Through the Woods: documenta, Fairy Tales, and the Time of Enchantment

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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July, 2019

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project began in the summer of 2012 when, with the generous funding of the Art History Department at the University of Minnesota, I was able to travel to Kassel, Germany. The original plan was to spend most of my time sleuthing through the Brothers Grimm Archive to see what kinds of goodies I could find, and secondarily, to attend dOCUMENTA (13). In short, documenta utterly enchanted me. It captured my imagination and curiosity, and it was there that this project really sprouted its roots. If it weren't because of the support, funding, and encouragement of the Department, I never would have been able to go to the places necessary to explore, research, and simply be where felicitous serendipity might find me.

The following summer, again thanks in part to funding from the Art History Department, as well as through the WorkART program, I was able to return to Kassel to conduct research at the documenta Archiv. During this trip, the helpful staff there pointed me toward Stan Douglas's *Suspiria* and archival materials on Ai Weiwei, as well as other invaluable finds. Douglas and his band of weird ghosts populate Chapter 3; Ai Weiwei's *Fairytale* is a future project, waiting in the wings. I was also able to spend that enchanted summer in Munich, where I immersed myself in the local arts and history there. I owe a big thank you to Doris Laves-Wegat and Gabriele Irle for opening their homes and their hearts to me and to the mothers and grandmothers of the Ottobrunn Kunstverein for their generosity and hospitality.

This is all to say that there is no way that this project could have come into being without the good counsel, kindness, insightful suggestions, and generosity both of those

whom I have known for a long time and strangers. Of course, the biggest thank you and broadest hug goes to all the faculty and staff who make up the Art History Department at the University of Minnesota. This department is populated not only with brilliant scholars whose work is inspiring, but with people who are truly kind, generous, and convivial, and who have embraced me with constant support, faith, and patience. In the office, Erik Farseth and Sara Enfield, and before them John McEwen, all deserve halos, raises, and a steady supply of kitten pictures for life. They have helped me out of more jams (bureaucratic and paper-related) than I care to count, and always did so with the utmost kindness and good humor.

It was by reading Jane Blocker's work that I first realized what compassionate scholarship could look like. She is both an incredible writer and a tremendously talented teacher, and one of her skills is her uncanny ability to push her students *almost* too hard in order to coax their best ideas and hardest work out of them; this is rooted in her faith in the capacity of her students. If I have any ideas that can hold water, they probably can somehow be traced back to Jane. Jane is not only a force of nature when it comes to writing and teaching, but she is one of the most generous and humble people I am fortunate to know, and I consider myself very lucky indeed to have an advisor who is so generous with her time, ideas, humor, and heart.

Jenn Marshall is another mentor whose kindness, razor-sharp wit, and power as a writer and teacher stand as towering examples for me. She is a geyser of enthusiasm and encouragement who believes in the potential of half-cocked ideas and always brings learning and writing back to the journey rather than the endpoint. Jenn kindly hired me as Managing Editor at *Panorama Journal* at a time when I was muddling slowly in my

writing, an experience that was not only invigorating, but helped me see how the sausage of peer reviewed scholarship is made. My time working with Jenn was not only great fun and exciting, but also proved to be an invaluable outlet for thinking through how to engage, as an academic, to deeply troubling political events.

Michael Gaudio is not only one of the nicest people with whom one could hope to study, but his research is hands-down some of the most interesting, weird, sensitive, nuanced, and beautifully formulated work I have come across. It was always a complete pleasure to be in his classroom, whether as a student or as a teaching assistant.

Jean Langford deserves my thanks for opening a door for me that I didn't know existed. Years ago, I took her course, "History, Memory, and Haunting," and the ghosts she trained me to listen for populate this dissertation.

Finally, the Art History graduate students have been the best peers, interlocutors, and friends I could ever wish for. Consistently brilliant, kind-hearted, and interesting, they sparkle. These are the kinds of people I want to have as my colleagues for decades to come.

To my parents, Steve and Dot: without your indefatigable support and love, I would have given up on this dream a long time ago. Thank you for your unending encouragement and steadfastness when it seemed that I was most lost in the woods.

To my partner in crime, my sweet Luis: you came into my life as I was mid-stream in this project. Even though I told you I was almost finished writing this when we met (I was not, I just didn't want to scare you away), you nevertheless stuck with me and have been my constant defender and fiercest friend. Whenever this dissertation felt

impossibly daunting and the end nowhere in sight, you were there to remind me that I was *so close* to reaching the top of the volcano. (When I'm with you, of course a mountain just wouldn't do.) Now that we're here, I can't imagine anyone else with whom I'd rather be to enjoy the view.

To my baby, Mateo, who is yet to be born: you started growing in me and getting bigger just as this dissertation approached its last months of gestation. You two are my unlikely twin stars and it has been magical to watch your looping orbits, first as you both came into being slowly and steadily, and finally now plumping up to impossible proportions. Thanks for taking it easy on me and for being patient enough to let me give birth to this project before you. (I think we can both agree it's for the best.) I can't wait to see what new stories we write together.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

List of Figures……………………………………….………………………..………..….vi.

Introduction: The Swan in the Library.…………………………………………………1.

Chapter I: The Spider and Her Web: The Beginning of documenta and its Ghostly Mothers …………………………………………………………….…………………...37.

Chapter II: Through the Woods: Joseph Beuys's *7000 Oaks*, Kassel and Working Through ………………………………………………………..…………………116.

Chapter III: Specters of *Suspiria*: Fairy Tales, Recombinant Narrativity, and Con/temporality……………………………………………………………………..190.

Chapter IV: There Was Once and There Will Be Again: The Fairy Tale Time of Mariam Ghani……….………………………………………….……………………………288.

Figures………………………….……………………………………………………...352.

Bibliography………..…………..………………………………….…………………421.

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

Figure 0.1: Tue Greenfort, *The Wordly House*, dOCUMENTA(13)*,* Kassel, 2012. Photo: Nils Klinger. Page 352.

Figure 0.2: Tue Greenfort, *The Wordly House*, dOCUMENTA(13)*,* Kassel, 2012. Photo: Nils Klinger. Page 353.

Figure 0.3: Tue Greenfort, *The Wordly House*, dOCUMENTA(13)*,* Kassel, 2012. Photo: Nils Klinger. Page 354.

Figure 0.4: Logo for Documenta IX, 1992. Page 355.

Figure 0.5: Frank C. Papé, "La Reine Pédauque." Anatole France, *At the Sign of the Reine Pédauque* (Plymouth: William Brendon & Son, 1928). Page 356.

Figure 0.6: Frontispiece to Perrault's collection of *Contes de ma mère l'oye*, 1697. Page 357.

Figure 0.7: Ludwig Richter, *Märchenmütterchen*, in Carl and Theodor Colshorn's anthology of fairy tales and legends, 1854. Page 358.

Figure 0.8: Ludwig Emil Grimm, "Dorothea Viehmann" from Wilhelm and Jakob Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, 2nd edition. 1819. Page 359.

Figure 0.9: Kiki Smith, *Rapture*, 2001. Page 360.

Figure 0.10: Paul Klee, *Angelus Novus*, 1920. Page 361.

CHAPTER I

Figure 1.1: Louise Bourgeois with *Spider IV*, 1996. Page 362.

Figure 1.2: Louise Bourgeois, *Femme Maison*, 1947. Page 363.

Figure 1.3: Louise Bourgeois, *Maman*, 1999. Page 364.

Figure 1.4: Louise Bourgeois, *Maman* (detail of egg sac), 1999. Page 365.

Figure 1.5: Louise Bourgeois, *Precious Liquids* (exterior), 1992. Page 366.

Figure 1.6: Louise Bourgeois, *Precious Liquids* (interior views), 1992. Page 367.

Figure 1.7: Louise Bourgeois, *Spider*, 1997. Page 368.

Figure 1.8: Diego Velázquez, *The Spinners, or The Fable of Arachne*, ca. 1657. Page 369.

Figure 1.9: Otto Freundlich, *Der Neue Mensch*, cover of *Entartete Kunst* exhibition guide, 1937. Page 370.

Figure 1.10: Float with a model of the *Haus der Deutschen Kunst*, *Tag der Deutschen Kunst*, 1937, Munich, Germany. Page 371.

Figure 1.11: Haus der Deutschen Kunst, *Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung*, 1937. Page 372.

Figure 1.12: People queued for the *Entartete Kunst* show, Munich, Germany, 1937. Page 373.

Figure 1.13: Exhibition postcard for *Entartete Kunst* featuring *Jesus Christ* by Prof. Gies, 1937. Page 374.

Figure 1.14: Wilhelm Lehmbruck, *Kneeling Woman* (1911), at *Entartete Kunst* (1937). Page 375.

Figure 1.15: Postcard from New York Armory Show, Lehmbruck's *Kneeling Woman* in the background (1913). Page 376.

Figure 1.16: Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Hoffmann, Wolfgang Willrich, Walter Hansen, and Adolf Ziegler visit *Entartete Kunst*, July 16, 1937. They examine the Dada wall, which features paintings by Kandinsky, Klee, and Schwitters. Page 377.

Figure 1.17: Page from the *Entartete Kunst* catalogue, 1937. Page 378.

Figure 1.18: Page from the *Entartete Kunst* catalogue, 1937. Page 378.

Figure 1.19: *Bundesgartenschau*, Kassel, 1955. Page 379.

Figure 1.20: Signage in front of the Museum Fridericianum at documenta, Kassel, Germany, 1955. Page 380.

Figure 1.21: Museum Fridericianum with German cars and national flags during the first documenta. Photograph by: Carl Eberth, 1955. Page 381.

Figure 1.22: Documenta 1, Hall of Sculpture, featuring Henry Moore's *King and Queen* (1953), 1955. Page 382.

Figure 1.23: Installation View of Ground Floor during the first documenta. Photograph by: Günther Becker. Page 383.

Figure 1.24: Wilhelm Lehmbruck, *Kneeling Woman* (1911), in the rotunda of the Fridericianum, documenta 1, 1955. Page 384.

Figure 1.25: The Fairy Tale Road, http://www.deutsche-maerchenstrasse.com/en/. Page 385.

Figure 1.26: Arthur Rackham, "The Jew in the Brambles," 1900. Page 386.

Figure 1.27: Ernst Hiemer, *Der Giftpilz*, Philipp Rupprecht, illustrator, 1938. Page 387.

Figure 1.28: "How to Tell a Jew," in *Der Giftpilz*. Philipp Rupprecht, illustrator, 1938. Page 388.

Figure 1.29: Arthur Rackham, *Hansel and Gretel*, 1909. Page 389.

CHAPTER II

Figure 2.1: Joseph Beuys, *7000 Oaks*, 1982. Page 390.

Figure 2.2: The Fridericianum in Kassel after the Allied air raids of September 8 and 9, 1941. Page 391.

Figure 2.3: Joseph Beuys planting an oak tree in front of the Museum Fridericianum, *7000 Oaks*, 1982. Page 392.

Figure 2.4: View of basalt stele, *7000 Oaks*, on the Friedrichsplatz, 1982. Page 393.

Figure 2.5: Georges Angeli, "Inmates' laundry and "Goethe Oak," June 1944. Photo taken secretly by the French inmate Georges Angeli. Page 394.

Figure 2.6: The Stump of the Goethe Oak, Buchenwald. Page 395.

Figure 2.7: Karl Albiker, *Der heilige Sebastian* (St. Sebastian), ca. 1920. Page 396.

Figure 2.8: Käthe Kollwitz, *Gedenkblatt für Karl Liebknecht* (Memorial Sheet for Karl Liebknecht), 1919. Page 396.

Figure 2.9: Korbinian Aigner, *Six images of different fruits (apples*), ca. 1913-1960. Page 397.

Figure 2.10: Photograph taken immediately after the departure of the Germans from Auschwitz-Birkenau. Sacks of human hair packed for dispatch to Germany. Photo credit: Glowna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu. USHMM Photo Archives. Page 398.

Figure 2.11: Joseph Beuys, *Plight*, 1985. Page 399.

Figure 2.12: Nazi *Totenkopfring.* Page 400.

Figure 2.13: Book Seal of Adolf Hitler, featuring the swastika, eagle, oak branch, and wreath. Page 400.

Figure 2.14: Top: 1 Deutsche Mark, 1950-2001, Bottom: 50 pfennigs, 1949-2001. Page 401.

Figure 2.15: Cannister of Zyklon B. National Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Page 402.

Figure 2.16: Joseph, Beuys, *The End of the Twentieth Century*, 1983-5. Page 403.

Figure 2.17: Students plant a tree as part of the *7000 Oaks* project, coordinated by independent curator Todd Bockly, in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. October 4, 1998. Photo: Walker Art Center Archives. Page 404.

Figure 2.18: Sam Durant, *Scaffold*, 2012. At dOCUMENTA (13), in the Karlsaue. Page 405.

Figure 2.19: Sam Durant, *Scaffold*, Walker Sculpture Garden, Minneapolis, MN. Photo: Jim Mone, AP Images. Page 406.

CHAPTER III

Figure 3.1: Kassel-Wilhelmshöhe, Herkules with cascades, photochrome print, ca. 1900. Page 407.

Figure 3.2: Schloß Wilhelmshöhe and Kassel, as seen from the Herkules Oktagon, ca. 2010. Page 408.

Figure 3.3: Stan Douglas, *Suspiria: Camera 1 and 2*, 2002. Page 409.

Figure 3.4: Stan Douglas, *Suspiria (video* still), 2003, Vancouver Art Gallery. Page 410.

Figure 3.5: Johann Jakob Anthoni, *Herkules*, ca. 1717. Herkules Oktagon, Kassel, Germany. Page 411.

Figure 3.6: Stan Douglas, Else in *Suspiria*, 2002. Page 412.

Figure 3.7: Stan Douglas, *Suspiria* (instillation view), 2002. Page 413.

Figure 3.8: Diane Arbus, *Identical Twins, Roselle, New Jersey*, 1967. Page 414.

Figure 3.9: Stanley Kubrick, video still from *The Shining*, 1980. Page 414.

Figure 3.10: Film Still from Dario Argento's *Suspiria*, 1977. Page 415.

Figure 3.11: Film still featuring wall décor based on M. C. Escher's *Study of Regular Division of the Place with Fish and Birds* (1938), from Argento's *Suspiria*, 1977. Page 416.

Figure 3.12: Film Still from Dario Argento's *Suspiria*, 1977. Page 417.

Figure 3.13: Film Still from Dario Argento's *Suspiria*, 1977. Page 418.

Figure 3.14: Eugène Atget, *Cabaret de L'Enfer, boulevard de Clichy 53*, 1910. Page 419.

Figure 3.15: Hans Bellmer, *La Poupée*, 1936. Page 420.

Figure 3.16: Frontispiece and decorative title page of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, illustrated by Ludwig Emil Grimm, 1819. Page 421.

Figure 3.17: Sir John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, 1852. Page 422.

Figure 3.18: Stan Douglas, Else in *Suspiria*, 2002. Page 423.

Figure 3.19: Lawrence Weiner, *Bits & Pieces Put Together to Present a Semblance of a Whole*, 1991. Page 424.

Figure 3.20: Film Still from Dario Argento's *Suspiria*, 1977. Page 425.

Figure 3.21: Graffitied wall in *Suspiria*, Herkules Oktagon, Kassel, 2002. Page 426.

Figure 3.22: Stan Douglas, *Panopticon, Isla de Pinos/Isla de la Juventud*, from *Cuba Photos (2004-2005)*, 2005. Page 427.

Figure 3.23: The now-obsolete 1,000 Deutsche Mark Note, which features Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm, as well as the Herkules Octagon and monument (the triangular spire to the left of Wilhelm's hat, directly left of the uppermost metallic strip), 1991. Page 428.

Figure 3.24: Emily Jacir, page from "No. 004," *dOCUMENTA (13): 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts*, 2011. Page 429.

Figure 3.25: Stan Douglas, *Der Sandmann* (video still, 4:00), 1995. Page 430.

Figure 3.26: Stan Douglas, *Der Sandmann* (video still, 1.20 min), 1995.
The nearly-imperceptible dividing line between videos bisects Nathanael and his face; a slightly darker shadow may be seen above his head. Page 431.

Figure 3.27: Stan Douglas, *Der Sandmann* (video still, 2.33 min.), 1995. Page 432.

Figure 3.28: Stan Douglas, *Der Sandmann* (video still, 7:30 min.), 1995. Page 433.

Figure 3.29: Philippe Curtius, *Sleeping Beauty (Madame du Berry)*, 1765. Page 434.

Figure 3.30: Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Pygmalion and Galatea*, 1890. Page 435.

CHAPTER IV

Figure 4.1: Mariam Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses* (2011-2012), installation view, dOCUMENTA (13), 2012. Page 436.

Figure 4.2: The Fridericianum after air raids, Kassel, 1943. Page 437.

Figure 4.3: Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann, *Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm*, 1855. Page 438.

Figure 4.4: Sanja Ivekovic, *Poppy Field*, 2007. Photo, Jens Ziehe. Page 439.

Figure 4.5: Page from Mariam and Ashraf Ghani's "Afghanistan: A Lexicon," in *dOCUMENTA (13): Catalog 1/3, The Book of Books.* Page 440.

Figure 4.6: The Dar ul-Aman Palace, Kabul, Afghanistan. Kabul Chamber of Commerce. Page 441.

Figure 4.7: "Die 7 km lange Eisenbahn zwischen Kabul und Darul-Aman war stark überfüllt." (The 7km-long train between Kabul and Dar ul-Aman was completely packed.) *UHU*. February, 1930. Page 442.

Figure 4.8: Francis Alÿs, *Reel-Unreel* (film still), 2012. Page 443.

Figure 4.9: Michael Rakowitz, *What Dust May Rise?*, 2012. Page 444.

Figure 4.10: Western Bamiyan Buddha, Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan. Pre-2001. Page 445.

Figure 4.11: Western Buddha niche after it was demolished on March 12, 2001. Page 445.

Figure 4.12: Bactrian Princess, ca. 2,000 BCE, modern-day northern Afghanistan. Page 446.

Introduction

The Swan in the Library

Erzähl mir eine Geschichte.

Tell me a story. Tell me a history.

In German, the word for history and story is the same: *Geschichte*. Linguistically, this double meaning is not unique, as *historia* means both history and story in Spanish and Portuguese, *histoire* refers to both concepts in French, and similarly in Italian *storia* means history, story, or tale. It is in this borderland that my dissertation lies. This project is about the ways in which stories and histories are constructed and how the two genres lean on each other; specifically, in this dissertation I weave a yarn about the intersection of documenta, fairy tales, and contemporary art after World War II. This tale about contemporary art is related specifically to the history of Kassel, Germany, and I will tell it in a way that is related both conceptually and formally to the tradition of storytelling in this town.

My story is to be an enchanted one, because Kassel itself lies at the heart of the German fairy tale universe. That is, it is the location where the Brothers Grimm collected the majority of their fairy tales and codified them into *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, or *Children's- and Household Tales*, the first volume of which was published in 1812/15. It is also the location of documenta, [1] a contemporary art exhibition, which has occurred

[1] Although I will elaborate on the etymology of the name "documenta" at a later point, it is worth noting at the outset that the name of the exhibition initially was not capitalized, and organizers branded the exhibition intentionally as such. Since its inception in 1955, documenta has taken place fourteen times and each exhibition is numbered, one through fourteen. In scholarly literature, the name "documenta" is

every four of five years since 1955, the original goal of which was to revitalize and rehabilitate the post-War German art and cultural scene. Surprisingly, the histories of documenta and the Grimm fairy tales have never been told together; in this project, I explore why this is the case and to tell one of many possible versions of this story. That is, the story I tell is one that describes documenta as a kind of magic thing that helped Kassel, and more broadly, Germany, work through the traumatic dark period of the Third Reich and the tumultuous aftermath of World War II. In no small part, documenta is an event that has largely facilitated the renewal of the town of Kassel after its near-destruction in World War II. Over the past sixty-plus years, documenta has been an event to which people return, much like a beloved story, and, like a fairy tale, it proffers a journey of sorts that may delight those who encounter it even as it helps visitors make sense of the present moment. Kassel is the site of terrible violence and destruction, rebirth and unexpected transformation, a locale that is designed periodically to both repeat itself and enchant those who come to it. The story I wish to tell is the way in which documenta has functioned as a fairy tale for this central German town. For good and ill, the event has enacted transformational power.

Also. Ich werde Ihnen eine Geschichte erzählen.

So then, I will tell you a story and a history.

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frequently, though not always, uncapitalized, and sometimes the name is italicized. Additionally, throughout the history of documenta, the organizers of specific iterations of the show have chosen to brand their event with non-standard typography. For example, documenta III (d III) took place in 1964, while 4. documenta (4.d) occurred in 1968. In the summer of 1992, Kassel celebrated DOCUMENTA IX (D IX), and in 2012 dOCUMENTA (13) (d [13]) occurred. In keeping with the brand of the event and its associated institutions, I have made they stylistic choice not to capitalize "documenta" when referring to it generally and use the typography with which it was branded for specific events. When quoting authors who have made different stylistic choices, I have remained consistent with their original text.

Once upon a time, there was a town nestled along the shores of the Fulda River. In this town there was a castle and a palace, a museum and a tower. There was a beautiful promontory from which one could watch clouds roll across the countryside, which was spread out like a lumpy quilt; there was also a summer palace with a pleasure garden in which decorative canals unfurled as gracefully as a peacock's feathers, and where swans, black and white, swam gracefully. Once upon a time, a live elephant all the way from India paraded with all possible pomp through the street along the promontory. However, it met its sad end when an intoxicating aroma wafted toward it and as the elephant ran in pursuit of this delectable smell, he fell over a steep precipice and tumbled down a ravine into the pleasure garden and to his death. A fine baroque building was constructed in the center of town, which became the royal anatomy theater. This later became a different kind of theater, the sort in which people perform plays rather than dissections. At one time the lovely theater was emptied of its stage sets and served as a munitions warehouse instead. Now, it is a natural history museum. Today it contains a unicorn and a wooly mammoth, human fetuses suspended in jars of formaldehyde and a colony of bees that fly into and out of the museum, a library made of trees and the skeleton of the poor elephant that fell over the cliff.

Once, bombs rained down as heavily upon this town as the low-hanging thunderstorms that lurk in the nearby hills and rumble in the afternoons. The bombs struck the palace, museum, castle, and theater, and damaged them all badly. The palace alternately was turned into a prison, housed the military, and later became a museum of antiquities; at least three times, but maybe four, Kassel expelled its Jews from town as

though they were the vermin in the nearby town of Hameln. There used to be princes and princesses in this town who enjoyed all manner of finery and splendor, poor scholars whose stomachs grumbled with hunger and who hunched over their desks by candlelight, and villains who sold armaments and people for profit. There is still magic that hides in the concrete crevices of the town, delights lurking underneath the fading and tattered advertisement posters that litter the streets, and secrets that might be discovered just around the next corner or behind the next grove of trees. Kassel, Germany, which is over a thousand years old, is a town of repetitions and transformations. It is a place that has fluctuated politically and culturally for centuries, shifting this way and that, like the inhalations and exhalations of time itself. Kassel's history has never traced a linear trajectory, but rather it has been shaped by ideological battles that recognize the importance and power of storytelling.

The Swan in the Library

A beautiful white swan spent the summer swimming though a library in Kassel in 2012. In the far recesses of the Karlsaue, the enchanting and enchanted baroque garden sprawled out before the Orangerie Castle, was an abandoned old shack in the middle of a pond, surrounded by trees and reeds. Tue Greenfort converted this hut into the *Worldly House*, a swan house-cum-library specializing in post-humanism and inspired by the writing of Donna Haraway (fig. 0.1). (The full title of this artwork is *The Worldly House: An Archive Inspired by Donna Haraway's Writings on Multispecies Co-Evolution, Compiled and Presented by Tue Greenfort*.) During the 100 days of dOCUMENTA(13) visitors could traverse the dock that led to the slate-shingled hut, enter it, and thumb

through various volumes about interspecies relationships and transformation in cast pools of sunlight; they could sit on a wooden bench and read from or listen to a selection of digital articles provided on the computers there, or watch videos projected on a screen within the hut (one of which was of Haraway and her dog playing outside), all while sharing space with a swan that came and went freely through a door propped open for it (figs. 0.2 and 0.3).[2] It is perhaps this co-habitation of swan and living archive that best encapsulates my enchanted perspective of documenta. That is, both documenta and the *Wordly House* with its avian resident are temporary, transitory, transformational spaces, and ones in which the written word and life, the archive and embodiment comingle. "It certainly has a dream-like, fairy-tale atmosphere," Greenfort writes of the environment he created, "giving the impression of a self-built house in which to retreat for solitude and reflection."[3] Water laps around the library, molted feathers float on the pond and fish swim just under the cloudy, dim green surface; the pages of books curl from use and the humidity of the enclosure, and the environment feels pregnant with possibilities and objects just on the cusp of metamorphosis.

I would like to keep Greenfort's artwork – the swan and the living archive, as well as the architectural structure that is a container for radical transformation and humble moments of solitude and introspection – as a guiding image for us as we embark upon my

[2] The swan demonstrates its independence by eluding capture in official photographs of the *Worldly House*. Only two large carp are visible in Nils Klinger's photos of the space. However, I can attest that I saw a swan swimming through the aquatic enclosure, even if it left before I thought to take a picture of it. Mirroring discussions of performance and the archive, the swan was prone to disappearance. However, today the *Worldly House* (that is, the enclosure as archive) is gone - it is a cabin that is emptied of its books and its door is locked, and yet the swans still swim throughout the Aue park. I imagine they still remember the strange summer during which throngs of people disturbed their normally tranquil paddlings.

[3] Tue Greenfort, "Tue Greenfort," accessed February 21, 2019, http://tuegreenfort.net/post/34698314235/the-worldly-house-2012-walking-through-the.

fairy tale reading of documenta. Greenfort's work is a reminder that literal references to fairy tales are not necessary in order to evoke the enchantment they engender, and that magical moments may often be concealed within humble and banal exteriors. Additionally, many artists at documenta, responding to what I argue is Kassel's unique and site-specific fairy tale environment, invoke wonder tales, myths, and fables in their work in ways that (as I will demonstrate) historians and curators have historically been hesitant to establish. The swan swimming through the library was not only evocative of an earlier time, Documenta IX (1992), when the image of a swan and its reflected image served as the insignia of the event, which typically does not have a figurative logo (fig. 0.4). It is also an animal that might transform into a Mother Goose figure and start telling those gathered around her stories – stories in which boys might transform into birds and birds into boys as in the Brothers Grimms' "The Six Swans." The swan swimming through the *Worldly House* in 2012 was white, however the swans the hut housed originally were black. In the 1950s, around the time of the first documenta show, this shack was built in the Karlsaue to house the park's black swan population; the black swans are now gone, the hut remains. The DIX logo, which at first glance appears to show a swan and its reflection on the water, upon a closer look shows two asymmetrical birds, foils of each other. The black swan that appears to float on the watery surface extends its neck to the left of the composition, as though reaching toward something just beyond its grasp or extending its body and unfurling its wings as it prepares to take flight, whereas the white swan flipped beneath it is poised with its neck in a demure and vertically-oriented S-curve. The swans seem poised in a moment of transformation, as though the drawing is coming to life and the black swan is about to fly away, perhaps into

another physical *and* temporal realm; even the feathers at the end of its body are depicted with more gestural brushwork than the swan beneath it, which is contained by a uniformly thick line. Like an origami trick in which a paper crane becomes a frog or a balloon, the swan (either the swan in the logo or the real one in the *Worldly House*) might also smooth out some of its wrinkles, modulate its folds, and transform into something altogether different. Adding a crease here, pulling a tab there, and perhaps giving the paper construction a puff of breath, I wish in my writing to make the contents of the archive fly, to transmogrify paper and quills into feathers and trees, all while maintaining a sense of wonder and a dreamlike, fairy tale spirit.

The Grimm fairy tale "The Six Swans" spins the yarn of six enchanted princes and their sister who strived to liberate them from their curse. An evil, jealous stepmother transformed the six brothers into swans by sewing them each a white silk shirt stitched with a magic curse. The only way for them to assume their human form again was if their sister, who was not enchanted, spent six years without speaking or laughing, sewing them new shirts that would counteract the spell. In the Grimms' version of the tale, the young princess must create the six shirts from star flowers. Hans Christian Anderson, the Danish storyteller, adapted this fairy tale into an expanded, literary story, "The Wild Swans." In his version, the princess is tasked with the more painful and arduous task of spinning stinging nettles gathered from graveyards into thread from which to knit her brothers shirts. In both versions of the story, the princess, who spends years exiled in a forest and goes about her handicraft while perched in a tree, is discovered by the royal party of a nearby king. The king falls in love with her during her period of silence and marries the mute young woman. However, the king's mother, an evil woman, frames the silent bride

for cannibalizing her own babies, which comes with the sentence of death. As the young woman is led to be burnt at the stake, she brings the shirts over which she toiled with her. The six-year period of silence ends just as the executioner is ready to light the fire underneath her - coincidentally the very same moment as her brothers fly in as swans. She tosses each shirt over a brother's neck as he flies past her and at long last they transform back to their human form. The young woman is broken from her bond of silence, liberated from the pyre, and is finally able to explain her situation and demonstrate her innocence to her husband, the king. The evil mother-in-law is put to death in her stead, and from then on, after the long period of hardship, the young woman lives in harmony with her husband and brothers. The only lasting reminder of the enchantment is found on the body of the youngest brother. The sister didn't have time to finish sewing the sleeve of his shirt, so one of his arms remained in the form of a feathered wing.

The story of "The Six Swans" reminds me of the swan swimming through the *Worldly House* not only because the environment in that cabin foregrounded human-animal relationships and co-evolution, but because the potential for fairy tale transformation also felt particularly present in that space. In the story, women quickly flip, like the swans in the DIX logo, between Manichean poles – they are either all evil or all good, and humans flap, not without effort, between human and avian form, and finally, sometimes people and animals get stuck between the two ontologies. The figure of a hybrid human-bird fairytale figure is not unique to "The Six Swans." The storytelling character of Mother Goose, first popularized by Charles Perrault in the late seventeenth century, but which predates the fairy tale author by centuries, is also linked to a large

waterfowl-human hybrid. While it is unknown who the real Mother Goose was, if there was a single original figure, one theory proposes that she is a fictional figure culled from the elderly peasant women who were given the relatively easy household task of herding geese and who would also tell stories to children. Other scholars suggest that the character's name comes from the goose-like, cacophonous sound of women gossiping and chatting. Finally, still other theorists of lore, whom the preeminent fairy tale scholar Maria Tatar finds the most convincing of the lot, connect "*ma mère l'oye*" with the actual French queen from the eighth century Berthe (or Betrada) of Laon, who was known for telling children stories.[4] Tatar writes, "That queen, endowed either with one large foot or two oversized feet (depending on the source), has also been identified as the model for a number of church statues of *la reine pédauque* (from the term *la reine pied-d'oie* or *regina pede aucae*, meaning 'the goose-footed queen'). She has close ties with spinners as well as storytellers."[5] The historical queen most likely had a congenital defect that caused her unusual, possibly club foot (Tatar notes that spinning wheels were uncommon in her era, so she probably was not "goose-footed" because of excessive spinning, as was the source of the deformity of some other fairy tale characters). Nevertheless, in both France and next door in Germany, Berthe (also known as Bercha in Germany) is the goose-footed patron goddess of spinners.

The youngest brother of the six swans was left with the remainder of a wing for an arm (which served as a reminder of his and his brothers' lives as swans, a period of tribulation from which they could never entirely move beyond), while Berthe kept the

[4] Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 106-7.

[5] Ibid, 107.

spinning wheel in motion with her oversized webbed foot, according to lore. (*La Reine Pédauque* is depicted as a literal goose-footed fairy queen, for example, in Frank Papé's illustration for Anatole France's early twentieth century book of tales [fig. 0.5]). While it might seem like a leap from the goose-footed queen to the humble storytelling granny, the two figures are both spinners of threads and stories, activities that originally took place simultaneously in cozy domestic interiors or in *Spinnstube* (spinning corners). The frontispiece to Perrault's volume of stories *Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé*, also known as *Les Contes de ma Mère l'Oye* (*Stories or Fairy Tales from Past Times*, or *Mother Goose's Stories*) depicts an older woman telling stories to her charges, who are three elegantly dressed children seated by a hearth (fig. 0.6). While she keeps her hands busy with a spindle and distaff, the foot of the humbly dressed woman in the scene labeled "contes de ma mère l'oye" appears normally proportioned and distinctly more human than goose-like. Tatar notes that this Mother Goose figure served as a model for other folk storytellers, both in France and Germany, and later in England and the United States – that is, an older woman surrounded by both children and the tools of spinning. A similar figure serves the role of "*Märchenmütter*," or "fairy tale mother," in Ludwig Richter's mid-nineteenth century illustration for Carl and Theodor Colshorn's book of fairy tales (fig. 0.7). This peasant woman, with a foot peeping out from underneath her apron, leans toward the children encircling her to tell them stories. A distaff and crow rest on the back of her chair and the background of the scene is a domestic interior that has begun to transform into a setting evocative of "Cinderella:" a pumpkin (which might just be conjured into a chariot) grows on a vine near the hearth and small, light-colored birds flutter on the top of kitchen cupboard (in contrast to the crow, who might relay a message

or even tell a tale, the smaller doves, which the Grimms noted were particularly good fairy tale helpers, could help an unfortunate girl pick peas and lentils from the nearby ashes in the fireplace).

The Brothers Grimm also drew upon the figure of the good old peasant woman who served as the custodian of stories and the vehicle for their delivery (in truth, the women from whom they collected stories were more bourgeois than lower-class). They chose to include a portrait of Dorothea Viehmann, one of their chief informants, by their younger brother Ludwig Emil Grimm on the frontispiece of the second edition of *Children's- and Household Tales* from 1819 (the wreath on the recto side of the page spread echoes a similar flower circle in depicted by the Ludwig Emil for the first edition of the collection, which is discussed in Chapter 3) (fig. 0.8). In the portrait Viehmann sits at a table, her prominent nose almost beaklike and face calm in a three-quarters view. Rather than engaged in spinning, her hands are placed one on top of the other, lightly clasping a sprig of flowers (which themselves could possibly be spun into fiber, as in "The Six Swans"). The image of her figure captured the imagination of people such as the translator Edgar Taylor, and, as Tatar observes, Viehmann, under the pseudonym that Taylor gave her of Gammer Gretel, was put forth as the source for the entire Grimm collection.[6] (In reality, the Grimms collected their stories from a variety of informants, including Viehmann, Jeanette Hassenpflug and her sisters, and Dortchen Wild, among others.)

Like the nameless young princess in the woods who spun nettles in silence, the tellers of fairy and folk tales spun their yarns while performing domestic tasks - often

[6] Ibid, 110.

spinning, weaving, and sewing. However, gradually in images depicting the telling of fairy tales, books such as those published by the Brothers Grimm eliminated images of the spindle and distaff, even as the heroines of their fairy tales frequently demonstrated their worth by excelling in domestic crafts, particularly in humble and humiliating circumstances.[7] Tatar writes that "it becomes clear that spinning and telling tales are more than two compatible, mutually fortifying arts. They are further affiliated in that they both have the power to disfigure the women who practice them…. If the activity of spinning is connected with bodily mutilation, telling tales becomes associated with vocal disturbances."[8] Storytellers and fairy tale characters paralleled each other, as hands weathered by coarse fibers found hyperbolic correlates in the blisters and rashes that stinging nettles left on the fingers that twisted prickly fibers into fine thread. The tedium of pumping a spinning wheel's treadle could cause one to go so flat-footed that webbing would grow between one's toes. A storytelling woman might be characterized as a cackling crone, a vociferous woman who did not obey the decorum of feminine silence, and ultimately she may be muted, as was the princess in "The Six Swans." Fairy tales and the telling of them have always affected physical changes upon those who tell them, those who listen, and the environment they share.[9]

In 1936, Walter Benjamin published an essay called "The Storyteller." In this essay he opened with the observation that the role of the storyteller in modern life is diminishing: people are increasingly unable to narrate their life events and "the

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[7] Ibid, 110-113.

[8] Ibid, 113.

[9] I remember seeing one lame swan swimming in an Aue canal while visiting documenta. She listed to the side, one leg crumpled and tucked up close to her body, holding the story of her injury close to her breast.

communicability of experience is decreasing."[10] This silencing, according to Benjamin, might be seen in the men who returned from the battlefields of World War I, traumatized by the horrors of modern warfare, which rendered men "silent – not richer, but poorer in communicable experience."[11] This waning of storytelling was concerning for Benjamin, who claimed that "the art of storytelling is reaching its end because the epic side of truth, wisdom is dying out."[12] The news (in magazines and newspapers, on the radio and on television) had replaced stories told around the hearth.

Benjamin's observation that the tradition of storytelling was waning was not new; over a century before he wrote "The Storyteller," the Grimms too noted that the oral folk narrative was becoming an increasingly rare poetic form. In the Preface to their first volume of *Children's- and Household Tales*, they wrote, "It is probably just the right time to collect these tales, since those who have been preserving them are becoming ever harder to find…. The custom of telling tales is ever on the wane."[13] In the early nineteenth century, and even more so in the twentieth, with the advancement of modernism and later, postmodernism, mass communication, speed, urban sprawl, and increasingly mechanized and brutal war, people's ability to make sense of life and productively reflect back their experience to those around them has been stripped away. Now more than ever, that which might develop because of boredom – curiosity, thoughtfulness, and wonder – have been dying for a long time. (Provocatively, Benjamin

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[10] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Leskov," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 86.

[11] Ibid, 84.

[12] Ibid, 87

[13] Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, 253.

writes that “boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience. A rustling in the leaves drives him away.”[14]) According to Benjamin, the traumas of the twentieth century (of which he himself was a tragic victim) are rendering people mute, and as a result it is increasingly difficult for people to work through their problems. If this was true for Benjamin in 1936, it seems only to be increasingly true today.

Most of the storytellers whom the Grimms used as informants have become relatively unknown to history, or their life stories were modified to the point at which they have become more fictional than historical characters, as in the case of Dorothea Viehmann/Gammer Gretel or the various Mother Gooses, both royal and pedestrian. In place of these women and the oral folklore of which they were custodians there are now books, such as *Children’s- and Household Tales*, as well as *Mother Goose’s Stories*, “The Wild Swans,” and stacks and stacks of other fairy tale books. When children wish to hear a story, typically their caretaker or parent will reach for a book at hand, festooned with beautiful illustrations, rather than tell a story passed down orally while keeping their hands busy with spinning or knitting. Maria Tatar is one of many who have made similar observations that, “The oral storytelling tradition – unstable and ephemeral but also often vulgar and offensive – was replaced by ‘authoritative’ tales that could be framed as sacrosanct cultural property that affirmed enlightened social values.”[15] Indeed, the Grimms are now seen as patriarchs of German culture, and although they published seven different editions of their fairy tales over the course of their careers, their stories (most

[14] Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” 91.

[15] Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, xv.

commonly repeated as told in the final edition of their compendium) are framed as the definitive versions of the beloved tales, the yardstick against which other retellings are measured. Frequently, although not always, this shift from oral to literary storytelling traditions followed gendered patterns, as those who told stories were often women, whereas, until recently, the people who published the stories in books were typically men. This erasure of the historical women from fairy tales (one severe means of mutilation) turns them into ghostly mothers – that is, mothers who are defined by their conspicuous absence, a trait that this fairy tale tradition shares with the historiography of documenta.

Ghostly Mothers

In her article "Ghostly Mothers, Faithful Sons," Vesna Madzoski interrogates the history of two juxtaposed photographs from the book *Arnold Bode: Documenta Kassel, Essays* (Bode, as I will discuss in Chapter 1, organized and conceptualized the first documenta). The first photo Madzoski examines shows a protest from 4.documenta in 1968, while the other shows a group of five men posed for the camera, ostensibly exhibition organizers, from documenta 5 in 1972. Madzoski is curious about what she perceives as the dissonance between these images (chaos versus order), which in the book were laid out one above the other, and is piqued by the lack of explication or contextualization about them in *Arnold Bode*. That is, contrary to what one might presume intuitively, the chaotic scene of protest comes from a relatively traditional show (if the exhibition catalogue is to be trusted), whereas the orderly group portrait of five men in suits exchanging a book before the camera comes from a curatorially iconoclastic exhibition, one that significantly altered the trajectory of the ways in which documenta

was curated going forward. Documenta 5 marked a shift in the event and was noteworthy for the way in which the director Harald Szeemann exhibited postmodern artworks and put on display as its primary artwork the act of curation itself, a thematic approach to curatorial practice that continues to be popular today.[16] In her article, Madzoski searched for the subtle keys or Barthesian *punctums* within these photographs that might lead her to discover the subtle yet revealing or hidden truths contained therein, and came to the conclusion that what the two photographs offer are two counternarratives. She writes,

> What both of those details, or *punctums*, open up are two different cracks, two different 'black holes' in the history of *documenta*. The female purse [sitting on a table in the 1968 protest scene, its female owner nowhere in sight] undoubtedly brings us to someone who is missing, who is absent from this perfect picture – a woman. It opens up questions of the total absence or invisibility of women from the narrative of *documenta*. From the other side, the book opens up questions about tradition and continuity, or the means by which the same things are transferred from one generation to the next, while presented as novel.[17]

Invisible women[18] and books exchanged among men that transfer information over the generations – these are the two punctums Madzoski finds that cut to the heart of documenta for her: people who have been ghosted out of visibility and history, and that which is the vehicle for generational and institutional transfer. Like Madzoski, over the course of this dissertation I bring my attention to that which is invisible. In Chapter 1, I examine the work of Louise Bourgeois, who may be considered a "ghostly mother," and

[16] While a common curatorial practice now, Szeemann's practice of curating shows thematically met significant resistance from artists at documenta 5 and other shows, who felt he stripped them of their artistic freedom of expression and construction of meaning. For more on this, see Beatrice von Bismarck, "'The Master of the Works': Daniel Buren's Contribution to documenta 5 in Kassel, 1972," *On Curating* 33 (June, 2017): 54-60.

[17] Vesna Madzoski, "Ghostly Women, Faithful Sons," *On Curating* 33 (June, 2017): 48.

[18] The representation of women artists at 4.documenta, like documenta III, was a measly three percent. This number was boosted to 11% in documenta 5.

in Chapter 3, I seek out Kassel's unquiet ghosts (who are conspicuous to those who attune their senses toward them, even if they lack visibility). In Chapter 2, I apply the Kantian notion of negative presentation to my reading of artworks and individuals, and finally in Chapter 4, I attune my senses to the picks of punctums and tears of traumas in order to seek out spectral footprints in dusty old rooms and whispers that travel down twisting hallways so that I might listen to some of the ghosts that haunt documenta and in their haunting, define it. Additionally, I read Madzoski's words and allow them to slip, so that documenta is both "presented as novel" and, as in the transfer of the book, "presented as *a* novel." And indeed perhaps it is both: it is certainly an event that consistently strives toward newness and reinvention (since 4.documenta, every new documenta comes with a new director) *and* it is a recurring exhibition that enjoys a special relationship with the book. Madzoski traces the relationship between documenta and books, referring to Lutz Jahre at an earlier point in her article. He wrote, "The book metaphor runs like a thread through *documenta's* history," where "the catalogue becomes a kind of lasting monument to the exhibition and one of its most important authentic traces."[19]

While exhibition catalogues have undoubtedly performed a crucial role documenting documenta (and I examine books and the d[13] catalogue specifically in Chapter 4), in my overall project, I use a different kind of book, a book of fairy tales, to run like a thread through my analysis of documenta, to unravel it like a run in a stocking. Over the course of this dissertation, I use as my guiding metaphor a book of fairy tales,

[19] Jahre himself feels like a ghostly presence in Madzoski's article, a disembodied voice whose quotation is spliced into her writing without contextualization. He is mentioned by name only in the footnote. Quoted in Madzoski, "Ghostly Women, Faithful Sons," 45.

which was composed of stories told by women via oral traditions, and later compiled by men so that the stories might be archivally preserved. The vacillation and dialogue between these two poles – between the swan and the archive, between the invisible women who spun yarns and the authoritative book that promotes patriarchal tradition and continuity – is a space I demonstrate is constitutive of documenta as an event and as a way of recording history. Specifically, I argue that the legacy of the fairy tales that Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm collected in Kassel and its environs, and the fairy tale themes of magic, transformation, and repetition are integral to documenta - a recurring event that is rooted in trauma and recovery. Finally, I explore artworks shown at documenta that use storytelling in such a way that traditional art forms are lifted from the wall, floor, page, or gallery and assume the sense of liveness that is present in storytelling.

The traditional histories of documenta are manifold and exhaustive, in both German and English. Exhibition catalogues frequently are several hundred pages in length (for dOCUMENTA[13], there were no fewer than three catalogues, all of which are hundreds of pages in length), and retrospective tomes such as Michael Glasmeier and Karin Stengel's *Archive in Motion: 50 Jahre/Years Documenta* provide comprehensive analyses of the event in its fourteen iterations in both English and German (Glasmeier and Stengel's retrospective covers the first through eleventh documentas). Scholarship on the event is often bilingual, although the earliest books on documenta (and books on the earliest documentas) are frequently still only in German, yet to be translated into English, which reflects how the event only gradually became truly global in its scope. (E.g., Glasmeier and Stengel's *documenta 1955: Erste international Kunstausstellung – eine fotografische Rekonstruktion*, [*documenta 1955: First International Exhibition of Art – a*

Photographic Reconstruction], was published only in German, as late as 1995; similarly, Harald Kimpel's important work on documenta history, *documenta. Mythos und Wirklichkeit* [*documenta. Myth and Reality*] still has yet been translated into English.) From Szeemann's documenta in 1972 onward, the event became increasingly "Americanized," as "the spectacle of modernism was replaced by the spectacle of (liberal) capitalism," following the broader global trend.[20] Perhaps counter intuitively for a study on the ways in which documenta has functioned as a particularly German institution, but following this turn, in this dissertation I focus predominantly on artworks at documenta from after this shift toward globalism. Even so, I am committed to investigate the relationships between my chosen artworks and the site-specific history of Kassel. Only Chapter 1 examines documenta 1 closely, when the artists represented at the event were largely confined to western Europe, and the event was much less global in its scope than it is today. The traditional histories of documenta generally focus tightly on the event itself, the artists and artworks represented there, and the curator's objectives. My work differs from this in that I chose to take a thematic approach to my analysis, and view documenta as intimately related to the specific history and culture of Kassel. As iterations of documenta followed Szeemann's trend of thematic and conceptual curation, I personally found the themes and artworks presented at later documentas to be more generative for me as I worked to think creatively and weave together two disparate histories; moreover, later exhibition catalogues, particularly that for d(13) have cast a broader net regarding their historiographic methodologies.

[20] Ibid, 50.

As I unpack in Chapter 1, the story of the relationship between the institution of documenta and the Grimms' fairy tale legacy – the two things for which Kassel is most widely known, yet which remain resolutely "siloed," in modern jargon – is rarely told or focused upon. For example, both institutions have their own archives in town, the documenta Archiv and Brothers Grimm Archive, yet based upon my personal experience with both places, the relationship between the two institutions is minimal and at times is politely strained.[21] When the connection between documenta and the Grimms is made and sustained, it is most often as a link explored by individual artists or used as a footnote to the event; it never is told as a relationship in which the history and logic of the two institutions constitute each other. However, this is exactly how I understand the contemporary art event and the local legacy of fairy tales: in this project, I apply the genre of fairy tales to documenta in order to create an experimental art historical methodology, one that is, I believe, particularly well-suited to think through some of the ways in which documenta has functioned as a kind of fairy tale, one that both transforms and haunts, one that has the potential to rehabilitate but also to harm.

The summer of 2012 was a particularly fortuitous moment to mine this relationship, as it was not only a documenta year, but was also the year that heralded the 200th anniversary of the first edition of the Grimms' *Children's- and Household Tales*. Kassel celebrated this milestone with considerable fanfare, although the Grimm-centered

[21] The Brothers Grimm Archive and its erstwhile affiliated Museum are rather traditional in their methodologies and the resources they offer visitors, and support only a skeletal staff. For example, until it closed, the Museum displayed the artifacts from the lives of the Grimms in Kassel, from their silverware, dining room chairs, and family artworks, to early editions of their books and manuscripts. The Grimm Archive is run out of a few rooms in a multifunctional building and its library is limited to one wall of books. On the other hand, the documenta Archiv is far better funded by both state and private sponsors. The Archiv employs several full-time staff members, enjoys a large and centrally-located building that houses an exhaustive library and cache of film and media resources, and boasts a bilingual, slick, up-to-date website.

celebrations were kept mostly separate from documenta events. At home in the United States, fairy tales had recently enjoyed a resurgence of popularity in the 2000s, bolstered by the star power of Hollywood. In 2005, Matt Damon and Heath Ledger starred as "Will and Jake" Grimm in the fanciful (and wildly historically inaccurate) film *The Brothers Grimm*; *Red Riding Hood* appeared on the silver screen in 2011; and in 2012, Kristen Stewart, Chris Hemsworth, and Charlize Theron appeared in the Oscar-nominated *Snow White and the Huntsman* (reprised in the 2016 *The Huntsman: Winter's War*). Disney Studios busied itself in the 2010s by releasing the blockbuster animated movie *Frozen* (2013), based on Hans Christian Andersen's story "The Snow Queen;" *Maleficent* came out in 2014, in which Angelina Jolie played the titular character, the antagonist from "Sleeping Beauty;" and *Cinderella* (2015), was a live-action retelling of the popular tale, directed by Kenneth Branagh. Syndicated television shows joined the fad, with broadcasts of "Grimm" (NBC, 2011-2017), a fairy tale cop drama; "Once Upon a Time" (ABC, 2011-2018), a fantasy drama; and "Beauty and the Beast" (CW, 2012-2018), another police procedural drama.

The genre of the fairy tale enjoyed prominence not only in popular culture in the opening decades of the twenty-first century but has provided fertile ground to a large number of international contemporary artists. To name only a few, artists such as Kiki Smith, Cindy Sherman, Miwa Yanagi, Katharina Fritsch, and Paula Rego have devoted sustained artistic attention in their creation of fairy tale-inspired art. In 2007, Angela Kingston curated "Fairy Tale: Contemporary Art and Enchantment" at the New Art Gallery in Walsall, England. This show presented six contemporary artists who either based their artwork on fairy tale stories, or used the fairy tale qualities of wonder,

transformation, and interior worlds to create fantastical video installations, otherworldly photographs, trippy drawings, spectral paintings and etchings, and uncanny performances. A few years after Kingston's "Fairy Tale," in 2012 (the same summer as dOCUMENTA [13] and the Grimm anniversary celebrations, incidentally) Mark Scala curated "Fairy Tales, Monsters, and the Genetic Imagination." The fairy tale scholars Jack Zipes and Marina Warner both wrote chapters for the exhibition catalogue and participated in forums associated with the event. Dozens of internationally prominent artists participated in this show. For example, Kiki Smith's *Rapture* (2001) served as a visual introduction to the exhibition: a life-size bronze of a nude woman emerging mid-stride from the rent belly of a wolf, seemingly plucked from a retelling of "Little Red Riding Hood" (fig. 0.9). Patricia Piccinini's gentle, yet unsettling, anthropomorphic hybrids occupied corners of gallery spaces and served as the cover image of the exhibition catalogue. Her hyper-naturalistic sculpture *The Long Awaited* (2008) depicted a young boy sitting on a bench embracing a reclining creature (his grandmother?) who lies on his lap. This snoozing nude creature appears to be half human, half manatee; her flabby and wrinkled skin made of silicone and uncannily naturalistic, the toenails on her webbed, conjoined feet seemed weathered with age, and her gray tresses were made of real human hair.

This dissertation is not meant to be an exhaustive overview of documenta, charting each exhibition to demonstrate the ways in which it has evolved over the past sixty-plus years, nor does it endeavor to catalogue every occurrence of fairy tale art that has been present at the event. The work of writing an historical overview of documenta

has been taken on ably by scholars such as Kathryn Floyd in her award-winning dissertation, "Between Change and Continuity: *documenta* 1955-2005" and in the scholarly articles of art historians such as Lutz Jahre, Susanne König, Christof Lange, Vesna Madzoski, Roland Nachtigäller, Annette Tietenberg, and Beatrice von Bismarck. Werner Haftmann, the art historian who helped Arnold Bode conceptualize documenta, is a pivotal voice from the early years of documenta and post-War Germany, and Michael Glasmeier, Harald Kimpel and Karin Stengel have co-authored and -edited comprehensive books on documenta such as *Archive in Motion: 50 Jahre/Years Documenta* and *documenta 1955*. Additionally, Walter Grasskamp wrote a pivotal essay, "'Degenerate Art' and Documenta 1" (originally in German, published in English in 1994), in which he presciently described the way in which documenta was an imperfect response to the trauma of Nazi antimodernist iconoclasm. To my knowledge, the only author who has seriously paired documenta and fairy tales is Christian Saehrendt, who wrote a breezy German-language guide to dOCUMENTA (13) in 2012, *Ist das Kunst oder kann das weg?: Kassel, documenta-Geschichten, Märchen, und Mythen* (*Is That Art or Can I Throw it Away?: Kassel, documenta Histories, Fairy Tales, and Myths)*. This book provides a concise overview of each instantiation of documenta, while considering some of the fairy tales and myths that surround the event and the region of Hessen.

In the realm of fairy tale scholarship, both Jack Zipes and Maria Tatar wrote detailed histories of the Brothers Grimm and demonstrated the ideological evolution of the Brothers' edited volumes of fairy tales in *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World* (1988) and *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales* (1987), respectively. A prolific scholar, Tatar also published an indispensable annotated

volume of the Brothers Grimm's fairy tales (2004), which I have used as my primary source for these stories, unless noted otherwise. Another indefatigable scholar whose work on folklore and the otherworldly has been indispensable to me is Marina Warner, who explored the intersection between the supernatural and visual culture in *Phantasmagoria* (2006) and focused specifically on the history of women in folklore and fairytales in *From the Beast to the Blonde* (1996), examining women's roles as the tellers and custodians of stories and as the characters who have populated them over thousands of years. The scholarship of Linda Dégh, and Christa Kamenetsky, while a generation removed, is still fresh in its perspectives on the Nazis' uses of fairy tales. Finally, Carol Mavor's unique, genre-bending approach to art historical writing, her lush and evocative use of language, and her keen insights were invaluable models for me as I worked in a similar fashion to transgress disciplinary boundaries. In *Reading Boyishly* (2008), *Blue Mythologies* (2013), and *Aurelia* (2017), she spins gossamer webs between fairy tales, literature, and art in a style that is as academically rigorous as it is creative and enchanting.

My project adds three significant elements to the current literature in that it is the first sustained, scholarly investigation into the relationship between documenta and fairy tales, and thus is unique in the way it brings their two disparate bodies of literature into conversation with each other. Secondly, the artwork case studies I use for my chapters are not based upon pre-existing fairy tales (i.e., they are not illustrative of "Cinderella" or "Hansel and Gretel"), but I argue that the artworks *function as* fairy tales. That is, they create spaces for those who encounter them to engage actively in wonder and curiosity, and in imaginative and transformative processes. Finally, following the example of Jane

Blocker, I look to artist-historians for models of how to yoke art and history writing together, such that my methodology is experimental and transgresses disciplinary conventions.

Telling Tales

I engage in acts of translation, from art object to text, as the Grimms also translated stories from an oral tradition to a literary one. As such, by necessity, my text will contain inaccuracies, embellishments, slippages, and changes of tone. Understood generously, this may be perceived as occurring in a productive space between the performance and the object, the transient and the archived, the swan and the library. Maria Tatar describes the Grimms recording tales from their informants, and writes, "They were… never able to capture anything other than the verbal dimension of a performance. Intonation, gesture, facial expression, along with all the other vital components of a live performance, escaped their recording efforts."[22] Just as the Grimms' fairy tales, by necessity, cannot capture the vitality and intangible quality of a live performance, so too will my writing change the character of the objects I examine and the live-ness of encountering them directly, in intended and unintentional ways. Additionally, I occasionally bend my interpretation of artworks by reading them in a historical and spatial context that is specific to documenta, rather than viewing them as autonomous objects. Every art object travels through time and space with a life of its own, and the moment of encounter, the moment (and place) of the now or the *Jetztzeit*, as Walter Benjamin calls it, is an instrumental component in any reading of an object. Finally, the

[22] Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, 26.

art objects I examine do not depict fairy tales in a literal or illustrative sense, and thus at times I will argue for artworks to be read capaciously.

Numerous contemporary artists have created figurative fairy tale-inspired artwork that is complex and provocative — Smith, Yanagi, Rego, Natalie Frank, and Marcel Dzama come readily to mind. However, many directors of documenta have chosen not to include this kind of figurative work in their shows, as artistic directors of the event historically have favored modernist abstraction and postmodernism. That said, there *have* been artworks at documenta that engage with fairy tales more explicitly or literally than do some of artworks I have chosen as the bases of my chapters. For example, Nedko Solokov documented the fulfillment of his dream of becoming a fairy tale knight in *Knights (and other dreams)* for dOCUMENTA (13) in 2012, in a sprawling, multi-room, multimedia installation on the ground floor of the Brothers Grimm Museum. Just as I take a thematic approach to my analysis of documenta, so too do I think about fairy tales thematically. As I read them, the artworks I examine tap into the logic of fairy tales, although they might not depict actual scenes or characters from the beloved stories. Therefore, while Stan Douglas draws explicitly from the Grimms' fairy tales in *Suspiria*, which I examine in Chapter Three, as we shall see, it would be counter to the artist's work to claim that he retells these fairy tales. Most of the artworks I examine closely do not appear at first glance to have a direct connection to fairy tales. For example, the subject of Chapter Two, Joseph Beuys's *7000 Oaks,* does not contain overt content that relates it to fairy tales – it is simply seven thousand oak trees and basalt stele planted throughout Kassel. However, I argue that his work might be understood as creating a space for post-War Germans that is analogous to the space of the woods in fairy tales, in

which characters work though hardship; moreover, the trees and stones possess dynamic, transformational potential, which is a common theme both in fairy tales and in much of Beuys's work.

I read my chosen artworks as theoretical objects, as Mieke Bal describes them. Bal looks closely the work of Louise Bourgeois (whom I will examine in greater depth in Chapter 1), and thinks deeply about both the narrativity inherent within Bourgeois's sculpture and her moments of encounters with the artist's work. Bal writes, "The most common narrative modes can be characterized by their positioning as *anterior* stories. In the sharpest formulation, a visual work is thus considered an *illustration* of the narrative that precedes it and to which it is subordinated, its success being measured in terms of the degree to which it matches the story."[23] This anterior model calls for iconographic readings, interpretations in which the success of an artwork is dependent upon its fidelity to an authoritative text that came before it, and similarly, such a model of anteriority also privileges biographical readings of artists' creations and psychoanalytical accounts. It is against such anteriority that Bal pushes, as do I, in part to give artworks precedence as theoretical objects – as objects whose visuality and thingness communicate in ways that are not dependent upon anterior narratives, even as they contain complex narrative functions, and in my case, bear strong relationships to the narrative form of the fairy tale. That is, while I argue for narrative components in the objects I analyze, nevertheless those objects do not refer to anterior narratives, and in their refusal to illustrate narratives that preceded them, similarly cannot be subordinated to a prior text. The objects I focus

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[23] Mieke Bal, *Louise Bourgeois'* Spider (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 31-2.

on in my chapters solicit engagement from viewers, who, activated and empowered, might "'build' a home for old stories in the *now*."[24]

Every story may be told in innumerable ways, and the objectives and delivery of the storyteller fashion the lessons and priorities of a story. This project examines and plays with the conceptual foundations of documenta, fairy tales, and the way in which their stories intertwine. I do not tell the story of the relationship between the two in a linear fashion, supposing a straight line between A and Z. As such, I also undermine the organizational logic of progressive, teleological historiography, and do not assume that tales of hardship, even when they are fairy tales, resolve with a "happily ever after." In all of my chapters, I experiment with different modes of storytelling, from modeling Chapter 3 on a remixed musical album to structuring my chapter on Mariam Ghani as the lexicon she and her father wrote for dOCUMENTA (13). It is my endeavor to engage performatively in my writing with the logic, structure, and ideas of the artists I examine so that I might apply the insights they provide to the craft of writing art history. That is, I wish to employ a methodology similar to that of Jane Blocker in her book *Becoming Past*, when she played seriously with this task as a historian-artist who writes about artist-historians. She writes,

> Rather than look at art as its object of study (as is commonly done), something to which the art historian brings a certain amount of expertise and upon which she exercises certain ways of knowing, but at the same time something that does not bear upon her own practice, this book will ask how the work of the artist implicates and interrogates the critic or historian. It asks how to emulate the artist-historian, how to do history differently. In other words, rather than trend spotting, my work here wonders out loud about what it would mean to take these artists' work seriously *as* history rather than simply as art.[25]

[24] Ibid, 34.

[25] Jane Blocker, *Becoming Past* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 20.

I too am curious about how I might understand the artists I examine as historians and will experiment with applying their working logic to my writing voice, structure, and lines of inquiry, without slavishly following their directives or approaching their work uncritically. Similarly, I incorporate the unique historiography of documenta to my writing. As I see it, there is a central paradox that is lodged firmly in the heart of documenta. That is, historically its twin goals have been to bring Germany as a country back into the international post-War, democratic capitalist fold after the period of Nazi fascism, and simultaneously to position itself at the vanguard of contemporary art. These goals are wound together inextricably and conflict with each other because the first is a reactive impulse, based upon retrospection and a grieving process that orients itself toward the past, whereas the second objective is oriented to the future and the *avant garde*.

These contradictory goals may be compared to Walter Benjamin's "Angel of History," which he described in the ninth of his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," published posthumously in 1955, the same year as the first documenta. Interpreting Paul Klee's 1920 monoprint, *Angelus Novus*, which he owned, Benjamin described the central figure of the composition as the embodiment of the function of history itself (fig. 0.10). (Klee's artwork, although not *Angelus Novus* specifically, was represented prominently at documenta 1). It is worth quoting Benjamin at length as he writes,

> A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon

> wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.[26]

The event of documenta is similarly poised like Benjamin's Angel of History, swept up in the tug between the past and future, propelled blindly onward while watching the catastrophes of the past pile up at his feet, under the guise of the names of "progress" and "cultural monuments." It is a space in which numerous constellations appear, as Benjamin constructed the notion pithily: "an image is that in which the has-been comes together in a flash with the Now to form a constellation."[27] Documenta documents art history and functions historiographically, even as it is pulled in two contradictory directions at once, wings immobilized by the winds of progress. As such, it requires careful attention to temporality, haunting, and questions of place.

My first chapter focuses on the early history of documenta and may be viewed as an extension of this introduction. French-American artist Louise Bourgeois helps to anchor my thinking, although her work was not included in the first four exhibitions in Kassel. Rather, Documenta IX (1992) included a retrospective of her work, which, like her career overall, was belated and celebrated later than it should have been. I focus on Bourgeois' cell and spider sculptures to understand her as one of many ghostly women, a

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[26] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 257-58.

[27] From Benjamin's description of the dialectical image, as quoted in Bal, *Louise Bourgeois'* Spider, 9.

mother spider who spins not only stories, but webs that endeavor to suture rips and rents in history, weave text(ile)s between historical nodes, and in these acts of repair simultaneously bring things back together again and highlight the original tear. Through her work, I introduce documenta anachronistically, through the multiple historical nodes of its conception and creation in 1955, the exhibition *Entartete Kunst* from 1937 to which it reacted, and later attempts, as in the case of Bourgeois, to repair a show that in many ways was meant to be a show about repair. This chapter, which skips temporally, sets up and relates to the way in which I understand documenta to relate to haunting, trauma, and fairy tales more broadly. Specifically in this chapter, I examine the history of the Nazis' iconoclastic relationship to modern art, as culminated in the objectives of *Entartete Kunst*, and which after World War II, Arnold Bode attempted to rectify and resuscitate with documenta. I examine both Bode's curatorial innovations and his shortcomings as creator of documenta in this chapter. Walter Grasskamp, in 1987, importantly made the relationship between documenta and *Entartete Kunst* explicit, something previous scholars of documenta had failed to do. My chapter builds upon the historiographical oversight Grasskamp addressed by also incorporating Kassel's fairy tale history into this relationship. Both liberal and fascist political parties used fairy tales to promote their politics and ideologies during the Weimar and Nazi periods in Germany, as well as toward more subtle political objectives before and after this period. The politicization of fairy tales, I argue, is a significant reason why the story of documenta has not been told alongside that of fairy tales, and in this chapter, I establish an untold relationship between the two, in order to show that reading documenta as a kind of fairy tale is central to understanding the event, its purpose, its history, and its future. In doing so, I also

demonstrate how documenta is an event that has at its core significant omissions but also is an event whose repetitive structure makes repair possible, even if this repair is belated and incomplete, and even if the scars of past acts of violence are still visible.

Chapter Two focuses on Joseph Beuys, one of the most important artists to emerge in Germany after World War II, and one of documenta's recurring and most celebrated artists. Specifically, I look at his massive city afforestation project, *7000 Oaks* from documenta 7 (1982) and argue that, in keeping with the artist's unique and idiosyncratic manner of employing material, the earthwork might be understood to function as a tool for working through trauma and Germany's Nazi history – an unorthodox reading of this work, to be sure. That is, I understand *7000 Oaks* – an artwork based upon a species of tree that is particularly tied to German cultural history – to function like the space of the woods in fairy tales, in which characters undergo trials and endeavor to work through existential dilemmas. Here, I argue, Beuys used a space as capacious as the entire city of Kassel as an environment for working through the complexities of a past in which the culture that made possible the contributions of the Grimms, Goethe, and modern science also made the Holocaust possible. In Beuys's hands, materials (the oak and basalt of *7000 Oaks*, as well as the materials he used in other projects such as fat and felt) have a uniquely transformational quality so that their connotations readily shapeshift. According to my reading of Beuys's work, the way in which these materials transubstantiate is specific and historically grounded in the materiality of a German historical past, and *7000 Oaks* is rooted literally and figuratively in the history of Kassel and documenta. In this chapter, I am indebted to Gene Ray, who argues that a substantial amount of Beuys's oeuvre should be read as a project of

mourning, and as such Ray reads Beuys's iconic materials of fat and felt as related to the bodies of those who were murdered during the Holocaust. I apply this project of mourning to *7000 Oaks*, which to my knowledge has never been read as a monument or anti-monument to the horrors of the Third Reich. Indeed, the idea of how best to create a monument to the atrocities of this dark period is a contested one. It prompts questions such as: What form should such a memorial take? Whose and what memories should it reflect or prompt? If it is meant to help a collective group of people work through a traumatic history, who is the monument for? Whose wounds are to be healed and who is to be absolved of their crimes? How might one read *7000 Oaks* as a monument that is about mourning strives for healing, while at the same time resist the framing Beuys constructed for himself as a messianic figure who might "save" German culture? If Theodor Adorno's dictum that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" is a thought that cuts to the core of cultural production in post-War Germany, how might I use *7000 Oaks* to meditate upon what kind of poetry is now possible? Finally, in a moment when "object-based" art historical practices are frequently touted, I argue for a reading of *7000 Oaks* that perceives the massive earthwork as an instance of negative presentation. That is, it evokes that which is gone, invisible, erased from view. It asks viewers to listen for the silences, look for what is missing, and make associative leaps in order to do so. In Chapter 2, I argue that *7000 Oaks* makes repair and remediation possible, even if the scale at which change happens surpasses that of the human.

Chapter Three takes as its subject *Suspiria* by Stan Douglas, which was presented twenty years after *7000 Oaks*, during Documenta XI (2002). This video installation, the content of which Douglas extrapolated from the Grimms' fairy tales, and which he

mingled with inspiration from Dario Argento's horror movie *Suspiria*, was remixed in real time for documenta and connected two important sites in Kassel, the Fridericianum Museum, the main documenta exhibition site, and the Herkules Oktagon, which occupies the highest point in the town and serves as the city's emblem. Douglas's work, I argue, engages seriously with some of the ghosts that haunt Kassel, from the time of the Landgraves as well as the Grimms, and uses temporality in such a way that historically conventional economies of narrativity, vision, and power are interrupted and subverted. As such, they undermine the master narratives inherent in conventional histories, as well as, more specifically, the totalizing world view shared by the Grimms and the Nazis. In this artwork, Douglas employs the uncanny in order to resurrect forgotten histories and allow unquiet ghosts to intermingle with a continuously unfolding present, thus opening up space for us to not only remember uncomfortable truths but to experiment with new, cyborgean forms of storytelling so that we might imagine possible new futures.

Finally, Chapter Four looks to Mariam Ghani's *A Brief History of Collapses*, from dOCUMENTA (13) (2012). In this video installation, the artist brings side by side two disparate places and cultures with intertwined histories: Kassel, Germany and Kabul, Afghanistan. Throughout her work she tells the story of two buildings that suffered physical collapses in each of these towns and the folk- and fairy tale traditions that are indigenous to their locales. In doing so, Ghani collapses the histories of these places onto each other, and shows the parallels between cities that at first glance seem divided by distance, language, culture, political and ideological conflict. I argue that in doing so, she not only refutes the ethnocentric utility of fairy tales that the Brothers Grimm endeavored to establish, but that she uses the tools of fairy tales to transcend the particularities of

language and place so that two different histories might be used to help read and understand each other. As such, viewers might employ Chus Martínez's concept of "the maybe" (that is, "what is the reverse of the known?") and what I call fairy tale time (an enchanted kind of time full of switchbacks and repetitions - an approach to time that bends according to the storyteller's tale) in order to imagine possible futures that include peace and reconciliation after periods of extreme violence and brutality, with the intent to develop radical empathy with not only remote locations but objects themselves. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, the creative director of dOCUMENTA (13), understands Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* (and by extension, Benjamin's Angel of History) to function as a "painting traumatized by the forward rush of progress and of war," and asked "What would the traumatized subject 'think' if that subject were an artwork or a cultural artifact? What does an object feel when it is attacked or destroyed or ignored or misunderstood, or even misplaced?"[28] In this chapter I think through some of the ways in which objects from Kassel and Kabul, which were attacked and destroyed, think and what they whisper. Throughout this work, Ghani demonstrates through her imaginative storytelling how the histories of the two cities of Kabul and Kassel have been intertwined for over a century, and throughout this chapter I use the image of the book, a recurring motif of documenta, to continue the story she began to tell. Not only does Ghani's two-channel video installation, which she presents at an open obtuse angle, physically resemble an open book, but it evokes as part of its formal and thematic conception the stories of and within books – books that have been and will yet be written and perhaps burnt, stolen and perhaps reconceived by artists as palimpsests. These palimpsests are

[28] Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, "On the Destruction of Art – or Conflict and Art, or Trauma and the Art of Healing," in *dOCUMENTA (13) Catalog 1/3, The Book of Books 1/3*. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 283.

overlapping stories in which the histories of occupation, violence, and bloodshed are etched; and yet, there remains the possibility that poetry may rise to the surface from the rubble, scrawled in the most unlikely of places.

My fairy tale work in this dissertation does not directly summon knights, magic beans, and hedgehog boys, or tell the tales of heroes' derring-do. Rather, I tease magic out of more mundane places: trees, stones, bat-infested towers, cobwebbed corners, and bombed out buildings. As such, the artworks I examine reflect my concern with the things that documenta and fairy tales share conceptually: the heroes of history and the underdogs who challenge their enshrined status, historical ghosts that refuse to be silent, objects whose metamorphosis in meaning and connotation might lead to greater insight and truth, and the enchanted books in which stories and histories inform and transform each other.

Also, ich werde Ihnen eine Geschichte erzählen.

Chapter 1

The Spider and Her Web

The spider leaves a trail of gossamer behind her as she crawls surreptitiously in the corner of the room. The thread from her spinnerets is supple and strong and she uses it to build a house that is also a trap, a pocket or a cage of which she is the architect, guardian, inhabitant, and executioner. The spider may use her silk to build webs (she may choose from a repertoire of orb webs, funnel webs, flat sheet-like webs, and tangled, complex cobwebs), and she may also use her silk as a safety rope, or to wrap up her fertilized eggs in a sac, like a chrysalis. Susan Stewart describes the spider as "perhaps the most domestic of insects, making her own home within a home," as the eight-legged creature frequently builds her domicile in secluded attic rafters and corners of underused basements.[29] Mieke Bal understands the insect to be a "still life coming to life," observing that frequently spiders remain motionless for hours until suddenly they skitter to life, making us jump.[30] Spiders are both domestic and mythological, creatures that feature prominently, albeit ambiguously, in Western culture and imaginations. They are mothers whose sacs teem with eggs, endearing tricksters from fables, and black widows who devour patriarchal schemas. While prized as industrious and tidy spinners, spiders are simultaneously frequently feared, reviled, and maligned, creeping quietly and ominously in the corners of our minds.

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[29] Susan Stewart, *On Longing* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 41.

[30] Bal, *Louise Bourgeois'* Spider, 55.

Spiders appear in mythology dating back millennia. Among the ancient Sumerians, Uttu was the spider goddess of weaving. Similar to the later titular character from "Furrypelts," whose story the Grimms chronicled, Uttu was the object of her divine father's incestuous advances. While Furrypelts concealed herself in a cloak made of a thousand scraps of fur pelts to evade her father's advances of marriage after the death of her mother, Uttu spun a web for herself, into which she retreated for safety away from her father, Enki. However, poor Uttu's attempts at retreat were not as successful as Furrypelts'. Enki lured her out of her web through trickery, intoxicated her with alcohol, and ultimately raped her. Enki's wife Ninhursag, the goddess of fertility, came to Uttu's aid but she could not prevent her step-daughter's violation. The best Ninhursag could do to remediate the cruel situation Uttu found herself in was to remove Enki's semen from Uttu's body and bury it in the ground; from this sprung eight previously unknown plants. Ninhursag was a complex maternal figure for Uttu, as, according to Sumerian mythology, after Ninhursag and Enki had their first daughter, Enki raped that daughter, who then gave birth to a girl. Each subsequent daughter born was violated by Enki; she gave birth to another daughter who, following a cyclical pattern of abuse, was ultimately raped by her father. As such, Ninhursag was an ur-mother to generations of daughters born of rape and incest.

Another myth with a central spidery woman comes from Ovid. According to Greek mythology, Arachne was a young Lydian master weaver. So confident was the maiden in her skill that she challenged a disguised Athena, the patron goddess of weaving, to a competition. For her competition tapestry, Pallas Athena chose to weave scenes of the Olympian gods' magnificence, power, and their punishments of mortals,

while Arachne countered this narrative by depicting the loves of the gods, choosing as her first scene a depiction of the Rape of Europa. Arachne produced a textile so skillful that the goddess could find no fault in it, and so Athena, in a rage over the mortal's hubris, destroyed Arachne's tapestry and struck her over the head repeatedly with a wooden shuttle. Arachne was so distraught and terrified by Athena's punishment that she hanged herself. In a quasi-merciful gesture, Athena resuscitated her rival, but transformed her into a spider and in doing so doomed Arachne and her progeny to hang forever from a thread. According to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,

> The poor wretch,
> Unable to endure it, bravely placed
> A noose around her neck; but, as she hung,
> Pallas in pity raised her. 'Live!' she said,
> 'Yes, live but hang, you wicked girl, and know
> You'll rue the future too: the penalty
> Your kin shall pay to all posterity!'
> And as she turned to go, she sprinkled her
> With drugs of Hecate, and in a trice,
> Touched by the bitter lotion, all her hair
> Falls off and with it go her nose and ears.
> Her head shrinks tiny; her whole body's small;
> Instead of legs slim fingers line her sides.
> The rest is belly; yet from that she sends
> A fine-spun thread and, as a spider, still
> Weaving her web, pursues her former skill.[31]

In the latter half of the twentieth century, Louise Bourgeois adopted the spider as a powerful motif in her art – a character who is no stranger to conflicted, anguished family relationships and narratives that cannot resolve peacefully. Her spider is a

[31] Ovid, "Arachne," in *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 125.

maternal character, one that is massive and looming, simultaneously protective and threatening, and invested deeply in the processes of creation, destruction, and repair (fig. 1.1). As I read it, this spider is also a maternal storyteller like Mother Goose, Dorothea Viehmann, and innumerable unnamed storytellers from history, who spins yarns and from them narrative webs, in an effort to alleviate the pains of labor and remembering. Maria Tatar reminds us that in a fairy tale context, not only are the tellers of tales frequently spinners, but within the stories, the activities of "spinning, weaving, and sewing… appear to have the power to turn animals into men and to domesticate the most ferocious beasts."[32] Spinning has a transformational and performative power, and in this chapter I will use Louise Bourgeois's spiders as figures that might pick their way through histories that feel wild, unwieldly, and beastly, those stories which threaten to fly apart at the seams or are in need of mending. Moreover, I will use the figure of the maternal spider as a device that proffers an alternative pattern of history writing. That is, rather than following a linear narrative, she weaves a web that is circular and supple, conforms to corners and bends to accommodate contours, and in doing so, her form of history making folds in on itself. Throughout this chapter, I am indebted to Mieke Bal, who in her extended meditation upon Louise Bourgeois's *Spider* (which is conveniently also the title of her book), articulates brilliantly the difference between narrative artworks (or theoretical objects, as she calls them) that are based upon anterior stories and those that bring narrativity into being through the *Jetztzeit* of encounter. I not only lean on her insights into the sculpture-installation-building *Spider*, but transpose her ideas to the

[32] Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, expanded edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press [1987] 2019), 115.

broader event, history, and space of documenta in order to articulate a method of art historical writing that is an alternative to conventional oedipal models. In this chapter, I tell a story that by now has been told many times – that of the first documenta and its relationship to *Entartete Kunst* (or rather, the two stories have been told many times, although not always together). However, I tell it slightly differently, in that I crawl over it with Bourgeois's spiders and package it up in a new form. In this new form, documenta becomes not a show that is based upon oedipal power struggles in which a previous generation of artists is superseded by a new generation of (overwhelmingly male, white, upper middle-class, Protestant) artists, but rather the show transforms into a repetitive event that is based upon historical revenants, anachronism, and returns. It freely and joyfully recycles stories and adapts them to the present moment rather than pursuing newness relentlessly. Finally, in this chapter I retell the story of documenta and fairy tales in Kassel and unpack why these two tales have not been told together. The reason for this is in part, I argue, because of the ways in which fairy tales were used toward political ends in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and, relatedly, because of the potential fairy tales have for promoting nationalist and hegemonic ideologies. However, I will demonstrate over the course of this chapter that fairy tales, like a pliable spider web, or perhaps like fur slipper, may also be hollowed out, enfolded, or turned inside out in such a way that they might subvert hegemonic and patriarchal narratives.

This chapter is anchored, like the triangular framing thread that connects the basic points of a web, to the spidery artist Louise Bourgeois (an erstwhile ghostly woman of documenta), fairy tales and mythology, and documenta alongside its precedent, *Entartete Kunst*. It uses Bourgeois's retrospective show at documenta IX (1992) and her cellular

structure *Precious Liquids* to think through the ways in which historical repairs and repetitions are central to the foundational logic of the event by creating a web-like constellation that sutures historical nodes together with a tough yet supple sticky thread (sometimes fluffy like a ball of yarn, sometimes shining like silver). Additionally, this chapter uses the metaphor of the spider's web and, relatedly, spinning -- common fairy tale tropes -- and Walter Benjamin's concept of the historiographical constellation to bring back together historical ruptures, erasures, and omissions. I spend considerable time in this chapter thinking about Arnold Bode's first documenta in 1955 and the way in which that show implicitly attempted to repair the cultural injuries inflicted by the 1937 art exhibition, *Entartete Kunst* ("Degenerate Art"), which was part of a broader effort by the National Socialists to purge Germany culturally. While Arnold Bode meant for the first documenta to revitalize artworks and artists forbidden previously and denigrated by the Nazi party, the story it told and the drama it staged was only a partial history, one whose omissions included women and artists who came from non-dominant religious, ideological, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as those whose politics did not conform with mainstream, centrist, German political and cultural norms. The art historical model promoted by Bode was conventional in that it promoted a family tree of reigning artists who assumed their spots as "artists of the twentieth century" via a paternal lineage through the modernist family tree, and were legitimated by their oedipal overthrow of the directly preceding generation of artists who purged modernist *avant garde* values in favor of fascism.

As I will demonstrate throughout this chapter, the stories told in Kassel, the webs of tales spun about documenta, the particular fairy tale history in Kassel, and the

mythology told about the visual art displayed there have molded the narrative in Germany about who and what constitutes German culture broadly, and how that is projected internationally. Following Walter Grasskamp's insightful critique of documenta 1, I reaffirm not only that the artistic representation documenta promoted at its inception and in its first decades was disproportionately male, Protestant, and politically centrist or purportedly neutral, but that it failed adequately to acknowledge the transformational and monstrous qualities of contemporary art against which Nazi propagandists campaigned. Moreover, Germany's contentious relationship with the Grimms' fairy tales throughout the twentieth century, and a tendency to politicize the stories toward nationalistic purposes, have in large part prevented scholars from reading documenta and fairy tales together. The skewed and partial representation of artists, politics, and themes remained one of the invisible, ghostly, yet defining characteristics of documenta through roughly 1972, when directors such as Harald Szeemann began to attempt to repair this original framing, a framing that largely excluded the representation of women, German Jews, those whose politics were overt and left-leaning, and artistic styles associated with the Eastern Bloc. (Although, it should be noted, I do not mean to frame Szeemann as an overly heroic figure, or even a central character to my story, even if he made innovative strides toward reshaping documenta.) Louise Bourgeois, one artist whose work was belatedly recuperated and celebrated at documenta, serves as my anchoring example of an artist whose work sutures past and present in a Benjaminian constellation. Her work is an example of that which was excluded and excised from history, only belatedly to have been invited into the fold, and it acknowledges trauma and attempts to repair what may be restored with her spidery storytelling web, while simultaneously acknowledging those

wounds that need to stay open. Significantly, as we shall see, Bourgeois only gained access to documenta after the narrative she promoted about herself — the kind of autobiographical yarn she spun — was in alignment with the brand of storytelling and historiography that surrounded the event of documenta. That is, her own personal fairy tale or mythology, which reinforced the Freudian narrative structure of family romances, repression, and potential sublimation, echoed the stories that later directors of documenta wished to tell about the history of documenta itself, including oedipal succession.

Maman

In 1992, documenta IX featured a retrospective of Louise Bourgeois's artwork. The artist, who was in her early eighties at the time, had had her first solo show in 1945, although she did not emerge into prominence as an artist until the early 1980s when, as critics noted, she could have been the grandmother to many of her peers in shows.[33] She may be understood as one of Vesna Madzoski's "ghostly mothers," a matriarchal artist whose work, like many other women of her generation (Anni Albers, Lee Krasner, and Elaine de Kooning, for example), was conspicuously absent from representation in major art exhibitions, an artist who was not only a mother herself and made work that referenced her own mother, but depicted women as mothers as homes – *femme maisons*, female figures seemingly turned inside out, transformed into houses, their architectural bodies homes in which memories might be secreted away like spiders who live in corners and basements (fig. 1.2). Frequently, as in the case of Bourgeois, these ghostly women of

[33] See Frances Morris, "I Do, I Undo, I Redo," in *Louise Bourgeois*, ed. Frances Morris (New York: Rizzoli, 2007), 11.

art history were eclipsed by their husbands or male partners and did not emerge into canonical prominence until late in life. (Bourgeois, who emigrated from France to New York City in 1938, was married to the prominent American art historian Robert Goldwater for thirty-seven years, an art historian, it should be noted, who never wrote about the artistic prowess of his prolific wife). Also like many ghostly mothers, Bourgeois's artwork was recuperated institutionally and reclaimed belatedly when she was well into "retirement age," and art historians and critics debate how exactly her oeuvre fits within the broader canon of twentieth century artists. Her retrospective at documenta IX came a decade after a show in New York changed the way in which her story was told within the history of contemporary art.

It was during Louise Bourgeois's retrospective show at MoMA in 1982, the first such large show the institution gave to a woman, that the discourse surrounding her work shifted, which was in large part the result of a shift in the way Bourgeois framed her life story publicly and interacted with those who wrote about her. Joan Acocella writes that,

> On the occasion of the retrospective, Bourgeois did something that has affected her career ever since. Before, no matter how unbuttoned her work, she tended to give reticent interviews…. Then, with the MoMA retrospective, the lid blew off. In putting together an autobiographical slide show to accompany that exhibition – and a photo essay, based on the slide show, that was published in *Artforum* – she told a story she had never gone public with before…. If Bourgeois, earlier, had been almost perversely tight-lipped, now she became almost perversely confessional.[34]

Bourgeois told the story of her family and her traumatic childhood while growing up in France, a story that bears similarities with many fairy tales of slighted children: born the

[34] Joan Acocella, "The Spider's Web," *New Yorker*, Feb 4, 2002, Vol. 77(46), p. 72(5), 73.

third daughter in her family, Louise was named after her father, Louis, which was an attempt on the part of her mother to garner paternal affection for another baby not born a boy. Her father, though, was a proud, egotistical man who philandered with a "false mother" (not a step-mother, but a governess); nevertheless, Louise loved him intensely and wished desperately to please him. For a decade during Louise's childhood, the father had an affair with the family's English governess, which according to the artist, her mother tolerated. This domestic situation, in which Louise felt betrayed and abandoned by all three parental figures (her natural parents and the step-mother of sorts), according to her, was the original traumatic condition that led to much of her subsequent artistic work, which explores the politics of the home, gender, memory, and a troubled childhood. Robert Storr described Bourgeois's obsession with the family romances of her childhood as the basis of a kind of creation myth for the artist's work, which subsequently "restrict[ed] interpretations to narrowly personal or archetypally Freudian sources."[35] Other artists, such as Kiki Smith and Louise Neri, perceived Bourgeois's story (which, as we will see later in Chapter 2, bears certain similarities in its mythological content to Joseph Beuys's "Story") as a kind of drama or personal theater. I too am interested in Bourgeois's story, but less for the personal insights it may reveal about her than for the way in which her autobiographical narrative itself is compatible with the historiographies of documenta, the kind of theatrical drama that has unfolded at that event, and the Grimms' fairy tales. That is, she tells a story that is compelling and satisfying in the Freudian dramas that unfold in its telling, in that she proffers a tale in which a neglected child, slighted and abused by a patriarchal system, comes back as a

[35] Ibid.

grandmother to create a powerful yet ominous maternal figure/alter ego that may help to weave a creative new course for the future, one in which daydreams about rescuing forgotten children and creating new social orders might come true. This story, which is reliant upon biographical and psychoanalytic readings of her artwork and is compatible with conventional historiographies of not only documenta but of modern and contemporary art in general, is at odds with a different model that I would like to apply. That is, according to Bal's formulation, the former model relies upon an anterior narrative to interpret her artwork (we can refer her artwork to her childhood history or to family romances), whereas I will base my reading of her work, and the lessons it teaches, upon the way in which it activates the present, and begs active engagement as a theoretical object, as I will explain more thoroughly over the course of this chapter.

The basic elements of Louise Bourgeois's life are now well known and often told in relationship to her work. She grew up in France to a family of prosperous artisans who were antique textile restorers. Like a spider fixing ruptures in her web, the elder Maman Bourgeois spliced threads, interwove carefully matched colors and textures, and labored to make old fabrics as good as new. While a child, Louise helped in her mother's workshop by drawing cartoons for tapestries undergoing repair, some of which were censored for prudish American collectors. Later in life, she recalled rather pruriently that her mother "would cut out the genitalia, very delicately, with little scissors, and collect them."[36] One imagines an antique dresser drawer full of tiny woven penises from putti, frayed threads sticking out from the patches like underdeveloped appendages.

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[36] Ibid.

Beginning in the early 1990s, Bourgeois crawled back to a motif she had first explored in 1947, the spider.[37] She replicated it on a modest scale in watercolor paintings and then on a grand scale in massive bronze and steel sculptures. Spiders that sat ensconced inside picture frames on a wall grew magically in proportion to sculptures that took up entire rooms, and finally grew to *Maman*, the mother of all spiders, which is thirty feet tall (fig. 1.3). *Maman* inhabited the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern during the museum's opening in 2000, and subsequently has perched on its tiptoes in front of art centers such as the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, and Kunsthalle Hamburg. Those visitors who stand nearby or underneath it may gaze up at *Maman*'s attenuated, knobby legs to where they join at her bulbous body. At the base of her bronze abdomen is a steel mesh sac that contains thirty-two smooth marble eggs, polished orbs like other magical eggs from fairy tales, which may erupt into the birth of millions of magical progeny – daughters who one day may file out of *Maman* and crawl down her spindly legs and go on to weave webs of their own (fig. 1.4).

The spiders that would crawl all over Bourgeois's artwork in the 1990s were still maturing in their egg sacs when the artist participated in documenta IX, though. The work for which she was best remembered at the show was *Precious Liquids* (1992), a large installation the size of a bedroom, the exterior of which was made of a cedar wood water tower, like that which might be found perched on the rooftops of her home in New York City (fig. 1.5). One could peer through an open sliding door into this circular room (a bit like a fairy tale turret) to see what the interior contained: a cast-iron bed; multi-

[37] "An A-Z of writings by, on and about the work of Louise Bourgeois," *Louise Bourgeois*, edited by Frances Morris (New York: Rizzoli, 2007), 279.

armed retort stands whose spiraling limbs supported glass vessels, hollow and clear, in the shape of orbs and curvaceous women's bodies; a large man's suit hung upright on a hanger that also enclosed a girl's dress; two large rubber spheres, like a pair of testicles at the base of the vertically aligned suit; and a cushion embroidered with the words "*Merci-Mercy*" (fig. 1.6)[38] Vincent Honoré describes the enclosure as "a psychic space full of transitions, echoes and confrontations. The forms and materials match while the motifs contrast with and complete one another: wood and steel, glass and cloth, verticality and horizontality, masculine and feminine, absence and presence, and so on."[39] The twin bed flanked by towers of glass vessels beckons one to come lie in it, to siphon her dreams into the bottles, yet she is prevented from doing so, as the museum cordoned off the door into the space. The circular room, with its door on tracks poised open and vertically-oriented cedar slats, recalls Bourgeois's later cells, metal cages containing curios, which were semi-transparent, intimate rooms stuffed with found and made objects that tell narratives – possibly about the artist's life, although she gives no key with which to decode them. These cells may be the building blocks of life and memory – cellular, meant for replication and building, and also for data storage – and they may be cells for incarceration or vehicles of contamination and disease. Polysemic, the cells are, as Bal describes them, "houses of the mind, sheltering and facilitating the childhood memories they obviously house. The huge spider brings in its wake the small child who first saw

[38] Ibid, 220.

[39] Ibid.

it."[40] The glass bodies within *Precious Liquids* become a kind of cell within a cell, just as *Precious Liquids* was a container within the larger container of the Fridericianum.

Bourgeois's cells, as Mieke Bal has pointed out, are difficult to categorize –- are they sculpture, architecture, or installations, or a hybrid of the three? In *Louise Bourgeois'* Spider, she argues that "the mediating term that glues experimental sculpture to the threshold of architecture in Bourgeois' work is 'narrative.'… Narrative is a function of Bourgeois' architecture because, uniquely, she infuses form – including the form that informs her work's architecturality – with memory."[41] Because Bourgeois's cells deal with narrative, by extension they also involve temporality. The narratives contained within Bourgeois's work, however, are hard to read; while they are personal, they seem to overflow the bounds of one person's individual history, they resist figurative readings, and do not refer to an anterior story or narrative.[42] Nevertheless, this intermediate space between sculpture and architecture is uniquely productive, according to Bal. She writes, "where these two domains of incompatible scale, volume, and density bounce back on each other, narrative becomes a tool, not a meaning; a mediator, not a solution; a participant, not an outsider."[43] While I will think through the relationship between architecturality and narrativity in greater nuance in Chapter 4 in regard to Mariam Ghani's *A Brief History of Collapses*, in this chapter too, I explore the relationship between artworks that appear static but in actuality are related to temporality,

[40] Bal, *Louise Bourgeois'* Spider, 38.

[41] Ibid, 2.

[42] Ibid, 2-3.

[43] Ibid, 3.

and the narrativity and dramas that unfold around these objects. Furthermore, I demonstrate that the Fridericianum Museum, like *Precious Liquids* or *Spider*, may be read as a theoretical object, and may act as a tool, when engaged with in the *Jetztzeit*, that hollows out history, and in the words of Bal, "builds a home for old stories in the *now*."[44]

Spider (1997, fig. 1.7), which is the focus of Bal's book, is a hybrid between cells like *Precious Liquids* and Bourgeois's larger-than-life spiders: in this work, a leggy arachnid is poised atop a round cell that contains multiple relics, as though the spider is both guarding and host to a chamber of memories. She protects her container, which, delimited by a circular woven steel mesh cage, plays between interiority and exteriority, and exposes a private history composed of domestic objects while simultaneously warding off and protecting those who would come too close. *Spider* is doubly architectural, although as Bal notes, Bourgeois's series of spiders do not immediately appear to be a built environment, as the cells do. Nevertheless, she writes,

> Yet through the narrativity that inheres to their figurativity and their appeal to mood, they invoke the home, which is where the memories of spiders belong and where little children spin their dreams out of spiders and their webs, webs that catch and enfold whatever comes their way. Moreover, the legs of spiders, blown up on a Bourgeoisian scale, are sturdy columns, supporting the weight of the body and its descendants. Through sheer aggrandizement, they become the skeleton of a house.[45]

Like *Precious Liquids*, the cage that extends from the abdomen of *Spider* has a door that is ajar, which beckons a viewer toward a throne-like chair in the center of the cell, which is not dissimilar in its position and function to the bed in *Precious Liquids*. The chair is

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[44] Ibid, 34.

[45] Ibid, 6.

covered with a faded antique tapestry, the edges of which are frayed, and other scraps of tapestries hang from the sides of the woven frame (one of the textiles is a fragmented woman who reaches up to pull a length of *trompe l'oeil* curtain, while another is a putto whose genitals were cut out, as if it had come straight from the workshop of Maman Bourgeois). *Spider* also contains relics that evoke childhood and memory, such as bones, two of which are round, the marrow hollowed out, and are attached to the steel frame like a playful pair of improvised binoculars; a locket hangs from a chain; similarly, a grandfather's pocket watch hangs from the ceiling; a Guerlain Shalimar perfume bottle, stoppered with a cobalt blue plug and body tapering like a corseted torso (the kind of perfume my own grandmother used to wear on special occasions, and which now my mother wears), dangles from a cord; three glass cupping jars, which when heated may be used to extract toxins from the body, rest upside down on metal pegs; and a key dangles uselessly from the ceiling (a key to what lock? How might one use the key to unlock the memories and secrets that *Spider* protects?). *Spider* activates the senses – smell, vision, touch, and transports one into a space of yesteryear, although the stories this space contains are not clear. Above the chair in the middle of the mesh "roof," which is also the spider's underbelly, in a space that is forbidden for museum-goers to enter, yet nevertheless the place in which one is invited to sit, is a basket that contains glass eggs, similar to those in *Maman*'s protruding belly, these orbs partially covered with nylon stockings. The basket part of *Spider*'s body protrudes down into ceiling of the cellular cage she protects, and "the spider's legs converge," Mieke Bal describes, "to form a constellation."[46] This convergence is not merely a groin vault made literal but is a space

[46] Ibid, 25.

that functions like Benjaminian constellation, and is an area that productively confounds interiority and exteriority, folds in on itself and balloons out in a way that, I argue, mimics the enfolded temporality that Bourgeois's work can offer.

In 1940, Walter Benjamin wrote his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," and in one thesis describes his concept of the historical constellation. Departing from an historical model in which the historian works in a strictly linear chronological fashion (a model of history that, as he describes in a different thesis, sets up history to valorize the murderous, plundering victors of history), Benjamin describes a materialist historian who "grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one."[47] This historical constellation is not a site of "homogeneous, empty time," but rather is "filled with the presence of the now (*Jetztzeit*)."[48] That is, the historical object of inquiry is bound up with the historical presence of the now from which the historian writes, creating a kind of temporal web that links past with present. The constellation of legs at the center of Bourgeois's *Spider* is, I posit, not just the epicenter of the work, or a convergence that mimics the radiating shape of an orb web, but also a Benjaminian constellation that is injected with both the past and a *Jetztzeit*, the moment of encounter. For my purposes, this constellation ties together *Spider* and *Precious Liquids*, the architectural sculptures (or sculptural architecture) of Bourgeois's creation and her creations in Kassel, and finally, more conceptually, it enfolds Bourgeois's overdue presence at documenta and the belated attempts of repair at multiple instantiations of the exhibition. Similarly, I understand the first documenta as bound up intimately with

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[47] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in Illumination, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 263.

[48] Ibid, 261.

previous historical moments such as *Entartete Kunst* in 1937, as well as my own historical moment. No iteration of documenta exists within "homogeneous, empty time," which stretches infinitely forwards and backwards, but rather the exhibition takes place as a recurrent event like a holiday that occurs every five years, and which is part of a very particular calendar. In his summary of Benjamin's objectives, Michael Rothberg writes that the German theorist, in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History,"

> [S]eeks to expose and replace the concept of history and time underlying the ideology of progress, an ideology that had failed to predict or combat the forces of Nazism. Benjamin traces this failure to modernity's consciousness of time and argues that the culpable Enlightenment belief in the 'irresistible' course of the 'infinite perfectibility of mankind… cannot be sundered from the concept of [mankind's] progression through a homogenous, empty time.' The harnessing together of different moments of time in a constellation challenges not just the 'progressive' narrative form of modern history, but also its originating gesture.[49]

So too do I wish to remove my story of documenta from a methodology based upon homogenous, empty time. While I will tell a story in which there are attempts to repair or work through historiographical traumas, I do not tell it with a belief in humankind's "infinite perfectibility," nor do I believe that a progressive historical course is "irresistible." Rather, the story that I tell is riddled with repetitions, like the hands of a clock arriving at the same number over and over, or the spirals of a web; it is full of cultural regressions, backslidings, and collapses, but also hope for ways in which to imagine new possible futures. By bringing together disparate historical moments in writing, historical constellations might, to use Rothberg's words, "bear witness to the traumatic legacies of modern historical extremity. *For better or worse, the expectation of*

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[49] Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 10.

revolution has given way to the more modest, if still elusive, goal of working through – instead of repetitively acting out – the traumas of the past [my italics]."[50] It is by recognizing historical repetitions, the skips in the record, as it were, that it is possible to work within a repetitive structure to make new choices, open spaces to begin to rectify historiographical omissions and injuries, and trace paths for new possible futures. By bringing together multiple temporalities and foraging in (re)construction sites, palimpsests, collapses, ruins, and haunted spaces, I wish to engage in a historiography that, in the words on Benjamin, attempts to "blast out of the continuum of history" and in the rubble, excavate for the stones with which we might construct new histories.[51]

Within this framework, the Museum Fridericianum, the main exhibition venue of documenta, like *Precious Liquids* and *Spider*, also becomes a kind of "house of the mind," a theoretical object that enfolds a history that resists homogenous empty time (and a house that was used to house Bourgeois's cellular house). I turn to Mieke Bal once again as she describes *Spider*, yet in her description also seems to be crawling along the walls of the Fridericianum or tucking herself into the folds of the sheets of the bed in *Precious Liquids*. She writes, "For topology destroys linearity by making embedding, not sequence, a principle of narrative time: embedding – an enfolding of one thing within another, a body within a house…. This is not simply a move away from narrative to architecture, but the invention of an architecture that encompasses the very material out of which it also consists: sculpture, bodiliness, narrative."[52] The Fridericianum, as we

[50] Ibid, 11.

[51] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 261.

[52] Bal, *Louise Bourgeois'* Spider, 44.

will see both in this chapter and in Chapter 4, sculpturally enfolds narrativity within its walls. Like flour folded gently into beaten eggs while making madeleines, like a piece of paper folded such that words and images smudge onto opposite sides, like a furry slipper that is also a pocket, like a spider within an egg within a cell within a spider, or a memory within a glass body within a wooden cell within a museum, the Fridericianum itself (and the stories contained within it) functions like Bourgeois's cells. It is a house of the mind, and just as a web may be a home, a trap, a pocket, a cell, an exteriorization of that which was previously interior, a turning inside-out, it is a body not unlike the *Femme Maison*, and it can be used to slyly subversive ends.

The Rape of Europa

In roughly 1657, Diego Velázquez depicted the famous competition between Arachne and Athena, described at the beginning of this chapter, in *The Spinners, or, The Fable of Arachne* (fig. 1.8). The painting depicts two different stories simultaneously, and in a contemporaneous setting. In the foreground, two women sit surrounded by the tools of spinning, in preparation for their later weaving. Lush reddish-purple curtains, skirts, and blouses evoke the royal Tyrian purple for which Arachne was famed for dying. A young woman, who is seated on the right side in a simple white blouse, has her hair plaited in a loop at the back of her head and fixes threads onto a circular wooden frame, both shapes evocative of the orb webs Arachne spun from delicate fibers after her metamorphosis into a spider. An older woman is seated in simple, dark garb to the left at a spinning wheel, her bare foot on the treadle; a white head covering encircles her face and neck as she twists around and leans toward an assistant. In the background of the painting, in a groin vaulted alcove, two actors play out a scene in front of a woven

backdrop. The woman on the left is wearing armor and a helmet and raising her hand as if to strike the other actor; three fashionable ladies in contemporary dress encircle the dramatic scene and watch it unfold. The backdrop behind the group is mostly blue sky and flying putti, but a keen eye may notice that Velázquez here is quoting Titian's *Rape of Europa*, painted a century earlier, an image that sets the stage for the fable of Arachne, when she wove this scene from the loves of the gods for the tapestry competition.

While the standard interpretation of *The Spinners* in the nineteenth century, in accordance with the image of Velázquez as a realist painter, was that it simply was a depiction of a tapestry workshop, since the 1930s most art historians have argued for a mythological reading of the painting.[53] Specifically, the dramatic action in the alcove between the armored woman (likely Pallas Athena, based upon her costume) and the white bloused woman (a protesting Arachne), against the backdrop of a depiction of the Rape of Europa (only recognizable if one is familiar with Titian's painting), along with an inventory from 1664 that listed a painting by the title *La Fábula de Aracne*, have served as evidence to support the mythological reading of the work, which is in accordance with the artist's well-known penchant for creating works whose comprehension requires a broad knowledge of the liberal arts. The humble workers in the foreground, barefooted and industrious, might be understood not only to be workers in a tapestry workshop, but women telling stories as they work, and in doing so, could be in the process of metamorphosing imaginatively into the characters who act out the fable in the background, as did women who historically spun both fibers and stories. If one

[53] Javier Portús, "Connecting Threads: Meninas, Spinners, and a Musical Fable," in *Velázquez's Fables*, ed. Javier Portús (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2007), 284.

subscribes to my imaginative reading of *The Spinners*, then perhaps while telling tales in the workshop, the old woman's head scarf turns into Athena's helmet. The young woman who is precocious and proud has jealous peers who seek to undermine her and so sabotage her work. Slighted, she feels like Arachne and sympathizes with those mortals who were unnecessarily targeted for abuse by the gods, simply for their skill or beauty. Meanwhile, the characters of Athena and Arachne in the background are in an ambiguous space, not unlike the spatially complex figural arrangement in Velázquez's other masterpiece, *Las Meninas* (1656). Because the base of Arachne's skirt falls at the same ground line as the tapestry, scholars have debated whether the mythological women are on a shallow stage in front of the backdrop or if they are woven components contained within the tapestry itself. Perhaps, for my purposes, however, this debate is moot, or the ambiguity of the painting is part of the fun, part of clever play, as, like in Louise Bourgeois's work, temporality and narrativity are both at work. Javier Portús notes that the spinning wheel in the foreground on the left may be an allusion to the story of Aristides, whom he describes as "a classical Greek painter who achieved the highest degree of illusionism through his ability to depict movement."[54] As the women spin wool, they simultaneously spin stories and weave delicate webs; a static tapestry may theatrically flicker into life on a shallow stage, or the background may be a reflection of the spinners' imaginations and storytelling. As in Bourgeois's work, so too does Velázquez's painting travel through time, inflame imaginations, bring fables to life, and tell a story of creation, iconoclasm, violence, and generational transformation.

[54] Ibid, 292.

In addition to being a scene quoted in *The Fable of Arachne* for savvy viewers to recognize and layer into their reading of Velázquez's painting, *The Rape of Europa* is also the title of Lynn Nicholas's 1994 book that carefully details the Nazi plunder of art from public and private collections within Germany, and later, throughout Europe. Nichola opens her book by detailing the infamous art auction at the Fischer Gallery in Lucerne, Switzerland in late June, 1939, when artworks stolen by the Nazis were put on sale. At that auction, great modernist artworks pillaged from major German art institutions – paintings by Van Gogh, Chagall, Kokoschka, Picasso, Gauguin, and Matisse, among scores of other beloved artists – were sold at bargain prices to a group of international buyers. It was well known at the time that the proceeds from the event went to pad Nazi coffers (deposited in pounds sterling in the party's bank accounts in London).

The art auction in Lucerne was only one symptom of a larger cultural battle that was waging in Germany, one that predated the 1939 sale significantly. Nicholas notes that Germany had a history of anti-modernist antipathy that dated back at least to the turn of the twentieth century. In 1893, Max Nordau stated that all modern art was "pathological" in his book *Entartung* (*Degeneracy*); in 1909, Kaiser Wilhelm fired Hugo von Tschudi from his position as director of the Nationalgalerie for purchasing Impressionist paintings; throughout the German press, newspaper articles referred to "the degeneracy of art" when describing the groundbreaking New York Armory Show of 1913, which included the work of Germans such as Wilhelm Lehmbruck.[55] (The term "degenerate," as I will unpack more fully later, assumed not only culturally retrograde but biological valences.)

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[55] Lynn Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 7.

Immediately after Hitler came to power, not only did smears on modern art increase, but the National Socialists instantiated a rigorous, systematic, and brutal bureaucratic system that effectively rooted out all sources of so-called "degenerate" art (although frequently, just what qualified as degenerate art was ambiguous and up for debate). On April 7, 1933, just three months after Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, a law passed that allowed any government official who did not please Nazi party officials to be removed from office. This group of governmentally-affiliated officials included museum directors and their staff, university professors, arts professionals teaching at art schools and academies, and city planners. In order to sell their work or be eligible for employment, all professionals in the arts and culture were required to be members of the *Reichskulturkammer* (Reich Chamber of Culture), under the control of Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment, and this umbrella organization regulated all cultural production. Jews and Communists, and later those whose artistic styles simply did not conform to Nazi guidelines, were not allowed to be members of the *Reichskulturkammer*.[56] In short order, artists, architects, writers, musicians, and art dealers were all subject to state surveillance and scrutiny; the Nazi party gave them the choice to either comply with state-directed cultural production or face blacklisting, unemployment, the inability to purchase art supplies, and, if they were found to be creating artwork when forbidden from doing so, potentially even deportation to concentration camps and execution. Otto Freundlich, for example, whose sculpture *The New Man* appeared on the cover of the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition catalog, was sent to a camp and murdered (fig. 1.9). In 1933 alone, Nazi officials fired over twenty museum

[56] Ibid, 9.

directors and curators from state institutions.[57] Over a period of just a few years in the late 1930s, the National Socialist party effectively silenced, censored, and outlawed an entire generation of German avant-garde artists in the country, and eliminated the ways in which their artwork, as well as that of the predecessors, could be seen and circulated in the country.[58] By contrast, the sanctioned art of the Third Reich, which Hitler praised as eternal and timeless, clear and harmonious, and promoted strongly, was unsurprisingly deeply anti-modernist. It tended to celebrate an imagined ideal Aryan body that was dynamic, powerful, and physically fit; it promoted wholesome, healthy familial bodies; and depicted nostalgic pastoral scenes of the German *Heimat*, or homeland, the literal space in which the ideology of "blood and soil" was grounded. That is, the art sanctioned by the Third Reich supported and often illustrated the nationalist slogan "*Blut und Boden*," which linked the bloodline of those who were deemed to have pure Nordic-Germanic ancestry with agrarian practices and the soil, literally depicting the roots of the German race. "True Germans" were depicted as products of and rooted in their ancestral homeland, in opposition to the so-called "wandering Jews," and German racial theorists ultimately tied the notion of "blood and soil" to the Nazi eugenics program.

In October 1933, Adolf Hitler laid the cornerstone of the *Haus der Deutschen Kunst* (The House of German Art), the first large, purpose-built work of Nazi architecture. In the heart of Munich, the town in which Hitler assumed his rise to power, this museum was to serve as his temple to German art and culture. Nestled at the foot of

[57] Stephanie Barron, "1937: Modern Art and Politics in Prewar Germany," in *"Degenerate Art": The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1991), 9.

[58] Ibid, 10.

Munich's grand *Englischer Garten*, the *Haus der Deutschen Kunst* was designed as a blocky, Greek-style temple, and was meant to evoke the grandeur of the classical patrimony to which the National Socialists claimed to be heir. (Local Bavarians took the monument slightly less seriously, calling it the *Bratwürstelgalerie*, because the colonnade resembled sausages hanging in a row at a butcher shop,[59] as well as the "Palazzo Kitschi" and the "Munich Art Terminal."[60]) Four years after its construction was begun, the *Haus der Deutschen Kunst* was the epicenter of what was to become an annual celebration of "Two Thousand Years of German Culture" during the Third Reich, the *Tag der Deutschen Kunst* (The Day of German Art). A massive parade snaked through the streets of Munich in July of 1937 for this event, in which the citizens who marched were dressed in their traditional, native costumes, as well as medievalesque tunics and armor, and classical togas. They sang anthems lauding the state and carried floats depicting Greek and Norse gods, huge golden Viking ships, and even a scale model of the newly opened *Haus der Deutschen Kunst*, much to the delight of Hitler and his cronies, as well as local crowds alike (fig. 1.10). The celebration culminated with an exhibition at the new museum, the *Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Great Exhibition of German Art), for which Hitler himself gave the opening address. According to Nicholas, in this speech, Hitler "forbade artists to use anything but the forms seen in nature in their paintings. Should they nevertheless be so stupid or sick as to continue their present ways, the medical establishment and criminal courts should put a stop to the fraud and corruption.

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[59] Peter Guenther, "Three Days in Munich, July 1937," in *"Degenerate Art": The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1991), 34.

[60] Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa*, 20.

'We will, from now on, lead an unrelenting war of purification,' he shrieked, 'an unrelenting war of extermination, against the last elements which have displaced our Art.'"[61] The foil to this celebration of Germanic heritage (a heritage that was, to say the least, very selective, and itself a kind of imaginative fairy tale) was the smear campaign and wildly popular show, *Entartete Kunst*.

Adolf Ziegler, the president of the *Reichskammer der bildenden Künste* (Reich Cabinet of Fine Arts) and Hitler's favorite artist, was the principal curator of both the *Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung* and *Entartete Kunst*, an appointment he received from Joseph Goebbels.[62] A mediocre painter of realistic nudes (known in local circles as "the Master of the Pubic Hair"), Ziegler nevertheless excelled at organizing the shows, and did so for the two 1937 exhibitions in record time.[63] Paintings and sculptures at the *Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung,* including several canvases by Ziegler himself, depicted hale, nude Teutonic beauties; saccharine domestic scenes with milk-faced, flaxen-haired children, as well as heroic nude sculptures (fig. 1.11). Any sense of the cynicism, depression, or *Neue Sachlichkeit* that had characterized much of Weimar-era avant garde artwork was not to be found in the heroic, nationalistic artwork lining the halls of the *Haus der Deutschen Kunst*. The artwork there was immediately legible and comprehensible to the German public, a populace that had been trained to be suspicious of abstraction and overly experimental artwork. Nevertheless, the *Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung* was not nearly as popular as *Entartete Kunst*, as the artwork displayed

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[61] Ibid.

[62] George L. Mosse, "Beauty without Sensuality," in *"Degenerate Art": The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1991), 29.

[63] Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa*, 16.

there was safely predictable and salacious only in the amount of nudity it contained.[64] Although the grand nationalist exhibition of art did not draw the same crowds as the show that purported to display degenerate art, the artworks displayed there eventually proved good for business and acted as a force-feeding taste maker: the *Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung* was but the first of eight annual, state-sponsored art exhibitions that the Nazis mounted, from 1937 to 1944. All of the paintings and sculptures at these events, which were intended to mold public taste and cultural policy, were for sale, and artists and patrons alike accommodated themselves to the reliability of the new art market.[65] While the first *Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung* had low sales and Hitler had to buy most of the artworks for the government, it nevertheless established an identifiable nationalist style and quashed deviations from it. Unsurprisingly, the artistic style advanced by the National Socialists was recognizable and bore strong similarities with the Socialist Realism mandated in the East. After the war, West Germans, including Arnold Bode, associated this realist genre that propped up the power of the state and her *Volk* with the Nazi past, the Soviet Union, and East Germany.

As noted previously, the overt goal of *Entartete Kunst* was to delegitimize abstract *avant garde* and modernist art by establishing a direct correlation between visual abstraction and moral, cultural, sexual, and physical "degeneracy." Nazi propagandists in the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition catalogue described these biological and moral "defects"

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[64] Peter Guenther, a young modern art enthusiast who visited both *Entartete Kunst* and the *Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung*, recalled in particular that the latter exhibition contained a gratuitous abundance of heroic nudes, which he found disturbing, and pastoral landscapes which he described as "quite removed from reality."
Peter Guenther, "Three Days in Munich," 35.

[65] Barron, "1937," 18.

as inherent to Jews, Bolsheviks, Blacks, homosexuals, the insane and mentally ill, whom they framed as all highly contagious groups of people that were poised to infect a genetically healthy, upright German populace. Indeed, the show conflated all of the previously mentioned "degenerate" types of people: their unifying feature was a common deviation from the Nazi Aryan ideal. The term "degenerate" in German was related to eugenic thought, and as Stephanie Barron points out, "*Entartet*, which has traditionally been translated as 'degenerate' or 'decadent,' is essentially a biological term, defining a plant or animal that has so changed that it no longer belongs to its species. By extension it refers to art that is unclassifiable or so far beyond the confines of what is accepted that it is in essence 'non-art.'"[66] Michael Blum expands upon this description, writing that

> The term [degenerate art] was a belligerent instrument used as much to designate as to diagnose and destroy. It didn't just condemn modernist formal experimentation; it was a totalizing emblem loaded with an assortment of judgments – moral, biological, political – that countersigned and cemented the larger ideological landscape of Nazi Germany. In the term's folds lurk considerations for eugenics, racial anthropology, military fitness among youth, and spiritual acquiescence to a Fascist, bucolic chauvinism.[67]

At a time when the Nazis were escalating their racist eugenic theory toward its genocidal endgame, *Entartete Kunst* was meant to demonstrate the ways in which a mongrel modern art would contaminate, degrade, and pollute their essentialist notion of German culture and the country's overall health. *Entartete Kunst* was thus a significant component in a campaign of cultural cleansing, or "cleaning house," as Hitler described it. It educated Germans, many of whom were not regular museum-goers and who had

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[66] Ibid, 11.

[67] Michael Blum, "The Many Lives of Degenerate Art," *Hyperallergic* (Aug 8, 2014), accessed March 21, 2019, https://hyperallergic.com/142518/the-many-lives-of-degenerate-art/.

very limited exposure to *avant garde* art, about what kind of art defied party-mandated aesthetics with startling efficiency. The goal of Ziegler and Goebbels as they organized the show was to discredit the cultural legacy of *avant garde* abstraction, and after tainting it very publicly, remove and ultimately erase it from both history and current practice by secreting away, selling, or destroying art objects and paralyzing professionally the people who made such work.

The popularity of *Entartete Kunst* was unparalleled in German history: upwards of 20,000 visitors a day thronged to it (roughly two million people visited the show in Munich), and when the original Munich show closed, *Entartete Kunst* traveled to several cities across Germany and Austria.[68] In Munich, visitors queued around the block in order to see "Degenerate Art," and the exhibition space was intentionally awkward to access. When they entered the building in which the show was housed (a storage space owned by the Institute of Archaeology in which plaster casts were housed previously), visitors were required to climb a narrow staircase to the building's upper floor and dodge physically a large, looming sculpture of a crucified Christ that partially obstructed the exhibition hall's entrance (figs. 1.12 and 1.13). The artworks shown at *Entartete Kunst*, which of course in any other context would have been forbidden, included over 650 paintings and sculptures by 113 artists, a fraction of the roughly sixteen thousand artworks confiscated and stolen by ministers and heads in the *Reichskulturkammer* (for their "protection," children were not allowed). At the exhibition, one could see works from a range of styles (Constructivist, Cubist, *der Blaue Reiter*, Dada, etc.) by artists such as Max Beckmann, Marc Chagall, Wassily Kandinsky, Oskar Kokoschka, Paul Klee,

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[68] Barron, "1937," 9.

Emil Nolde (ironically, a Nazi sympathizer), and Otto Dix, among many others. In some stops of the traveling show, the gallerists mounted paintings crudely and hung them deliberately crookedly on the walls alongside rude or ironic captions.[69] Additionally, the curators squished sculptures and paintings closely together in cramped spaces in order to instill a sense of claustrophobia in visitors.

One visitor to the show, who could have appeared in the photograph of the crowd waiting for entrance, was the seventeen-year-old Peter Guenther from Dresden, a young avant-garde art enthusiast and son of a curator. Decades after the event, he wrote about his experience attending the exhibition and recalled,

> I felt an overwhelming sense of claustrophobia [at *Entartete Kunst*]. The large number of people pushing and ridiculing and proclaiming their dislike for the works of art created the impression of a staged performance intended to promote an atmosphere of aggressiveness and anger…. It became increasingly clear to me that most people had come to see the exhibition with the intention of disliking everything.[70]

The way in which gallerists staged *Entartete Kunst* encouraged visitors' negative emotional reactions to the modern art on the walls, and the esoteric, angular, or anguished qualities of some pieces of art were used as self-evident proof for its own indictment.

The environment of the exhibition space encouraged spectators to consider *avant garde* art as a sham, a farce, and corruptible. The space presented an overwhelming quantity of artworks; emblazoned directly on the walls were quotes from Hitler's and Goebbels' speeches that castigated *avant garde* art, as well as self-incriminating

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[69] Photographic documentation shows that initially, the organizers hung the paintings at *Entartete Kunst* catawampus. However, soon after the opening they appear to have reconsidered that choice as too heavy-handed in its didacticism, as photographs of the exhibition later in its run show the paintings were later leveled.

[70] Peter Guenther, "Three Days in Munich, July 1937," 38.

statements from artists. Statements meant to frame sections of the show conceptually were written over entrances to the galleries and on the walls: "*Sie hatten vier Jahre Zeit*" or "They had four years" described those who did not comply with the cultural codes mandated in 1933 (fig. 1.14). In this room, Wilhelm Lehmbruck's elegantly attenuated Expressionist sculpture *Kneeling Woman* (1911), was displayed prominently. This work, although part of the New York Armory Show in 1913, which was an important exhibition that brought European modernism to the United States, was deemed "degenerate" twenty-four years later. (It is visible in the middle ground of a postcard, in a room with other nude statues rendered in different styles [fig. 1.15].) Another photograph from *Entartete Kunst* shows Hitler and some associates touring of the exhibition. Featured prominently in scrawling writing on the wall behind them is a quote by George Grosz, meant to be read ironically: "*Nehmen Sie Dada Ernst! Es lohnt sich*" ("Take Dada seriously! It's worth it.") (fig. 1.16). Other rooms bore the slogans "art as a tool of Marxist propaganda against military service" and "a representative selection from the endless supply of Jewish trash that no words can adequately describe."[71] Price tags accompanied artworks, some of which museums paid for using public monies. However, the sums looked terrifically high by contemporary standards, as the sums paid for the art were skewed, taken from the height of depression-era inflation. Jostling elbows, the hot breath of strangers upon one's neck, loud outbursts of disgust and indignation, jangling colors, and propagandistic slogans: all of these elements contributed to a carnivalesque mockery and denigration of *avant garde* art and intimidated those who enjoyed such art (people like Peter Guenther) from defending it, let alone publicly enjoying it. Many people who

[71] Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa*, 21.

attended *Entartete Kunst* did so because they knew it might be their last opportunity to see artwork by beloved artists.

The organizers of *Entartete Kunst* used not only the exhibition space but its accompanying catalogue carefully to establish the relationship between modern art and the various forms of "degeneracy." While the catalogue was intentionally confusing and poorly published, it is instructive as to the objectives of the show. Two pages may be illustrative of the show's general line of reasoning and argumentation. One page purports to demonstrate "*ein sehr aufschlußreicher rassischer Querschnitt*," or "a very revealing racial cross-section," in which modernist paintings, three of which are portraits or self-portraits by the artists Morgner, Otto Dix, and Ernst Kirchner, are compared with an unidentified sculpted African bust (fig. 1.17). These artworks, implicitly compared on morphological grounds, share in common distorted physical features: prominent foreheads, bulging eyes, hyperbolically geometrical noses. Another page similarly contrasts paintings and prints by Amadeo Modigliani and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff with photographs of individuals with apparent mental disabilities and physical abnormalities (fig. 1.18). In one of the photos, a woman's scalp is covered in patches of hair and she appears to have lost an eye; next to her is an image of a small child with crossed eyes and a dimwitted grin, who perhaps has Down's Syndrome. In their visual rhetoric, the juxtaposition of these images establishes a direct relationship between diseased bodies and retrograde cultural production: they are linked as though one gives birth to the other, or as though they are communicable diseased cells. According to the logic of *Entartete Kunst*, the physical, cultural, and moral degeneracy demonstrated by "primitive art" writ

large and those who created it (be they non-white or developmentally delayed) was terribly contagious – and so, by extension, was modern art.

Of course, there was also a bitter irony inherent to the story and rhetoric of *Entartete Kunst*: the very art that was deemed so degenerate that it might jeopardize the moral and cultural fabric of Germany was *shown* all over Germany, and this show was tremendously popular. While *Entartete Kunst* was sponsored and designed by the state, which encouraged its citizens to consume this *avant garde* art in a controlled environment so that they may deride and reject it, the Nazi government banned it in all other contexts. After *Entartete Kunst* finished its tour, show organizers shipped the artworks to a Berlin warehouse on Köpenicker Strasse, and Goebbels created a commission in 1938 tasked with the disposal of all artifacts of "degenerate art." Ultimately, Franz Hofmann, a member of the Propaganda Ministry, and his consultant Rolf Hetsch transferred thousands of artworks to Schloss Niederschönhausen, just outside of Berlin, where they moldered or were sold to international buyers for foreign currency.[72] Officials sent roughly 125 of the most internationally renowned artworks to the auction at the Galerie Fischer in Lucerne, Switzerland, and the "undisposable remainder" of artworks (the "dregs," as Goebbels also called them, or that which was "unexploitable," in Franz Hofmann's words[73]), were greenlighted for incineration. Hofmann burnt five thousand artworks – over a thousand paintings and sculptures and nearly four thousand drawings, watercolors, and graphic works – in front of Berlin's

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[72] Andreas Hüneke, "On the Trail of Missing Masterpieces," in *"Degenerate Art": The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1991), 125.

[73] Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa*, 25.

main fire station, an act that echoed the Nazis' infamous book burnings and the incineration of those millions of humans murdered in concentration camps.[74]

Arnold Bode's choice to champion *avant garde* modernism in documenta and use it as the vehicle to document cultural continuity between the pre- and post-war periods in Germany was meant to resuscitate and revitalize an ethos and a period of cultural history that the Nazi party had fought so hard to purge from history. It also served to establish the art of West Germany as a part of the global West, in distinction from Kassel's close neighbor, East Germany, which it associated with the Socialist Realism of both the USSR and earlier, that promoted by the Third Reich. As such, Bode's political objectives for documenta were to document a history and chart a course that was specific to West Germany - a linear, materialist, oedipal history, that in Benjamin's formulation, excised (or at least marginalized) the period of Nazi rule to establish the victory of modernism. Susanne König notes that art historians typically have framed Bode's exhibition as an isolated event and have failed to consider it in relationship to the *Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (General German Art Exhibition), which occurred across the border in Dresden, beginning in 1946. However, both documenta and the East German *Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung* had similar objectives: to rehabilitate the modern art that the Nazis erased from public view and to survey contemporary art practices in exhibitions that were recurring.[75] (König notes the aptness of Dresden as a location for such an

[74] Hüneke, "On the Trail of Missing Masterpieces," 128.

[75] Susanne König, "documenta in Kassel and the *Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung* in Dresden: A German-German History of Interrelations," *On Curating* 33 (June 2017): 25.

exhibition, as the city was the first stop for *Entartete Kunst* when it toured.) The failure of historians to tell the story of documenta in conversation with the *Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung* indicates the reticence of both documenta organizers and historians to draw parallels between the two divided Germanys, and the selective history Bode charted with his serial exhibition – an exhibition that largely excluded artwork by Communists, as well as German Jews, women, and political progressives.

Indeed, Arnold Bode wrote as part of his "Bode plan" for documenta 1 that "Kassel is the German city that is predestined for an exhibition like this. Kassel is close to the East German border, was largely destroyed, and has been very actively reconstructed. It is an exemplary deed to manifest the idea of Europe in an art exhibition thirty kilometers from the East German border."[76] This is in keeping with West Germany's official relationship to their recent past. Michael Rothberg writes, "West Germany's official 'politics of memory' vis-à-vis the Holocaust and Jews served (and to a certain extent, continues to serve) as 'the Federal Republic's entry-ticket into the Western alliance.'"[77] That is, it West Germany's politics of memory, as well as those promoted by Bode and documenta, advocated for a historical model that described a clean break with the past, in which those in positions of authority disavowed all Nazi-era sentiments and remnants from the era were hidden from view. This position bolstered Germany's "economic miracle" and re-entry to the West, even if many former Nazis still held positions of power in political and cultural institutions, and previously public

[76] Arnold Bode, "Bode plan," as quoted in "Tableau II Conception," in *Archive in Motion: 50 Jahre/Years documenta*, ed. Michael Glasmeier and Karin Stengel (Göttingen: Steidl, 2005), 172.

[77] Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, 42.

expressions of bigotry remained just out of sight. The near-destruction of Kassel, the intentionality with which it was rebuilt, and its proximity to the Soviet East all contributed to make Kassel an ideal place for Bode to demonstrate and celebrate the state of art and culture in West Germany. Figuratively thumbing its nose to the East, documenta was meant to demonstrate to the global West that West Germany was rebuilding itself according to the true, "predestined," nearly divine plan of history and modernity.

If Arnold Bode intended to stage a drama that told the story revival after a period of iconoclasm, the curtain fell on the Nazi past and rose to present a bright new future, that phoenix-like, rose from the ashes and the ruins of the past. The actors who had pilfered the museums of Germany in the preceding act set in the 1930s made quick costume changes in the wings for the new scenes set in 1955. Meanwhile, indifferent to this dramaturgy and spinning a web of a different design, a spider picked her way across the corner of the stage, ignored the fourth wall altogether, and wove a web that told a different kind of story.

The First documenta

In the summer of 1955, the annual *Bundesgartenschau* (National German Garden Show) was scheduled to take place in Kassel. This was a bit of a consolation prize to the city, which, along with the cities of Frankfurt and Stuttgart, had recently lost its bid to become the *de facto* capital of the Federal Republic of Germany. Every year, the popular national botanical event rotated to a different German host city, and based on the turnout of previous shows, organizers in Kassel expected that large crowds would throng to the

city for the occasion (fig. 1.19). Arnold Bode, an artist, curator, and local art professor at Kassel University, decided to ride on the coattails of this convention, and created an exhibition of modern art that he had long dreamt of realizing, which coincided with the *Bundesgartenschau*. Bode titled his art exhibition documenta, which he designed to be the first (West) German exhibition of avant-garde art since *Entartete Kunst.* (The omission of the *Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung* in documenta historiography is still evident in the documenta website, where in its "Retrospective" section, it describes documenta as the first modern art exhibition since 1937, failing to mention the East German event that occurred nine years prior to the one in Kassel.[78])

"Documenta" is a word Bode invented, the Latinate roots of which are instructive in understanding his goals for the exhibition. As Christoph Lange demonstrated, in Latin "*Documenta"* means a lesson, example, instruction, or warning, while the conjugation "*documentum"* means both to teach or instruct (from the verb *docere*), and also refers to the intellectual faculties, the mind, understanding, or spirit of something (from *mens*).[79] Additionally, the name "documenta" might also be situated within the context of 1950s brand-name neologisms in Germany, which include products such as Nivea, Tempo, and Fanta (skin cream, bathroom tissue, and soda brands, respectively). Lutz Jahre notes,

> It's easy to recognize the young Federal Republic's dominant themes: a new beginning, change, and reconstruction…. If you were searching for a forward-looking name, you went with something that sounded international…. It was especially popular to tack on an *a*, which according to psychologists of language makes a word sound more optimistic to

[78] "Documenta Retrospective," *documenta.de*, accessed Aug 24, 2016, http://www.documenta.de/en/retrospective/documenta

[79] Christoph Lange, "The Spirit of *documenta*: Art-Philosophical Reflections," in *50 Jahre Documenta/50 Years Documenta*, edited by Michael Glasmeier and Karin Stengel (Göttingen: Steidl, 2005), 14.

> German ears…. Lowercase and with a Latinate *c* in the middle, the name [documenta] is unmistakably a child of its time.[80]

Kathryn Floyd observes that documenta, in addition to the way in which event's branding was a linguistic product of its era, subtly signaled Germany's return to common Western values because of its Latinate derivation. She writes,

> Tied to classical education and the 'Western tradition,' the Latin origin lent prestige, quality, and authority to the show's reframing of modernism. Like visual abstraction Latin also signified international ties and a shared language, history, and values. And, when written out, the name expressed an anti-nationalistic attitude; while 'documenta' sounded like the German *Dokumente* (documents), the word had in fact been stripped of its national characteristics by shifting the German 'k' to the Latinate 'c,' and the plural 'e' to 'a.'[81]

Finally, the name "documenta" appropriated and repurposed terminology used during the Third Reich to denigrate modern art. Floyd remarks further that "Articles and announcements for these exhibitions [that demonstrated modernism as evidence of cultural corruption, such as *Entartete Kunst*] used the term 'Dokumente' or 'Kulturdokumente' [cultural document] not 'Kunst' (art), to describe work deemed Jewish, Bolshevik, or foreign. 'documenta' subtly rehabilitated this term, reauthoring formerly 'degenerate' art into legitimate cultural history."[82] The lowercase "d" in the Akzidenz Grostesk typeface, used as shorthand for "documenta" in the promotional literature and catalogue cover, evoked both the commercial font used in the 1920s and '30s, as well as that which was used by prewar art movements such as International

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[80] Lutz Jahre, "Curators and Catalogues," in *50 Jahre Documenta/50 Years Documenta*, edited by Michael Glasmeier and Karin Stengel (Göttingen: Steidl, 2005), 46.

[81] Kathryn M. Floyd, "d is for documenta: Institutional Identity for a Periodic Exhibition," *On Curating* 33 (June 2017): 12.

[82] Ibid, 13.

Constructivism and its institutions, most specifically, the Bauhaus, which was closed in 1933 by the Nazis for its radical political ideology and experimental pedagogy (fig. 1.20).[83] While Arnold Bode did not explicitly set forth for documenta to be a recurring event, Floyd acknowledges the strong possibility that he hoped it could be, and the popularity of his initial exhibition opened the door for many repeat events. From its inception, the purported dual purpose of documenta was to take stock of the state of modern and contemporary art in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, and to educate, instruct, and provide insight into the history, values, and philosophies attendant to *avant garde* art making practices, which dated back to the turn of the century. However, this matter-of-fact mission for the exhibition is snarled up with the dark period of fascism in Germany, the ruptures the country suffered during the mid-twentieth century, and the struggle of Bode and subsequent directors to chart a new cultural future.

Arnold Bode chose to house documenta 1 within the hollowed-out ruin of the neoclassical, previously grand, Enlightenment-era Museum Fridericianum, which the Allies bombed intensively during World War II. Although a decade had passed since the war's end when Bode mounted his show, the rubble from the building had still not been entirely removed by 1955, and documenta became the impetus to renovate and restore the museum. Images from the first documenta show the building's façade restored, although raw stones in columns and exposed bricks show where repair was necessary (fig. 21). Bright new stones and fresh, light colored mortar indicate where column drums crumbled under the weight of bombs and bullets pocked masonry. Bode's team cleared away stone shards and glazed broken windows in the portion of the Fridericianum they planned to

[83] Ibid, 14-15.

use (they did not overhaul the entire building), inside, they gave walls a fresh coat of white paint and hung up white floor-to-ceiling curtains, colorful wallboard, and translucent sheeting from Göppinger plastics,[84] over which they mounted paintings (fig. 1.22).[85] Not only was documenta a good excuse to renovate the Fridericianum, but Bode's choice of location for the event was symbolic. The editors of *50 Jahre/Years Documenta* note that "presenting documenta here [in the Fridericianum] of all places, ten years after World War II, also had a symbolic import as the start of the restoration of European cultural life in West Germany."[86] Although it would not be until the early 1980s that the museum was fully rehabilitated, in many respects documenta 1 served as "Year 1" of Germany's cultural regeneration. Although previously reduced to a shell, the renovated Fridericianum provided an air of stability, permanence, and classical timelessness to the visitor of documenta, and by extension ennobled and institutionalized the contents of the show, not unlike the purpose to which Hitler put the *Haus der Deutschen Kunst*. The space of the Fridericianum established the modernist artworks contained within it as legitimate and sanctioned by the state, as it was not only the oldest public art museum in continental Europe, but it had long been a state-affiliated institution.

Documenta 1 purported to exhibit fifty years' worth of European modernism, from England to Italy, and surveyed many of the canonically important movements – for

[84] Floyd, "d is for documenta," 12.

[85] Kimpel and Stengel, *documenta 1955*, 10.

[86] Michael Glasmeier and Karin Stengel, "Tableau I History," in *50 Jahre Documenta/50 Years Documenta*, ed. Michael Glasmeier and Karin Stengel (Göttingen: Steidl, 2005), 172.

example, Expressionism, Cubism, and Futurism. Bode and his team undertook the display of this vast compilation of over 600 artworks in order to establish a de-Nazified cultural history for Germany that might "document" the precedents for contemporary forms of modernism. However, as Floyd and Grasskamp have both noted, the styles and artworks omitted from this exhibition are instructive in understanding the kind of future Bode meant to chart and the history he intended to trim away. Floyd writes,

> Social realism and Berlin Dada, along with styles linked to political radicalism or totalitarianism, were omitted. Instead, through visual juxtaposition and formal correspondence, the 1955 *documenta* rewrote the contemporary modernists of the present moment not as offspring of the immediate (and fascist) past, but of the international prewar avant-garde. They therefore reauthored Germany's relationship to progressive art, part of a broader postwar effort to fashion a 'usable past.' This narrative idealized the 1920s and the Weimar Republic as the real precursors to the Federal Republic and its 'economic miracle.' Totalitarianism was a tragic detour on the nation's true evolution to democracy. *Documenta's* display of modern art signified freedom, individuality, and universality and signaled the desire to return to its rightful place in the fold of 'Western' culture.[87]

Bode wished to demonstrate to the international community that Germany was well along on its way to returning to international democratic values, if not for all intents and purposes already culturally rehabilitated a decade after the demise of the Third Reich. In addition to the retrospective of a particular version of pre-war modernism he documented, the contemporary state of art he meant to demonstrate was focused almost exclusively on a Western European present, one that represented German, French, and Italian artists disproportionately, to the exclusion of any representation of artists east of the 16th line of longitude (which touches Stockholm, Vienna, and Messina).[88] Reflecting

[87] Ibid, 11.

[88] Walter Grasskamp, "Becoming Global: From Euro-centrism to North Atlantic Feedback – documenta as an 'International Exhibition' (1955-1972)," *On Curating* (June 2017): 98.

the specifically West German orientation of Bode's project, the society for the founding of documenta originally registered itself with the name "*Gesellschaft Abendländischer Kunst des XX. Jahrhunderts*," or "Society for the Occidental Art of the 20th Century," and as such, it reflected a globalism that was defined by that which lay to the west of the Iron Curtain (correspondingly, the Victoria and Albert Museum described Kassel as the capital of *Cold War Modern* in their show from 2008).[89] In addition to being exclusively Western-oriented, the first documenta enacted further exclusions in its failure to exhibit any of the Jewish artists whose work had been targeted by the National Socialists in the 1930s and '40s – a glaring omission, considering the overt anti-Semitism of *Entartete Kunst* and the way in which Bode meant to overturn its legacy. Walter Grasskamp notes the surprising "omission of Jewish artists of classic modernity who had been forced to emigrate after 1933 and then were murdered in concentration camps after their countries of exile had been occupied by Germany: the first *documenta* did not show a single one of them, not even Otto Freundlich, whose sculpture *Der Neue Mensch (The New Man)* had been depicted on the cover of the guidebook to the *Degenerate Art Exhibition* of 1937" (fig. 1.9).[90] In addition to the Jewish artists left out of documenta 1, Bode and Haftmann also neglected to include political émigrés such as Jean Heartfield (no Dada artists were represented at documenta), George Grosz, or Karl Schwesig, the latter of whom was a member of the Communist-affiliated group, the Association of Revolutionary Visual Artists of Germany. Schwesig was tortured for his political views in 1933 by the SA in

[89] Ibid, 100-101.

[90] Ibid, 101.

the "Schlegelkeller" headquarters before his detainment in concentration camps in France; he survived the Third Reich and died only a month before documenta 1 opened. Grasskamp notes, "his very impressive series of 'Schlegelkeller' drawings would have told a story not welcome to a post-war West German art audience. It had its reasons that the first *documenta* clearly put emphasis on modernism only in the *form* of the artwork, not in *content*!"[91] If the organizers of *Entartete Kunst* had meant to put a decisive end to Germans' creation of and participation within European modernism, Bode meant to reestablish the legacy of modernist art production in Germany, yet the scope within which he did so was proscriptive along geographical, political, ethnic, religious, and gendered lines. Additionally, he reinforced a kind of anterior narrative (as Bal would frame it), in which the history he referenced was itself a selective version of events, a fairy tale of sorts.

As Walter Grasskamp argued, Bode not only failed directly to establish the historical referent of *Entartete Kunst* and rehabilitate the full range of artists represented there, but he also did not adequately counter the overriding logic of the Nazis' cultural smear campaign. In his important article from 1987, "'Degenerate Art' and Documenta 1," translated to English in 1994, Grasskamp noted that at that late point in which he was writing, fifty years after the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition and over thirty years since the first documenta, throughout the vast quantity of literature on documenta, scholars had almost entirely failed to consider the direct relationship between documenta and *Entartete Kunst*. He claimed,

[91] Ibid.

> As if they wished to revise that smear campaign into a regrettable deviation, the founders of the Documenta returned to international modernism with vehemence and enthusiasm. But they neglected to answer conclusively and concisely with their Documenta the questions that the Degenerate Art exhibition had raised. This omission can perhaps be understood in retrospect, but not unconditionally condoned. The Degenerate Art exhibition did not stage just any idiotic, senseless, or barbaric attack on modern art. It was rather a suggestive and refined attempt to discredit modern art at the level of its means and problems: an attack that was surely conclusive for many viewers and that did not fully lose its effect even after the liberation from national socialism.[92]

Crass though many elements of *Entartete Kunst* were, at its foundation the logic its organizers promoted was persuasive, contained subtlety, and was in part rooted in classical art historical and cultural rhetoric. Was it not the purpose of art to be beautiful and uplifting? Didn't the slapdash, and at times ugly forms modernism could take indicate the lack of refinement of its creators, who were hell bent to wallow in the muck? Weren't Western European cultures, with their modern technologies, imperialist might, and long history of "high culture" superior to those they were colonizing? Didn't cultural, moral, and physical degeneracy seem often to be intertwined, and wouldn't it be best to pull the weeds from the garden so that the healthiest organisms could flourish? These kinds of questions, at the heart of the Nazi criticism of modernism, were inadequately and only obliquely confronted by the organizers of documenta, as well as roughly four decades of scholars since the inception of documenta (many of whom were German). Additionally, as Walter Grasskamp points out, when Bode organized documenta, "Eurocentrism, of course, did not yet have a negative reputation at all, not even its label:

[92] Walter Grasskamp, "'Degenerate Art' and Documenta 1: Modernism Ostracized and Disarmed," in *Museum Culture*, ed. Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 165.

Europe had no doubts about its priority in the world and still felt like the homeland of civilization, culture, and (modern) art."[93] As such, the rhetoric the Nazis had leveled against modernism –- that it was evidence of cultural decadence and degeneracy, that it reflected the lunacy (to use their outdated terminology) or childlike quality of the artist, and that it was "primitive" (a racist and culturally chauvinistic term) and thus culturally retrograde –- was never addressed with a counter-argument that was as compelling, thoughtful, or sophisticated as the argument made by those who attempted to smear modernism. Rather, Bode presented documenta 1 as a drama in which modern art was staged as the rightful heir of so-called primitive or naïve art, and this, so his line of visual argumentation went, was not only true but good.

Like a fairy tale that sheds any extraneous details and is comprehensible specifically because of its simplicity, documenta 1 was meant to be an art show that functioned like a wonder tale for German adults, a *Gesamtkunstwerk* that told the story of cultural redemption (and of course the *Gesamtkunstwerk* evokes Richard Wagner, the composer of monumental nationalist operas and great hero of Hitler's). As though describing the stage set for a retelling of the story of "The Rape of Europa" or "Athena and Arachne," Arnold Bode himself used theatrical language to refer to documenta 1, which Harald Kimpel and Karin Stengel, in their photographic reconstruction and virtual tour from 1995, *documenta 1955*, repeat: in their book the pair describe Bode as the "director" (*Regie*) of his staff, who brought forth a "performance" (*Aufführng*). The exhibition was "staged" (*Inszenierung*), and according to the authors, documenta 1 was

[93] Grasskamp, "Becoming Global," 101.

like a modern reworking of a Greek drama.[94] The authors describe the exhibition as a "*Drama der modernen Kunst*" (the expression "drama of Modern Art" is one they attribute to Haftmann), which took place in "Kassel's labyrinth of modernity" (*Kasseler Labyrinth der Moderne*), which was mounted in the "ruins of the museum" (*Museumsruine*, that is, the hollowed out Fridericianum).[95] Impassioned, they write of the "anthemic" and "spectacular" show (again, Wagnerian in scope) which received near-universal adulation by a chorus of voices.[96] In their words, Bode's prescient use of stagecraft, design, and innovative installation allowed for nothing less than a revolution, the result of which allowed a discredited and "degenerate" country to re-enter the European cultural community.[97]

The entryway into documenta 1 is instructive to understand Bode's stagecraft and the drama he meant for his exhibition to perform. This space was framed by a large floor-to-ceiling photomontage of artworks that spanned a range of thousands of years and hopped continents, which he presented as the ostensible inspiration for much of modern art (fig. 1.23). Conspicuously absent are Classical European treasures and artworks from the Renaissance; instead, the photomontage is full of non-Western artworks and pre-Classical works, such as Mycenaean funerary masks. He arranged a photograph of a Nigerian Ife head near the visage of a Sumerian votive statue from Tell Asmar (perhaps

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[94] Harald Kimpel and Karin Stengel, *documenta 1955* (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1995), 5.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Kimpel and Stengel are not the only ones to intentionally repeat the theatrical language that Bode used in his description of documenta. Roland Nachtigäller, in "Performing the Zeitgeist," also employs the language of stagecraft in his essay.

[97] Kimpel and Stengel, *documenta 1955*, 7.

dedicated to Ninhursag), which in turn was close to a reclining Mayan Chacmool, among other photographs. This photo grid may be read in dialogue with a secondary entrance wall that contained a rectilinear photomontage of the Western artists whose work was contained within the exhibition. Kimpel and Stengel label the first wall as the "*Historischer Vorspann*," or "Historical Introduction," to documenta, a visual prelude that reminded visitors of the purported spiritual and formal proximity of modern art to, in their words, "archaic, early Christian, and exotic-primitive artworks."[98] This so-called "exotic-primitive" art that had inspired so many of the European modernists was precisely the kind of art that the Nazis used previously to demonstrate the degeneracy of modernist art. Bode, in this aspect of his stagecraft, did not deconstruct the Nazis' structural logic, as developed in *Entartete Kunst*, but rather simply reversed it. That is, both the organizers of *Entartete Kunst* and documenta reasoned that modernist artists were inspired by and heirs to so-called "primitive" art and used morphological similarities to demonstrate their purportedly similar spiritual or psychological effects; the Nazis argued that these effects would degenerate German culture, whereas Bode argued that these effects would *re*-generate German culture and situate modernism within the realm of international, universalist humanism (and Kimpel and Stengel, in their description in *documenta 1955* describe Germany under the Nazis as "a discredited and 'degenerate' country").

Indeed, in this struggle for art historical lineage and in the overturned lines of argumentation (white becomes black becomes white again, like in the swans in the Documenta IX logo), Wilhelm Lehmbruck's sculpture assumed yet again a prominent

[98] Ibid, 14.

position. *Kneeling Woman* was placed in the central rotunda of the Fridericianum (the area Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev was to frame as "the Brain"), beckoning visitors to come into the exhibition and up the stairs (fig. 1.24). This icon, once a celebrated work of German Expressionism, then thrown onto the slag heap of degeneracy, was revived yet again for documenta. Lehmbruck, additionally, was lauded widely throughout Germany as one of their most important artists from the turn of the century – an artist whose work was uncontaminated by Nazi ideology (he died from suicide in 1919).[99] Regarding the relationship between so-called primitive art and modernism that Bode worked to establish, Walter Grasskamp writes that,

> Not very convincing nowadays, such analogies between modern and ancient or non-European practices were thought to authorize modern art with the amplification of anthropology. Being universal situated art in history and anthropology rather than in actual political geography, and hence infused it with an internationalist humanism (be it one of primitivism – a notion, by the way, Bode and Haftmann would not use for tribal artefacts, but for naïve painting, nowadays labelled *outsider art*).[100]

Whether Bode framed documenta 1 with photographs of ancient and non-Western artworks to establish their relationship to classical modernism or to create an anthropological, humanist cast to the exhibition, he repeated a visual trope and logic that the organizers of *Entartete Kunst* also employed, without acknowledging or challenging it directly. That is, on formal grounds, he drew parallels between modern artworks and non-Western objects, those individuals who suffered from mental illness, or approached

[99] Later, critics described Joseph Beuys as the heir to Lehmbruck, described in terms of royal or oedipal succession.

[100] Walter Grasskamp, "Becoming Global," 102.

art making as naïve *sauvages*, "uncontaminated" by academicism or rigorous art school training.

The organizers of documenta straightforwardly, and rather ham fistedly, celebrated modernism unconditionally, without, as Grasskamp describes, "accounting at the same time for modernism's dubiousness, dissonance, and aggressive arrogance, which the National Socialists were so cleverly able to turn against it," and without accounting for the ways in which it had been framed as dangerous and contagious.[101] Specifically, Grasskamp cites the example of Werner Heldt, who in a 1947 speech for an opening at Gern Rosen Gallery in West Berlin, recalled an anecdote about a friend of his whose artwork had been included in *Entartete Kunst*. This friend's artwork was placed next to the drawings of a "lunatic," alongside the caption, "What is the difference!?"[102] Rather than try to answer this rhetorical question, Heldt instead meditated upon what the two kinds of visual representation shared in common. It may be instructive to quote Heldt at some length to understand his thinking about creativity and modern art:

> This question, once posed out of narrow-mindedness, arrogance and malice… is still posed today for the same reasons. What is the difference between the 'sculptures by lunatics' and the aspirations of the art of our time? In 1929 I came upon [Hans] Prinzhorn's book *Bildnerei der Geisteskranken* (*Imagery by the Mentally Ill*). Monstrosities could be seen there: *witches, spirits, demons, grotesque and gruesome apparitions and dreams*. Such things were familiar to me from dreams and earliest childhood memories. I saw something related in the works of artists of all times: Bosch, Seghers, Meryon, Gaudi, van Gogh, Henri Rousseau, Odilon Redon, Munch, Ensor, Kubin. What was it? It was the hallucinatory look! Life as a dream; it was the presentiment of a *powerful realm full of magic*, populated with angels and demons, forming the eternal underworld of our human realm [my italics].[103]

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[101] Grasskamp, "'Degenerate Art' and Documenta 1," 165-66.

[102] Ibid, 166.

[103] Ibid, 166-67.

For Heldt, as for many of the organizers of documenta, modernism and the art of the mentally ill (and by extension of the prevailing logic of *Entartete Kunst*, and later documenta, art from all "primitive" sectors) shared the same idealized, romantic dreamlike qualities, and both could transport one into a magical, primitivistic realm populated with apparitions, and memories, angels and demons. Whether or not it is true that both forms of creativity share this quality, Heldt was transfixed, "as if under a spell," and in his speech was unable to argue against the question posed at *Entartete Kunst*, "What is the difference!?" In Grasskamp's words, "he sought to recast as universally human, and presented as universally dreamlike, that which was only a product of his own universalizing. For just as representations of angels and demons have their own history, the relationship between art and madness is also the result of a historical development, whose specifically modern culmination Heldt here denies."[104] This denial of historicity is similar to Bode and Haftmann's evasion of difficult questions and relationships posed by the Nazis. The magical, monstrous, and mad (qualities that pertain not only to early of documenta, but also may be used to describe fairy tales), when unaddressed in their historical context, return to haunt the event, without resolution. Not only do they return to haunt, but an ahistorical approach is related to the construction of mythmaking, in particular fascist ahistorical mythmaking (as will also be investigated in Chapter 2, vis à vis Benjamin Buchloh's critique of Joseph Beuys). It is time that these qualities are addressed seriously and analyzed as historical products.

In the next section, I will examine the history of fairy tales (which are, of course, kinds of vernacular myths) as they developed in Kassel and as they were used toward

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[104] Ibid, 167.

ideological ends both during the times of the Grimms and during the Third Reich. Here, I will demonstrate how fairy tales are not innocent, but rather are volatile tools that may be used to enchant, delight, and manipulate. Because of their malleability, repetition, familiarity, and moral ambiguity, fairy tales (and more specifically the fairy tale story of documenta) can serve nationalist and hegemonic ends. They both describe acts of violence in the past (the "once upon a time") and authorize violence in the present. At the same time, the fairy tale's constitutive ambiguities mean that they can be turned inside out to subvert entrenched systems of power. (It is perhaps no coincidence that from the 1970s through the present there has been a growing trend of writing or "rewriting" subversive fairy tales.) Like the black and white swan from the D IX logo, fairy tales often contain Manichean templates; this is applies most frequently to gender, race, religion, and ethnicity. However, as we saw in the Introduction and beginning of this chapter, there is also the possibility for goose-footed women, swan-winged boys, and weavers whose bodies transform into spiders: auspicious figures who occupy ambiguous, hybrid, in-between spaces – figures who through imagination, transformation, and in-betweenness, challenge notions of ontological purity.

In his richly provocative book *The Five Senses*, Michel Serres reminds us that Cinderella's slipper was not always made of glass, but of fur. This confusion comes from the oral nature of when "*Cendrillon*" was told orally: in French, "*verre*" (glass) and "vair" are homophones. While Perrault made Cinderella's glass slipper famous, Serres argues for a return to the variegated soft fur, a medium that rather than shattering upon impact or pressure, is pliable. He describes this slipper "like an invaginated pocket: an awkward pleat, a sort of bonnet or the finger of a glove. You can feel its shape, an open

and shut tent, made by and for the touch, skin on skin in places where it suffers, pathologically sensitive…. Now look closely at vair: a color lacking in homogeneity, white and black, not black or white, distinct and separate, but with somewhat mingled colors, not grey, but precisely squirrel, a mixed ash-grey color."[105] A vair slipper folds in upon itself, not unlike *Spider*'s egg sac that cradles the glass eggs, a pocket within a cell that is both internal and external. This kind of pliable tent opens and closes, giving birth to new forms, like an origami crane may become a frog, and accommodates mingled colors and mingled bodies. It is, perhaps, within this space of invaginated pockets, that patriarchal spaces and histories may be recuperated by the return of a ghostly mother who may come in the form of Cinderella's dead mother who turns cobwebs into silk dresses or in the form of an artist like Louise Bourgeois. It is useful to keep in mind that while they may be used to bolster hegemonic systems of power, particularly through simplistic schemas, fairy tales, when they mobilize and engage minds to imagine better futures and that which not yet known, may empower "those who are excluded or beaten [to] concentrate within themselves the power of metamorphosis or apotheosis," and write the stories of their lives in the present moment to produce better worlds.[106]

Dark Spots on the Fairy Tale Road

Kassel is located in the middle of "the fairy tale road," or the *Deutsche Märchen Straße*, which is quite literally a south-to-north pilgrimage route that winds its way through the central German towns in which popular fairy tales are set and in many of

[105] Michel Serres, *The Five Senses*, trans. Margaret Sankey and Peter Cowley (London: Continuum, 2008), 64.

[106] Ibid, 65.

cities where the Brothers Grimm lived (fig. 1.25). The northernmost city along this route is Bremen (marked on the official *Deutsche Märchen Straße* map by the iconic musical rooster, cat, dog, and donkey, stacked on top of each other), and the southernmost town is Hanau (the birthplace of the Grimm Brothers), just to the east of Frankfurt am Main. The route meanders and forks as it passes through Hameln (infamous for the Pied Piper who rid the town of both its rats and its children), Marburg (the town in which the Grimms studied), Alsfeld (the setting of the purported Little Red Riding Hood House), and Kassel, as well as numerous smaller towns. Kassel is prominent on this map and located centrally, signaled by a dark purple blob, as the Grimms lived there for thirty years (the key indicates that the towns in which the Grimms lived are marked in purple). Annually, Kassel holds a Brothers Grimm Festival over the course of several weeks in the summer, for which fairy tale-based musicals are performed to the crowds that throng to the event. Kassel also boasts one of the largest archives associated with the Grimms: the Brothers Grimm Archive and the affiliated Museum of the Brothers Grimm house a considerable wealth of the Grimms' personal effects, as well as scholarly literature on fairy tales. (The Museum of the Brothers Grimm, which closed in 2014 and now only exists as an online presence, was located in one of the Grimms' former homes along the Schöne Aussicht. This remains a fashionable boulevard in Kassel's old city-center that overlooks the baroque Karlsaue park and was the street along which Goethe's elephant paraded just prior to its untimely demise.)

If one were to imagine a suitable landscape for a fairy tale, Kassel and its environs might be the perfect choice. The town is nestled in a valley though which the Fulda River flows lazily. Overlooking the town is a tall hill upon which is a castle, the Schloss

Wilhelmshöhe, and the entire town is laid out at its feet. A vast baroque pleasure garden, the Bergpark Wilhelmshöhe, stretches behind the castle and up to the summit of the hill. If one wandered through this park, one might find small grottoes tucked along trails in the hillside or the crumbling ruins of an ancient castle; one wouldn't be surprised if while resting by the grotto pond, one encountered a frog surfacing on the water, a golden ball clutched between his webbed fingers, and one can almost hear Rapunzel's sweet melody lilt from the stone tower's topmost window. Finally, the steep hill of the Bergpark Wilhelmshöhe is surmounted by a ponderous octagonal monument, topped by a colossal copper statue of Hercules. A weary guardian, he gazes down upon the city of Kassel, which appears sleepy and tinged with blue from a distance. Behind the copper sentinel that keeps watch over Kassel lies the Habichtswald. Far in the valley, just beyond the limit of Hercules' gaze, is a plateau and the gloom of another forest, the ominously named Gutsbezirk Kaufunger Wald. The low gray clouds that are wont to hang over Kassel erupt frequently into sudden downpours, although when it is least expected, the sun may burst through the dreary sky, bringing with it sparking and majestic double rainbows. Melancholy and magic are doled out in equal measure in the town of Kassel.

Kassel is an important city for storytellers; historically, it has attracted them, particularly during the last two centuries. In 1779, the Museum Fridericianum opened its doors as the first public European museum. Very much an institution of the Enlightenment, it contained an encyclopedic collection of objects, a library, and an astronomical observatory. Additionally, the Fridericianum attracted numerous visiting scholars, such as Wolfgang van Goethe and Achim von Arnim.[107] It was in this building

[107] Christian Saehrendt, *Kassel. documenta-Geschichten, Märchen, und Mythen* (Köln, DuMont, 2012), 115.

at the opening of the nineteenth century that Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm worked as librarians and lexicographers, collecting the fairy tales that would become *Children's- and Household Tales*. Most of the women who acted as informants for the Grimms lived in or around Kassel and traveled to the Fridericianum to deliver their stories.

However, Kassel is also a town with a history of fluctuation, transition, and migration. At the beginning of the Grimms' tenure at the library in the Fridericianum, Kassel was the capital of the short-lived Kingdom of Westphalia under Jérôme Bonaparte, which lasted from 1807-1813. The town was returned to Germany after the Napoleonic Wars, although some street names bear francophone traces to this day, and indeed many of the women from whom the Grimms collected their stories were of French Huguenot extraction, women whose families had fled religious persecution in the west a generation or two previously. During the Industrial Revolution, Kassel was home to Henschel und Sohne, a factory that became the largest locomotive producer in the country, and during World War II the factory expanded to produce tanks. As I discuss in greater depth in Chapter 4, Kassel became a crossroads for train routes across the country –- the Berlin to Frankfurt line, traveling west-central to northeast, and the Ruhrgebiet to Leipzig line, moving from the urban, industrial northwest to east, crisscrossed in Kassel. As such, the city, although moderate in size, became an important tactical location for the Nazis, which they used for economic and military purposes. Consequently, during World War II the Allies' strategic bombing campaigns hit Kassel heavily and widely, and by the war's end four out of five homes in the city were destroyed, along with two-thirds of its

industrial installations.[108] This bombing campaign targeted not only production sites and railroad lines, but important cultural institutions such as the Fridericianum.

After the war, Kassel found itself in the new far east of West Germany, near the border between the newly-formed Federal Republic of Germany in the West and German Democratic Republic in the East, a geographic position that affected the way in which Arnold Bode framed documenta politically, as noted previously. Particularly in the post-war era, however, the city garnered a reputation as a rather gloomy industrial town, rebuilt quickly in a concrete-heavy, generic modernist style.[109] The "economic miracle" seen widely throughout Germany in the 1950s did not reach Kassel immediately. Nevertheless, the town proved to be a tactical, if unlikely, location for an international contemporary art exhibition, which Bode exploited to indicate West Germany's cultural values against the nearby foil of East Germany.[110] Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, documenta provided not only a sizeable share of the revenue necessary to regenerate Kassel, but also became the cultural framework around which the city revolves. Kassel is now called the "documenta city," and the town and the event have become nearly synonymous.[111]

In *Ist das Kunst oder kann das weg? Kassel, documenta-Geschichten, Märchen, und Mythen*, Christian Saehrendt notes that although numerous well-renowned, globe-trotting art critics have voiced their desire for documenta to be moved to a more

[108] Ibid*,* 103.

[109] Ibid, 107.

[110] Ibid, 103.

[111] Ibid, 112.

cosmopolitan or fashionable city, documenta is indissolubly linked with Kassel. Saehrendt (sometimes tongue in cheek in his tone, but never malicious) describes Kassel as a city that is the ideal "beige background" for contemporary art and a city that has become a white cube gallery writ large, a kind of city-wide stage set for a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Kassel, he argues, is "the Cinderella of German cities," and documenta is her fairy godmother of sorts (or to use the imagery from the Grimms' version of the tale, documenta is her gift-giving, magical, and maternal elder tree). As such, the event of documenta facilitated Kassel's transition from abject squalor in the immediate aftermath of World War II to her international prominence and notoriety.[112] The city and the event are married together and, according to Saehrendt, to rip them apart would not only change Kassel for the worse, but the event of documenta would be altered fundamentally were another town to host it.

Although Kassel is now best known as a "place of art," one must also to take stock of the way in which it is also a "place of fairy tales." Using the phrase of Bazon Brock, Saehrendt describes Kassel as a "knowledge landscape."[113] That is, the Hessian region in which Kassel is located retains a particular mindset and culture that reflects local legends and fairy tales, many of which are dark, violent, and fearsome.[114] This fairy

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[112] Ibid, 103.

[113] Ibid, 102.

[114] Saehrendt writes, "Because of the frequently gruesome fairy tales of the Grimms, plus numerous stories of witches, vampires, and werewolves from regional mythology, one may wonder whether this emerges as a basic feature of the Hessian mentality. This phenomenon was also dealt with by the Allied occupation after World War II. At the time, the officer T. J. Leonard of the British Military Government, on behalf of the Textbook Section, analyzed the German textbooks. He believed that the 'crude and terrible details' that he found in German school texts of the Grimms would have had a fatal effect: 'It is the whole fairy tale atmosphere that is poor, it is un-Christian, outdated, a relic of the bad past which for too long oppressed the hearts of Germans: the visions of gnomes and fairies, giants and witches roaming the country' are the expression of a false education of the Germans 'in that the supernatural occupies so much space.'" [My translation.]

tale culture has very real historical flashpoints, such as when the Allies who occupied the region targeted Kassel's fairy tale legacy and culture specifically for remediation after World War II; they banned *Children's- and Household Tales* in Hessen for a period, and espoused the idea that the Grimm fairy tales would have deleterious, if not fatal effects on German youth. If one is to consider the phenomenon of documenta completely, one must also consider the way in which the cultural landscape developed over the centuries preceding the event by the dark, brooding fairy tales that linger like a thick fog in gullies and valleys. While the Hessian city and its environs may not be any more "authentically German" than the stories that the Grimms collected from their Huguenot informants, the particular histories, stories, and myths of Kassel and the Grimms' contribution to that knowledge landscape certainly constitute a singular and irreproducible environment. Although the history of fairy tales and documenta are not told together for reasons I will explore later, this knowledge landscape grounds documenta, shapes it dynamically, and informs the way in which the art event is understood and framed, as well as our understanding of fairy tales within this context.

While today fairy tales are perhaps most commonly and popularly associated with children, fantastical wish fulfillment, and the saccharine plot lines and proscriptive gender roles of Disney adaptations, the genre of storytelling did not originate as such exactly. When Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm collected the folk stories, fairy tales, and fables that constitute *Children's- and Household Tales*, many of the stories in their volume were decidedly *not* kid-friendly (and, incidentally, the presence of magical fairies are actually

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Ibid, 13.

rather rare in their compendium). The Grimms' fairy tales contained substantial bawdy humor and violence, and before being collected were originally frequently told by and to adults after the children's bedtime and in spaces associated with domestic labor. ("Little Red Riding Hood" might serve as an example of the kind of story that, depending upon the context, could be told in a risqué manner for mature audiences; even today her character frequently takes on overtly sexual valences in advertisements, adult-oriented movies, and other instances of popular culture. In this story, a young lady known best for her crimson clothing and vernal dalliances readily gets into bed with a poorly disguised, seductive, and voracious wolf. The sexual innuendo of this story was explicit in some French versions recorded before the Grimms' edition, and certainly an adept storyteller with a penchant for lewd humor could happily exploit the suggestive twists in the tale.[115])

The tremendous popularity of the Grimms' published fairy tales and the extent to which they appealed to children initially took the brothers by surprise, although this guided the way in which they edited and modified the tales over the course of their careers. (The Grimms did publish another, smaller volume of fairy tales, *German Legends*, meant explicitly for children and families, which did not prove to be as popular.) After their first edition of fairy tales, which they intended for an academic audience of folklore scholars and philologists, the Grimms came to the realization that they needed to tailor the stories in their volumes to a public, lay, and largely juvenile audience. Subsequently, in the verbiage of Jack Zipes, the brothers "vaccinated," censored, and moralized the following six editions of their collection. As Zipes points out

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[115] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*, ed. and trans., Maria Tatar (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2012), 146-155.

in *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, the first edition of their iconic volume (1812/1815) was far more faithful to the oral storytellers from whom the Grimms collected their tales than was the final seventh edition. Although textually furthest from the oral sources the Grimms consulted and transcribed, the seventh edition is commonly accepted as the standard or definitive edition of fairy tales, which was the product of forty years of edits, over which Wilhelm labored predominantly.[116]

The original goal of the Grimms' fairy tale collecting project was not to disseminate moralizing literature for children (as the function of *Children's- and Household Tales* later became), but rather to preserve the stories indigenous to the region of Hessen in order to better understand and preserve the German language and culture in essentialist terms, such that they might aid in the formulation of a modern German nation-state. The Grimms hoped that in unearthing the *Naturpoesie*, or natural poetry of Germany, they might discover an authentically German cultural quality, which could be crystallized and used toward nationalistic purposes. (Germany did not become a modern unified country, the German Empire, until 1871; prior to this point, it was a loose association thirty-nine sovereign states.) In the preface to *Children's- and Household Tales*, the brothers wrote explicitly that some of the stories within the volume should not be told to youngsters, instructing parents and guardians to exercise judgement and discretion when choosing a story to tell (effectively, they gave the volume of stories a modern-day PG-rating).

[116] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, ed. and trans., Jack Zipes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), xx-xxi.

Additionally, and contrary to the popular assumption that fairy tales are mere wish fulfillment narratives that end with a "happily ever after," many of the stories the Grimms collected originated as either direct or indirect responses to troublesome contemporaneous events and existential threats. For example, Maria Tatar notes in *The Annotated Brothers Grimm* that "the German term for fairy tales (*Märchen*) is a diminutive form of the word for 'news.'"[117] She cites the Grimms' story "How Children Played Butcher with Each Other," a violent tale in which children –– whom today psychologists would describe as too young to be capable of symbolic thinking –– "play butcher" with each other, but in doing so abandon the space of imaginative play and literally slaughter the child designated to play the role of "pig." Tatar writes that this story "appeared in the *Berliner Abendblätter*, a short-lived newspaper…. The incident was based on a published report from 1555."[118] Over the centuries, long after this piece of news could be considered new, and long before it appeared in Heinrich von Kleist's *Abendblätter* around 1810, the story was circulated orally as a cautionary tale, rather than as a wonder tale (in the story, no magical act intercedes to prevent a child's unnecessary death, nor does the child come back to life, rectify any moral imbalance, or otherwise end the story happily). Even the Grimms' mother told them the story of "How Children Played Butcher with Each Other" when they were children, in order to encourage her youngsters to play carefully (Wilhelm Grimm thought the brutal tale was a useful didactic tool and encouraged adults to tell it to their little ones).

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[117] Grimm, *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*, 406.

[118] Ibid.

Even fairy tales that do not reference specific current or historical events directly may recall very real existential dilemmas and threats. For example, the story of "Hansel and Gretel" emerged from a time of widespread famine, when it was not uncommon for parents to make the unthinkably difficult choice between watching their children starve to death and abandoning or euthanizing them. (In the story, a family is facing starvation and the two young children are repeatedly abandoned in the woods by their father and step-mother so that they might die in the forest from exposure or a wild animal attack rather than from hunger at home.) Additionally, during the Grimms' lifetimes and throughout the early modern period in general, high mortality rates among women of childbearing years made the occurrence of stepmothers a commonplace, and these women frequently managed blended households teetering on the brink of survival.[119]

In addition to the ways in which fairy tales are often extrapolated from real life events and problems, it is important to recognize the Grimms' collection of fairy tales as a powerful vehicle that transmits ideologies and values in a seductive way, even when the values that are taught may reinforce injustice or bigotry. For example, as Maria Tatar examines at length in *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, frequently the brothers' stories emphasize gender roles in which boys are heroic and emancipatory (and frequently, she argues, none too brilliant but, to their benefit, lucky), whereas girls are passive, servile, and forced into humiliating circumstances. Fathers are often absent and passively allow hardship to befall their children, while women frequently are either angelic mothers who die at the opening of a tale or evil stepmothers and witches. Tatar notes that over the course of the Grimms' volumes, evil mothers gradually transform into

[119] Tatar, *The Hard Facts*, 49-50.

evil stepmothers; this not only reflects the historical circumstance of maternal mortality rates but also lessens the blow of violence coming from a maternal figure when the biological mother is replaced by a more distant family member, the stepmother, who is not related by blood.[120]

Too often, the child abuse that occurs in fairy tales remains unaddressed, excused, rationalized, or naturalized, and violence in general is typically justified, if not celebrated uncritically or used for entertainment. Finally, some of the tales collected by the Grimms contain troublesome xenophobic and anti-Semitic messages, as may be found in stories such as "The Jew in the Brambles" and "The Good Bargain." "The Jew in the Brambles" tells the story of a "good" young servant who is swindled out of years of pay by his skinflint of a master. When he finally goes out to explore the world, the servant is granted three magical tools, which he uses subsequently to torture a Jewish man he encounters on the road. With his magic fiddle, the servant compels the Jew to dance in a bramble bush, thus shredding the man's clothes and scratching him all over; with his magical tools, the dimwitted servant finally succeeds in taking the Jew's bag full of money. When the Jew brings his case of abuse before a local judge, the servant is condemned to hang, until, on the gallows, he plays his magic fiddle, which forces everyone who hears it to dance uncontrollably. The servant is able to talk his way out of his death sentence, and he ultimately forces a confession out of the Jew that his riches were actually stolen. Hence, it is the Jew who is condemned to hang as a thief, rather than the mischievous servant.

Maria Tatar observes that in other recorded versions of this story, the story's central conflict unfolds not between a servant and a Jew, but between a servant and a

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[120] Ibid, 85-155.

monk or priest, so "when faced with the option of including an anti-clerical tale or an anti-Semitic tale, [the Grimms] chose the latter."[121] Additionally, in the Grimms' version of the story, "the Jew becomes the scapegoat for the master's miserliness…. [yet the tale] fails to offer a critique of that scapegoating and instead legitimizes it in its final tableau. In its repeated use of the attribute 'good' to describe the servant, the false accusations ring true as a global accusation of all Jews as thieves. The Jew in the story is never seen as victim but as the deserving target of punishment."[122] This story was included not only in German editions, but also English editions of the Grimms' fairy tales up until the 1930s, and English illustrators such George Cruikshank and Arthur Rackham relied on racist Jewish stereotypes for their pictures that depicted a carnivalesque delight in the torture of the Jew (fig. 1.26). In doing so, "The Jew in the Brambles," and other anti-Semitic fairy tales in the Grimms' collections, normalized and condoned anti-Semitism and promulgated hateful and hackneyed clichés of Jewish avarice, which could later be used to condone real violence against and suspicion of Jewish people.

Stories such as these indicate a general cultural distrust of Jews in Germany – not just in the nineteenth century when the Grimms collected the tales, but in the centuries preceding the brothers as well as those that followed them – and they probably also reveal Jacob and Wilhelm's personal veins of anti-Semitism. Again, Tatar notes,

> Wilhelm Grimm's friendship with members of the conservative Christian-German Society in Berlin may have been symptomatic of a deep strain of anti-Semitism and… the *German Legends* published by the Grimms intensifies that suspicion because of its inclusion of two tales about bloodthirsty Jews. Furthermore, a dream recording by Wilhelm Grimm in 1810 recycles motifs from 'The Jew in the

[121] Grimm, *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*, 398.

[122] Ibid.

> Brambles,' suggesting that the tale resonated powerfully with him on an unconscious level.[123]

Maria Tatar's observations indicate a couple of things. First, fairy tales are not innocent. They are not necessarily benign, enchanting stories for children, and their function is not universally innocuous (or inoculating), redemptive, or therapeutic (as child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim claimed). Fairy tales provide powerful motifs, narratives, and sets of values that contribute to the framework within which children play, experiment, and think, and which frequently linger to provide the fantasy structures that grownups hang onto — frameworks that adults replicate orally and in print, in the image of their own predispositions, histories, and biases. Sometimes fairy tales teach children about teamwork and persistence, as in "Hansel and Gretel," and sometimes children are taught to torment and delight in the misfortune of those whom they perceive to be different from themselves, as in "The Jew in the Brambles." Sometimes children internalize stories of romance and adventure in which a princess is saved by a prince, as in "Sleeping Beauty," and sometimes fairy tale characters are terrorized by (step-) parents who threaten youngsters with incest or abuse as in "Furrypelts" or "Cinderella." And finally, frequently the Grimms' fairy tales promote morals of resilience and ingenuity at the very same time as they advocate forms of violence and bigotry. For example, Hansel and Gretel ultimately work together to get out of the perilous woods, but not without burning the witch alive; Cinderella marries a prince, but her step-sisters are maimed and blinded at the end of the story; Sleeping Beauty, whose catatonic state precludes her from giving consent, awakens at the moment that a total stranger kisses her in bed.

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[123] Ibid, 397.

Secondly, fairy tales might reveal powerful psychological insights. Wilhelm Grimm's dream that incorporated elements of "The Jew in the Brambles" is one of many instances in which people latch on to a particular fairy tale or scene from a story that resonates with them deeply. The fairy tale scholar Bruno Bettelheim, a Freudian child psychologist who survived the Dachau and Buchenwald concentration camps, took a keen interest in the ways in which fairy tales function on an unconscious level. Writing about fairy tales in his book *Uses of Enchantment*, Bettelheim stated that "more can be learned from them about the inner problems of human beings, and of the right solutions to their predicaments in any society, than from any other type of story within a child's comprehension."[124] Similar to Freud's conception of the latent and manifest content of dreams, Bettelheim believed that fairy tales too contain overt and covert meanings, which communicate differently to young children and adults. Fairy tales, for Bettelheim, may be used as imaginative vehicles by which one can work through unconscious problems via the conscious format of storytelling and fantasy. He writes, "when unconscious material *is* to some degree permitted to come to awareness and worked through in imagination, its potential for causing harm — to ourselves or others — is much reduced; some of its forces can then be made to serve positive purposes."[125] For Bettelheim, fairy tales are unparalleled in their therapeutic uses, particularly for children, but also for adults. However, as we have seen in the case of Wilhelm Grimm's dream, fairy tales are *not always* therapeutic, neither do they always serve positive purposes. As I will discuss in more depth later in Chapter Two, the utility of fairy tales and their therapeutic properties,

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[124] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 5.

[125] Ibid, 7.

as Bettelheim described them, have serious limitations, and his estimation of the uses of enchantment was overly idealistic and rosy.

One example of adults wielding fairy tales deliberately and explicitly to mold children's perception of the world and subtly politicize youngsters was during the so-called "war of fairy tales" in Weimar Germany and during the Third Reich. After World War I, when Germany first experimented with democracy, the country was hit particularly hard by the double blow of paying reparations for World War I and the Great Depression. This led to widespread poverty, which affected Germany's youth disproportionately. The Weimar Period witnessed the widening division between the economically franchised and disenfranchised, even as it was a time of unparalleled artistic and cultural innovation. The largest political groups in the country, the Social Democrats (SPD), the Communists (KPD), and the National Socialists (NDSAP), all targeted the nation's young people for recruitment. Political groups aimed their sights particularly on those who came from the vulnerable and marginalized majority of the lower middle- and working classes, many of whom were confronted with homelessness and lives in which prostitution and criminality were both common and necessary.[126]

Life for many German youths during the Weimar Period bore similarities to those of fairy tale characters at the beginnings of stories: abuse, poverty, hunger, child labor, and dangerous working conditions were frequent occurrences, and insecurity in myriad forms was not unusual. Political parties saw this situation as ripe for their intervention. Not only did the dominant political organizations within Germany establish youth groups,

[126] Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and Fables from Weimar Days*, ed. and trans. Jack Zipes (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 5.

loosely based upon the previously existing adventure groups such as the *Wanderbund* (Wandering Group, est. 1896) and the *Wandervogel* (Wandering Bird, est. 1900), which promoted outdoor recreation, camaraderie, and holistic living, but many cultural leaders also turned to the national literary form, the fairy tale, and wrote their own ideologically driven fables and tales.[127] Jack Zipes writes in *Fairy Tales and Fables from Weimar Days*, "it is not difficult to see that the fairy tale had become the most popular genre [in Germany] and served to provide a sense of community. That is, the shared referential system of the symbols and motifs of a cultivated fairy-tale canon gave German readers, young and old, a means to identify themselves with important aspects of German culture."[128] Members of the Social Democrats and Communists published volumes of fairy tales with the goal of "proletarianizing" children (in contrast to Protestantizing them, as was the goal of the Grimms and their generation). Zipes notes, "The cultural movement [of left-wing political parties] entered a strong agit-prop phase in 1926 that lasted until the Nazi takeover in 1933."[129] These utopian and left-leaning fairy tales, however, failed to gain traction, in part because their target audience was too economically disadvantaged to buy books and because conservative-leaning schools and libraries resisted this counter-cultural material. Thus, according to Zipes, "reading audiences were swayed more and more to consume nationalist and *völkisch* tales in keeping with the growing chauvinism during the 1920s. One need only read the

[127] Ibid, 4-5.

[128] Ibid, 10.

[129] Ibid, 16.

conservative and liberal magazines and annuals for children to note the increase in allusions and connections between traditional folk symbols and Nazi ideology."[130]

Ultimately, the progressive experimentation with fairy tales that had flowered during the Weimar Period, like other politically and socially liberal experiments in the arts and culture, were banned under the Nazis, and the party subsequently appropriated traditional stories like those by the Grimms and Hans Christian Andersen to use toward the advancement their National Socialist ideology.[131] Linda Dégh notes that the Nazis used the Grimms' stories extensively, which were particularly popular during the 1930s and '40s. She writes, "Ideologists of the Third Reich consciously exploited Jacob Grimm's idea that *tales are direct descendants of German mythology*. They saw tale heroes as pioneers of the racist causes and models for the desirable 'fundamental German' prototype. They demanded that every German household own a copy of the Grimm collection, 'this most important work among our sacred books,' and that every school use it as a textbook" [my italics].[132] In their hands, both myths and fairy tales were about origin stories, and the Grimm fairy tales were direct descendants of Norse-Germanic mythology, the golden heirs to the crown. Nazi educators also put their own original fairy tales to educational and nationalist use to an extent that progressive, socialist, and Communist-oriented fairy tales had not been able to achieve, and wrote moralizing tales in which, frequently, home-grown heroes defeat threatening, evil,

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[130] Ibid, 23-24.

[131] Ibid, 25.

[132] Linda Dégh, "Grimm's *Household Tales* and Its Place in the Household: The Social Relevance of a Controversial Classic," *Western Folklore* 38.2 (1979): 93.

outside forces, thus fulfilling in a perverted fashion the didacticism the Grimms had advocated for fairy tales a century earlier.

While in the early decades of the nineteenth century the Grimms recommended that parents make judicious decisions regarding which tales they presented to their children and when, later the Nazi party assumed the role of deciding which fairy tales to teach and how to interpret them in a formal education setting, and the party officially stated that *all* Grimm tales were suitable for *all* children. Unsurprisingly, the fairy tales told to young German children during the Third Reich described the German *völkisch* heroes as frequently overthrowing hostile, non-Aryan, or foreign forces. Nazi educators, for example, interpreted Little Red Riding Hood as an allegorical figure for the poor German people, while the Big Bad Wolf represented the threatening and bestial Jews, and the heroic Huntsman served the role of Hitler himself.[133] In addition to using the Grimms' fairy tales as teaching material, Nazi propagandists wrote and published their own fairy tales, such as the collection *der Giftpilz (The Poisonous Mushroom*) from 1938, which was meant to inject anti-Semitic and racist thinking into the youngest minds in Germany (fig. 1.27). The cover of the volume features a cartoon illustration of an anthropomorphic mushroom with a prominent nose, broad lips, full beard, and a Star of David emblazoned on what would be his chest, behind whom four smaller mushroom-men peer, the mushroom caps on their heads resembling military helmets. In case this broad caricature on the cover of *Der Giftpilz* was not legible to young readers, one of the stories in the book, "How to Tell a Jew," depicts a school lesson in which young boys are taught the physical identifiers of Jews, one of which is a nose in the shape of the number

[133] Ibid, 95.

"6" (fig. 1.24). Another story in *der Giftpilz* tells of a young brother and sister, whom an evil Jewish child molester attempts to lure with candy so he can kidnap them. Broadly, this collection of Nazi children's stories teaches young ones how to identify Jews, based upon coarse, stereotypical physiognomic features; to fear, distrust, and segregate them; and finally, the book exhorts school-age kids to protect themselves as vigilantly as one might when confronted by a crop of poisonous mushrooms.[134] Incidentally, the publisher of the volume of children's stories, Julius Streicher, was so virulent in his anti-Semitic thoughts and actions that he was convicted of crimes against humanity in 1946, for which he was hanged during the Nuremberg Trials.

Fairy tales may be utilized to either dark or utopian ends and are powerful vehicles that are uniquely suited to enchantment and imaginative transportation. Scott Harshbarger, in his article "Grimm and Grimmer: 'Hansel and Gretel' and Fairy Tale Nationalism," demonstrated the ways in which many classic Grimm fairy tales condone and support violence against perceived outsider groups, and argued that the properties of fairy tale worlds create "parable[s] ripe for nationalist appropriation."[135] He observed, "the Grimm Brothers and the Nazis had much in common, not the least of which was their shared interest in transporting their readers/followers into narrative worlds where… the good and pure could live 'happily ever after.' From this perspective, it doesn't appear coincidental that the Grimms and the Nazis were both ardent supporters of nationalism – an ideology which… is powered largely by the imagination."[136] If the goal of the

[134] Stephanie Peters, "Nazi Fairy Tales," *World War II* 30.2 (2015), 45-49.

[135] Scott Harshbarger, "Grimm and Grimmer: 'Hansel and Gretel' and Fairy Tale Nationalism," in *Style* 47, No. 4 (Winter 2013): 490.

[136] Ibid, 493.

Grimms' fairy tale work was to recuperate the stories and *völkisch* sayings that might underpin and congeal an emerging nationalist German identity, the Nazis used these foundational texts to advance a racist nationalist ideology and exploit a rhetoric prevalent in many fairy tales that condones cruelty and violence, intolerance to outside groups, obedience to authority figures, and the ultimate triumph of heroic characters, be they salt of the earth, royal, or any admixture thereof. Indeed, Dégh notes that after the end of World War II, fairy tales became associated with the horrors of anti-Semitic pogroms and the Holocaust, and "in accordance with what the Nazis had suggested, the opinion spread that German tales, particularly those of the Grimms, were responsible for Auschwitz, Buchenwald, the horrors of the war, and extreme racial intolerance."[137]

As such, the Grimms' fairy tales not only fell precipitously out of fashion in a post-War Germany that attempted to demonstrate its rapid de-Nazification to the global community, but the Grimms' volume, once mandated for the bookshelf of every German home, school, and library, was banned for years in some places after World War II, such as Hessen. Scott Harshbarger notes not only the outright anti-Semitism in various Grimm tales, but he and others, such as Hugh Redwald Trevor-Roper and Thomas Szasz, have argued for the interchangeability of the figure of the Jew and the witch within the broader European imagination.[138] If one applies their argument for the interchangeability of the characters of the Jew and the witch to a Grimm tale such as "Hansel and Gretel," the figure of the cannibalistic witch whom Gretel burns up in the oven becomes a haunting figure indeed, and in this transposition, the imagery of "Hansel and Gretel" uncannily and

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[137] Dégh, "Grimm's *Household Tales*," 96.

[138] Harshbarger, "Grimm and Grimmer," 499.

eerily evokes the crematoria of Nazi concentration camps. In Arthur Rackham's illustration of the story from 1909, for example (fig. 1.29), the witch's face bears similarities with the mushroom-man from *der Giftpilz*, and the other stereotypical images of Jews contained within the volume: she has a bulbous nose, heavily lidded and beady eyes, and thick lips; additionally, her cache of rubies and pearls, which Gretel finds after she shoves the witch in the oven, plays into racist stereotypes of avaricious Jews hoarding their wealth, as may be found in "The Jew in the Brambles."

When one considers the ways in which fairy tales can both enchant and be used for nefarious ends, and particularly their legacy in twentieth-century Germany, it is understandable why many scholars of documenta have historically been reluctant to make the connection between the art event and the legacy of the Grimms in Kassel, even if the two institutions are pillars of city's cultural legacy. Particularly at its inception, associating a contemporary art show in Germany with the Grimm patrimony would not just pose the potential of infantilizing the event or presenting it as low-brow rather than avant garde, but more seriously, it would implicitly associate documenta with a cultural tradition from the country's Nazi past – a painful legacy that the organizers of documenta were explicitly trying to rectify and repair. Instead, just as Bode tapped into the internationalism of Latinate neologisms, the organizers of documenta used the language and framework of Greek myths and stagecraft to create a sense of documenta's future enduring legacy and establish a relationship to international values.

Today, and particularly for my project, it is important to take the relationship between documenta and fairy tales seriously not only because of their geographical and historical proximity, but to understand the way in which documenta has acted as a fairy

tale in both negative and positive ways. By using some of the strategies of fairy tales, it is also possible to conceive of ways in which Germany can use the literary genre and its particular conceptual properties to work through its troubled history of iconoclasm, xenophobia, and ethnic cleansing. The Nazis' use of the literary genre demonstrates why merging history with wonder tales can be a volatile choice, one that may be used to manipulative ends. As such, it stands as an example of why it is dangerous only to focus on the side of fairy tales that enchant readers and listeners with stories of wish fulfilment, happy endings, and in-group heroics, while rationalizing or surreptitiously weaponizing the potential abuses and violence advocated for in fairy tales. Fairy tales can be used to either dull or sharpen critical thinking, just as they can be used to reinforce xenophobic divisions or promote cooperation and work though trauma.

As I write about fairy tales and build the relationship between them and documenta, I wish to be mindful of the ways in which fairy tales might be used therapeutically, but also may incite or encourage violent, hostile, or negative mindsets and tendencies, such as anti-Semitism, racism, classism, sexism, and childism. Similarly, I will attend to the ways in which fairy tales might be used to whitewash and over-simplify complex histories and stories; often, they tell tales of convenient and larger-than-life heroes and resolve sometimes irresolvable endings; thus, they may manipulate the thinking of some of a society's most vulnerable and naïve thinkers. However, whether we like it or not, fairy tales constitute a large part of the conceptual syntax we use to understand the world around us and our place within it. Jack Zipes writes that "we are impelled and compelled to use [fairy tales] to make meaning out of our lives."[139] If

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[139] Jack Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 2012), xii.

scholars such as Bettelheim and Zipes are to be believed, the fairy tale is a narrative form that in the contemporary moment, just as in centuries (or millennia) past, serves particular psychological ends efficiently. These ends and fairy tales' uses of enchantment, however, are not pre-determined, nor are the ways in which they are used always or predictably positive.

***Spider* and Arachne**

Throughout this chapter, I have picked my way through the history of *Entartete Kunst* and documenta 1, weaving a web between them and a fairy tale landscape. Now I have come back to where I started; that is, I am now circling back to Louise Bourgeois. Within the historiography of her oeuvre, there is a central tension as Mieke Bal formulated it – between reading her work in terms of anterior narratives and in the sometimes-messy *Jetztzeit* of encounter. That is, between reading her work in terms of her artistic mythology, or as something that each object produces with a viewer in the moment of the now.

Similarly, the function of storytelling has been important for all of the strands I have woven into this web, from the mythology that both Velázquez and Bode employed to the fairy tales used by the Grimms and the Nazis. Fairy tales, when used as anterior narratives, either for artworks or for nation building, may be dangerous. In the case of art, they reduce the artwork to iconographic reliance upon a previous foundational text, and as such fidelity to the text becomes the measuring stick by which the artwork is measured, thus stripping the art object of its autonomy.[140] Or, as Bal writes, "by

[140] Bal, *Louise Bourgeois'* Spider, 32.

specifically ignoring the visuality of the particular work, a narrative of anteriority bypasses what the work of art as a theoretical object has to say."[141] In the case of nationalism, fairy tales or myths may, as Scott Harshbarger noted, act as readymade parables "ripe for nationalist appropriation," narrative forms that mold listeners to expect stories that resolve in a happily ever after for those who are of pure of heart and are virtuous. (Certainly, this is the kind of "barbarism" Benjamin describes as being central to materialist histories – the kind of narrative form that justifies the plundering, murder, and conquest that results in victory, and calls the spoils of this looting "culture.") However, by examining art objects as theoretical objects that function in the moment of the now, we might allow ourselves to be "caught up between narrativity and sculpturality" by objects that "'build' a home for old stories in the *now*."[142] The Fridericianum, I contend, may be read as one example of these theoretical objects that Bal describes – a "house of the mind," a shelter, or a tent that, as I wrote at the beginning of this chapter, enfolds history within it.

While Arnold Bode framed his original documenta as a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, he substituted the language of mythology for that of fairy tales. However, the anterior narrative he referenced, that of *Entartete Kunst*, proved to trap him within the discursive logic of the event. That is, it reflected a fantasy of what constituted modernist art in the first half of twentieth century Germany: a vision that was overwhelmingly male, Protestant, white, and politically centrist. In many ways, he repeated the visual rhetoric of

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[141] Ibid, 33.

[142] Ibid, 34.

Entartete Kunst and continued a long tradition in which history was told as a series of oedipal power struggles and patrilineage.

However, when viewed as a theoretical object, documenta, viewed through its primary physical space, the Fridericianum, may engage viewers more actively, elicit their active participation, and simultaneously posit a different relationship with temporality and historiography. Moreover, if we may view the Fridericianum like Bourgeois's *Spider* or *Precious Liquids*, we may find ourselves in a space that "requires a 'house,' a habitat for the subject to be, precisely *not* master of."[143] This is a container that splits into a cell that further subdivides, an object that is constituted by its fragmentation and variation, that while it may become whole again, is never the same structure as it was previously, even as it carries its past and future within it. When engaged with in the moment of the now, in Bal's words, "the *Jetztzeit* is drawn out into long threads. Like the ribs of spider webs, the threads are centrifugal; they each go in a different direction."[144] While the Fridericianum and the stories it contains pluck on the strings of fairy tales, the stories it tells are not reliant upon that which was codified in a book or told previously. Rather, it is a maternal structure that gathers listeners toward the hearth, toward her spinning fingers, and tells stories that twist and turn according to the situation, her audience, and round the contours of current events. And while she may be homey, she also readily flips into unhomely, into the uncanny. Just as, according to Bal, *Spider* is both uncanny and motherly, so too is the Fridericianum an architectural, sculptural, and dramatic structure that "recalls the home the mother's body once was, when we had no mastery

[143] Bal, *Louise Bourgeois'* Spider, 38.

[144] Ibid, 75.

whatsoever."[145] The Fridericianum is simultaneously a house that is also a trap, a cage, and a tent; it is a museum whose shelves were filled with not only books but glass vessels in which animal specimens were preserved in brandy (precious liquids indeed). It was a ruin that could take on monumental proportions and a library that in the hands of conquerors was also a parliament. As a spiderlike home, a space in which spiders might crawl in the basements and in the Zwehrenturm, a body that looms over and guards that which it contains, a cell within a cell, a theoretical object that may be used to refute anterior narratives such as oedipalism, and as such, is more like Uttu and less like the paternal lineages upon which documenta was based. The Fridericianum, and the documenta that it houses, may be seen as being based upon ghostly mothers and their return, even when (or perhaps precisely when) their return is anachronistic. Or at least, that is the story I would like to tell about this place, as I weave a web in the moment of the now.

[145] Ibid, 73.

Chapter 2
Through the Woods: Joseph Beuys's *7000 Oaks*, Kassel and Working Through

Introduction

The night of June 18, 1982, a group of young men vandalized Joseph Beuys's *7000 Oaks*, the monumental artwork that Beuys designed for documenta 7, which took place during the summer of that year.[146] Beuys's intention was to create an artwork that was part Action, part Social Sculpture, and part Environmental Art: it was and continues to be a city-wide, permanent installation of seven thousand oak trees planted throughout the city of Kassel, each tree paired with an accompanying basalt stele. Beuys envisioned *7000 Oaks* as an urban afforestation project, one that required community involvement to plant the trees and erect the stones. While the work was in the primary stages of its progress, the 7000 basalt monoliths were piled into a wedge-shaped triangular heap on the Friedrichsplatz, the carefully manicured eighteenth-century grassy square before the façade of the Museum Fridericianum. It was this pile of stones that the vandals defaced, only three days after the last of the rocks were unloaded onto the Friedrichsplatz. Under the cover of night, the young men spray painted the basalt hot pink. Upon the discovery of the defacement, Beuys immediately ordered the pink paint power-washed off the rocks,[147] and the young men who had spray painted the artwork were obligated to foot the bill.[148] This series of actions is typically relegated to a footnote when it is mentioned at all in the literature on *7000 Oaks*, and as such I have been unable to learn anything more

[146] Fernando Groener, Rose-Maria Kandler, and Norbert Scholz, "Chronologie," in *7000 Eichen: Joseph Beuys* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 1987), 174.

[147] George Baker and Christian Philipp Müller, "A Balancing Act," *October*, 82, Autumn (1997), 107.

[148] Groener, Kandler, and Scholz, "Chronologie," 174.

about the incident — who these men were, why they chose to vandalize the artwork, or if their choice of color had a broader meaning. When this event is mentioned, the authors who write about it imply that this was a manifestation of Kasselers' broader dissatisfaction with the unsightliness of Beuys's project in its initial stages and his methods. However, even if the young men did not invest deep thought into the deeper meaning of their choice of spray paint, I believe that their act of iconoclasm reveals broader insights about *7000 Oaks* that are significant to consider. One main lesson is that it indicates the interpretive limits Beuys attempted to impose upon his artwork, even as he was an artist who advocated for unconventional possibilities for what could be art and unorthodox material practices. Another lesson is that the spray-painting gestures toward ways in which I might embark upon an expanded reading of this work, specifically within the context of German iconography and tropes.

In this chapter, I proffer a fairy tale reading of *7000 Oaks*, in order to think of it as an anti-monument to the traumatic legacy of the Nazi period in German history, as well as an attempt to reclaim nationalist symbols toward the purposes of environmental (and by extension, social and political) remediation. Although Beuys did not overtly tap into the Grimms' fairy tales, nor did he claim for this artwork to be explicitly about the legacy of the Nazis and their symbols, throughout his artistic career he did rely heavily on myth making and drew upon many motifs that are common between both fairy tales and myth. Not only did Joseph Beuys promote a narrative of his life that was itself a kind of fairy tale, but the materials, tropes, and themes of his work are very much in keeping with those fairy tales. When Joseph Beuys embarked upon *7000 Oaks*, his intention was to bring the forest into the city, and thus to transform Kassel from a depressing concrete

hamlet (an infamous reputation agreed upon by art critics such as Douglas Crimp, although a position to which I do not personally subscribe) into a primeval, mythical *Wald*, or woods. George Baker and Christian Philipp Müller write that "Beuys ultimately aspired to return the city to the perceived purity of a German mythical past,[149] a mythology that was latent in the very choice of basalt stones and oak trees as the substance of his 'Social Sculpture.'"[150] From the material of his life story to the physical materials he employed, I posit that *7000 0aks* may be read within the context of fairy tales. Based upon these connections, as well as the ways in which Beuys's work connects with fairy tales on a thematic and historiographic levels, I endeavor to unearth the ways in which *7000 Oaks* taps into the tropes of an enchanted environment and also think through the ways in which characters lost in the woods use that space to work through pressing existential problems. Moreover, even though *7000 Oaks* is a vast, materially substantial artwork, I understand it to employ the strategy of negative presentation. That is, by the absences that it invokes, it brings to mind that which is gone and may only return through imaginative conjurations.

I will read *7000 Oaks* in a magical way, which will allow me to time travel along a path that winds between 1982, the 1940s, and 1812, while making a few other detours

[149] Benjamin Buchloh, in conversation with Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson in 1980 regarding Beuys's show at the Guggenheim, directly criticized Beuys for his evocation of Germany's mythical past, even as the artist avoided mentioning this as a specific historical referent. Buchloh argued forcefully that "historical thought on any level – whether general historical thought, art-historical thought, any attempt to acknowledge the specific conditions of a historical situation – is rejected by Beuys altogether. The history of post-Second-World-War Germany, which is Beuys's own historical situation; the history of an emerging, economically powerful society; the histories of specific art forms – all of these are ignored, falsified, or mythified."
Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson, "Joseph Beuys at the Guggenheim," *October*, 12 Spring (1980): 11.

[150] Baker and Müller, "A Balancing Act," 107.

along the journey. In a way that engages performatively with the repetitions and circularity of both fairy tales and trauma (both of which I argue over the course of this chapter are necessary elements for understanding *7000 Oaks* and documenta), I encourage the reader to loop back in this text, indulge in the Alice in Wonderland-like rabbit holes that lengthy quotes proffer, pause to explore footnote asides that branch off of the beaten path, and draw connections between themes that are sometimes not presented in a straightforward, linear manner. My overall endeavor is to provide an unorthodox reading of *7000 Oaks* and resituate this artwork within the legacy of World War II. While many scholars read Beuys's artwork in terms of the artist's environmentalist artistic production (and certainly, this framework is logical), I argue that it is impossible to understand *7000 Oaks* fully if it is not also considered as a product that grew both out of Nazi iconography, as well as the thoughts of the German Romantics from the early nineteenth century. Situating the piece in relation to these antecedents not only provides a historical corrective (drawing links to previous eras that have otherwise been ignored), but follows through on the dark promise of nationalism that was both the original impetus for and repressed desire of documenta. As I demonstrated in Chapter 1, one of the overarching goals of documenta was for it to establish a clean break with Germany's National Socialist past. *7000 Oaks* refuses this clean break by pinning the event and Kassel down with an object, the oak, that has a long history as a nationalist symbol in the country. As such, it doesn't let documenta or Beuys off the hook when it comes to tough questions regarding memory, mourning, and redemption. These questions may ask: if *7000 Oaks* is about environmental and social remediation, what is the wound that is to be healed and what is the nature of the toxin that must be cleaned? My reading

of *7000 Oaks* holds organizers of documenta accountable for the way in which they evoke (or ignore) Germany's past (for example, Rudi Fuchs), as well as Beuys himself (whom Christian Saehrendt calls, for example, a "rock star of documenta" and Pamela Kort describes as "the long augured successor who could revive culture in Germany" [151]), who used a personal mythology over the course of his career to both explicate his artwork and position himself as a cultural messiah.

As *7000 Oaks* occupies a fairy tale space (it grows throughout the landscape in which the Brothers Grimm conducted the work for which they are best known), and because I understand it to employ fairy tale motifs, the historiography I use relies upon magical twists and turns. Like the character of Hansel who is stranded in the woods with his sister Gretel, over the course of this chapter I will sprinkle elements of my argument across the pages, setting out clues like a trail of pebbles for an intrepid reader to follow, so that she will not lose her way in the deep, dark forest. (According to the Grimms, at night when lit by the moon, the trail of shiny pebbles that the fairy tale siblings sprinkled along the forest floor glowed as brightly as newly minted coins.) Finally, transformation is at the heart of this chapter, both in the materials that Beuys used in his work and also in my reading of them. As in fairy tales, just as little boys might turn into birds and frogs may turn into princes, so too in this chapter stones may turn into bodies and bodies may turn into trees. Granules of laundry starch morph into poison pellets and a monumental sculpture transforms ominously into a mass grave. One would be wise to remember that frequently these transformations hinge upon an act of violence — after all, in "The Juniper Tree" a jealous step-mother murdered the little boy before he became a

[151] Gene Ray, "Preface," in *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy*, ed. Gene Ray (New York: D.A.P., 2001), 3.

resplendent bird, and a prevaricating princess in a rage smashed the frog against a wall before it metamorphosed into a prince in "The Frog Prince." These acts of violence should not be excused, ignored, or taken lightly in fairy tales *or* in the objects and events I examine. Finally, just as Beuys meant to transform the city of Kassel into a forest in his tree-planting campaign, so too I will employ the site of the deep, dark woods as a location of radical metamorphosis as well as danger. I journey through the woods in the hopes that I may come out safely on the other side, and I invite you as my traveling companion.

The Pink Stones as Palimpsest

The creation of *7000 Oaks* was a monumental undertaking, one that took five years to complete, and which Beuys did not live to see finished. As noted previously, the completion of the project required community engagement. Local volunteers were asked literally to "buy into" the artwork; each volunteer who paid 500 DM (roughly $210) was able to plant a tree and its companion stone marker in the city of Kassel, for which the participant received a "Tree Diploma" from Beuys's Free International University.[152] According to the artist's instructions, only when a volunteer planted an oak tree in Kassel would its accompanying stele be removed from the pile on the Friedrichsplatz and erected next to the sapling. Thus, the progressively diminishing mound of stone served as a timepiece for the work, and its gradual disappearance indicated the progress of the tree planting campaign. After it was erected next to its companion oak, the width of the basalt column could indicate comparatively the age and maturity of the oak, as the size of the tree slowly dwarfed the stone marker over the course of years. While volunteers planted

[152] Baker and Müller, "A Balancing Act," 103.

7000 Oaks, the pile of stone – placed prominently in the center of town – also encouraged city residents to engage with Beuys's project, subsidize, and eventually whittle down the pile of basalt into nothing.

While Beuys's project received some initial local support, it did not garner the overwhelming local enthusiasm he had hoped for, and many Kasselers objected to the rough, triangular mountain of stones directly in front of the primary documenta venue (fig. 2.1). Although Beuys framed the community engagement necessary to realize his artwork as Social Sculpture ("Social Sculpture" is a patently Beuysian art form that attempts to re-form society at large through volunteers' participation in expanded art events), some Kasselers interpreted the pile of rock in the center of town as an unsightly, manipulative ploy he designed to coerce their participation. Baker and Müller describe how many locals felt like their main city square was held ransom until they ponied up the money individually to make the mound of basalt go away. Describing this local sentiment, they write that "Beuys effectively attempted to force the citizens of Kassel to participate in the planting project; the Friedrichsplatz would not be returned to normal until all of the trees were finally planted," although his "scheme seems to have been unsuccessful in eliciting the direct participation of the citizens of Kassel."[153] Locals viewed *7000 Oaks* not simply an eyesore created by a charismatic albeit controversial artist, but the craggy mound also evoked the rubble caused by the destructive Allied bombing campaigns during World War II that blew Kassel apart, the detritus from which continued to litter the city for years after the war (fig. 2.2). Indeed, as described in

[153] Baker and Müller also note that "In 1984, Rudi Fuchs wrote a letter requesting financial support for the planting of the oaks that was sent to museums around the world."
Baker and Müller, "A Balancing Act," 103-4.

Chapter 1, in 1955, a full decade after the last of the wartime bombing, Arnold Bode's first documenta played an instrumental role in creating the impetus finally to clean up and restore the Friedrichsplatz and Museum Fridericianum, although the Fridericianum was not entirely restored until 1982. And so, in light of all these factors – the scale, the cost, the imposition upon public space – Beuys's project languished. Over the years that *7000 Oaks* was in progress, Beuys felt compelled to turn to more aggressive means of fundraising to ensure his expensive artwork's completion: he auctioned off a golden *Peace Hare* and *Sun*, made from melting down a replica of a tsar's crown, and he even agreed to make whiskey advertisements in Japan, the proceeds of which went to subsidize *7000 Oaks*.[154] Over the course of the five years it took for the work to be fully realized, the pile of basalt diminished and disseminated at an incremental pace, to the great annoyance of many city residents.[155]

Thus, the evening of June 18, 1982, when the young men painted *7000 Oaks* hot pink, Beuys's project was quite new, although not entirely new to local criticism. That documenta summer, Beuys was a controversial figure.[156] While Kasselers frequently

[154] Stefan Körner and Florian Bellin-Harder, "The *7000 Eichen* of Joseph Beuys – experiences after twenty-five years," *Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Vol 4 Issue 2, Autumn (2009), 11.

[155] Beuys provided precise instructions that when one of the rough columns of basalt was taken from the pile, it should be taken from the center, so the way in which the mound diminished visibly should feel slow and serve as a kind of timepiece for the execution of his project. Only when the pile of basalt stones disappeared would his be project be complete. (Or, arguably, then the first phase of the project would then reach completion.) Wenzel Beuys, in his father's posthumous stead, planted the final oak tree next to the first tree during the opening of documenta 8 in 1987.

[156] During the summer of 1982, not only was Beuys one of Germany's most prominent contemporary artists, he was also involved deeply in co-founding the German Green Party. Literally a rock star artist, he sang the anti-war song "*Sonne statt Reagan*," a pro-environmental, anti-Ronal Reagan protest song, with the popular German rock band BAP to crowds of enthusiastic thousands. (The title of the song is a pun on the German word "*regen*," or "rain," and the name of the American president at the time; it translates to "Sun instead of Reagan/rain." Beuys's performances with Germany's most popular band at the time were energetic and rousing, although video documentation of his performances indicate that Beuys's talents were perhaps not best employed as a *chanteur*.)

grumbled about his enigmatic and esoteric artworks, Beuys was nevertheless one of Germany's most prominent contemporary artists; although his work was generally regarded highly in Germany, he was also criticized harshly by American critics such as Benjamin Buchloh for his messianic bravado and fabricated, mythological biography (more on this later). This first time that *7,000 Oaks* was defaced,[157] it had only been a matter of weeks since Joseph Beuys planted the first "Beuys Oak" on the Friedrichsplatz, and the sapling looked puny next to the towering triangular pile of basalt in the face of the Museum Fridericianum (fig. 2.3). It was in this context that *7000 Oaks* became, in essence, a giant pink triangle.

While I have come across no evidence that the young men who painted the basalt triangle hot pink were working to advance a particular GLBTQ* agenda, or that Beuys, when he ordered the pink to be scrubbed off his work was consciously trying to excise any connection between his work and the iconography of the Holocaust, from the vantage point of my contemporary sensibilities, I cannot help but see *7000 Oaks* as a palimpsest. That is, even though Beuys purported to create an artwork that was about environmental greening and rebirth, the triangular pink patch that the Nazis forced homosexuals to wear in concentration camps lingers in my mind's eye over that original pile of rocks. Additionally, Beuys's choice immediately to remove this signifier, and the fact that this pink triangle is hardly ever noted, let alone explored, in the literature on *7000 Oaks* provides further impetus for me to examine the relationship between Beuys's work and the iconography used in Germany during World War II. (To my knowledge, no author

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[157] Sadly, vandals have repeatedly chopped down or otherwise damaged Beuys oaks and the basalt stele. George Baker and Christian Philipp Müller note that by as early as 1996, 269 trees and 324 basalt stones were missing from Kassel.
Baker and Müller, "A Balancing Act," 107.

has yet made the explicit connection between the spray-painted pile of stones and the Nazi pink triangle symbol.) This is particularly relevant within the discourse of memory, amnesia, trauma, and redemption, as theorists such as Andreas Huyssen have described it.[158] Viewed within the context of the Holocaust, *7000 Oaks* takes on new valences. The triangle of basalt stele magically, gruesomely shape-shifts in a flash of bright pink light between signs of new life and the patches worn forcibly by inmates at Nazi prisons. In another flash, it appears on the placards held by gay rights protesters in the United States during the Reagan administration's silence during the AIDS crisis, demonstrations that occurred during roughly the same period as Beuys's project was planted. I catch my breath as the individual basalt stones, long, slender, and human-sized, dissolve into the iconic images from the Nazi concentration camps of emaciated murdered bodies stacked upon each other like cord wood (fig. 2.4).[159] For this, and other reasons I will explore later, I find it necessary to read *7000 Oaks* within the context of wartime and post-World War II Germany, as well as within the specific context of Joseph Beuys's involvement in that war.

The vandalism of *7000 Oaks* resuscitated a period of history beyond which, since the aftermath of the war, Joseph Beuys struggled to move beyond. That is, Joseph Beuys, despite his most earnest attempts to close the door on the Nazi era and fashion a persona for himself in which he could act as a kind of German cultural savior who might usher in

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[158] See Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 2003.

[159] I chose intentionally to present a photograph of the stele in front of the Fridericianum here, rather than a photograph of scores of anonymous bodies at a concentration camp. I believe we all have mental images that may be brought to mind to compare with the image of Beuys's basalt stele, and I wish to not use the image of murdered humans trivially. Additionally, as will unfold later in this chapter, I understand *7000 Oaks* to employ the notion of negative presentation. That is, the very absence or void that it invokes is evocative of that which is gone and cannot be returned; it is a hole that cannot be filled.

a progressive agenda, nevertheless could never quite sever his post-war persona from his involvement in World War II and the dominant cultural ideology in which he came of age. This is reflected in and exacerbated by what Peter Nisbet calls "the Story," or the myth that Beuys told about his airplane crash, which happened while he served in Luftwaffe during World War II. In this Story, which is certainly a kind of fairy tale or myth, Beuys's airplane went down over Crimea, and while his copilot died in the accident, atomized upon impact, Beuys was thrown from the plane and survived. However, he was gravely injured and almost freezing, hidden under his airplane in the winter snow. The Germans abandoned their search efforts, and it was instead the local nomadic Tatars, with whom Beuys had previously established a friendship, that discovered the injured man and nursed him back to life. They slathered his body with fat and wrapped him in felt to revive him and keep him warm while he was unconscious, and he awoke from the traumatic accident several days later, in a German hospital bed, a changed man.

While critics such as Benjamin Buchloh have debunked Beuys's Story (although Beuys really was in an airplane crash, how could he know what had happened to him in the aftermath of the accident if he was unconscious the whole time?), Nisbet argues that the Story should not be understood literally.[160] Rather, he suggests that the Story may serve as an iconographic decoder ring for Beuys's artistic production and that "key experiences can be composed in part of imagined, intuited, subconscious elements."[161] Indeed, traditional readings of Beuys's work have been traced back to key objects from

[160] Peter Nisbet, "Crash Course: Remarks on a Beuys Story," in *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy*, ed. Gene Ray (D.A.P., New York: 2001), 10.

[161] Ibid.

the Story: fat and felt primary amongst them, as well as beeswax, animals, and other elemental materials. These things form the core of Beuys's oeuvre, and in order to understand his art, according to standard arguments, one must have a basic knowledge of Beuys's personal iconography and Story. (These objects are not unlike the magical substances that frequently occur in fairy tales: gold, magic beans, enchanted bones, talking animals, and the like.) However, one of the uses of Beuys's story was that of a messianic rebirth narrative. He is "reborn" with the fat and felt of the Tatars (who in the Story insist to Beuys that he is not really German, but Tatar like them), and this rebirth – which is both magical and ominously primitivizing – absolves him of the crimes he committed as a Nazi pilot, in thought and deed. The Story served as a kind of break for Beuys from which he could use a near-death experience to shed his skin as a member of the Nazi armed forces and be reborn into a de-Nazified cultural leader for a new Germany.

The idea that Beuys *could* or *should* move beyond the horrors inflicted by Germans during World War II is a troubling one, as is the implication that because he was absolved of sin by the events of a self-invented mythical past, he was thus fit and capable of guiding Germans' cultural progress (Beuys at times went so far as to describe himself as a *Führer*, or leader, using language that evokes Hitler's self-proclaimed role as nationalist leader). As writers such as Buchloh and Thomas Crow have argued, Beuys's position as the figure who might simultaneously lead Germany to a better cultural future, absolve the country of the Nazis' crimes, and finally, help to heal the wound not only mass murder and ethnic cleansing, but within the context of contemporary art, of the cultural cleansing that occurred during the Third Reich and Germany's virulent

iconoclasm and rupture with modernism after the Nazi purges of art that led up to and included *Entartete Kunst*, is deeply unsettling.[162] Whether or not he publicly or frequently acknowledged it, Beuys and his artwork are haunted by the Nazi past, a haunting that was compounded by the convenient past he constructed for himself (to borrow the language of Primo Levi in his autobiography, *The Periodic Table*).[163] Beuys's desire for redemption of his own personal crimes risks taking precedence over the myriad injuries that the Nazis and those complicit with them inflicted upon their fellow citizens and those in the path of their troops who meant to carve out *Lebensraum* for a "pure" ethnic German state: injuries including murder, torture, starvation, incarceration, slavery, involuntary participation in medical experiments, forced migration, family separation, loss of employment, and the thousands of subtle ways in which lives can be broken.

In my analysis and reading of *7000 Oaks*, I deviate from Beuys's authorial intention for his artwork, as well as conventional readings of it and similar afforestation projects.[164] That is, I do not read his work as an "ecological *Gesamtkunstwerk*," and

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[162] David Thistlewood, "Joseph Beuys's 'Open Work': its Resistance to Holistic Critiques," in *Joseph Beuys: Diverging Critiques*, ed. David Thistlewood (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), 5.

[163] Beuys's personal World War II "mythology" reminds me of a passage in Levi's *The Periodic Table*. The author, a survivor of the Auschwitz concentration camp, contemplates what may transpire when, years after the war, he is faced with the possibility of meeting face-to-face a German civilian with whom he had worked at the Auschwitz-Buna chemistry lab (Levi as a slave, the German as a free person). Levi writes, from a post-War context, when by coincidence he had business dealings with this German, "it was obvious that he wanted from me something like an absolution, because he had a past to overcome and I didn't: I wanted from him only a discount on the bill for the defective resin." Levi goes on to describe this German man's recollections of Auschwitz—a man who appears to be more complicated and human than absolutely evil. Levi described that Doktor Müller's letter to him "affirmed that he had had a relationship with me almost of friendship between equals…but against the background of disintegration, mutual distrust, and mortal weariness, the mere supposition of them were totally outside reality, and could only be explained by a very naïve ex post facto wishful thinking; perhaps it was an incident he told a lot of people and did not realize I [Levi] was the one person in the world who could not believe it. *Perhaps in good faith he had constructed a convenient past for himself*" [my italics].
Primo Levi, *The Periodic Table*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 217-220.

[164] Since *7000 Oaks* was initiated in Kassel for documenta 7, there have been other Beuysian *7000 Oaks* projects: Dia sponsored a project in New York City for which twenty-three trees and stele were planted,

piece of utopian Social Sculpture, as he and so many art historians have described it.[165] (And indeed, the evocation of *Gesamtkunstwerk* beckons forth the specter of Richard Wagner, the avowed anti-Semite whose monumental operas bolstered the idea of a coherent and historical German nation, and an artist whose ideological frameworks Hitler deeply admired.) While I do not intend to vandalize this artwork historiographically, commit a needless act of iconoclasm, or generally write uncharitably about *7000 Oaks*, like the young men who painted the pile of rocks pink, I do wish to gesture beyond Beuys's conscious and explicit intentions for *7000 Oaks* in order to proffer a reading that diverges from the dominant body of literature. That is, I wish to read *7000 Oaks* against the grain, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick might say, so that I might mine the ambiguous yet rich cultural references upon which Beuys's monumental artwork touches. Sedgwick writes, albeit within the context of queer theory, that "becoming a perverse reader was never a matter of condescension to texts [or artworks], rather of the surplus charge of my trust in them to remain powerful, refractory, and exemplary."[166] I mean for my reading of *7000 Oaks* to be a sensitive kind of reading, which I hope is complementary to the spirit of Beuys's work, although not a direct reflection of his purported intentions for the project. I *do*, however, intend to dislodge Beuys from his position as an ultimate or privileged seer or creator of meaning, and as the ultimate reference point for a closed semiotic system of his devising, a positionality he worked over the course of his career to

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and a Beuysian tree planting project also occurred at the Leech Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota. In this chapter, however, I am interested specifically in the relationship between *7000 Oaks* and the space of Kassel, Germany.

[165] See David Adams, "Joseph Beuys: Pioneer of a Radical Ecology," *Art Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 2, (Summer, 1992), 28.

[166] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 4.

cultivate. Additionally, even though I understand *7000 Oaks* to function as an agent of repair, I want to hold Beuys accountable for the ways in which he perpetuated a dangerous mythology.

Sticks and Stones

7000 Oaks, like Joseph Beuys himself, is a slippery, ambiguous, and deceptively complex work. While surely one of its functions is to cleanse Kassel's natural environment and make the city and its inhabitants literally and metaphorically "greener," as I have indicated previously it also taps into Germanic and Nazi-era symbols in ways that remain under-examined. This is a significant blind spot, and so in this shadowy realm I will place my first pebble, my first clue, so that when seen in the right light, it might glow silvery and bright. A site-specific work, the materials Beuys chose for *7000 Oaks* are laden with deep-rooted German cultural significance, and an interpretation of it that takes into account the nationalist iconography that Beuys drew from must consider the location of Kassel and the history of oaks and stone markers in Germany. While Beuys was certainly aware of the cultural and historical significance of the oak tree in twentieth-century Germany, he chose not to highlight this in the way he framed his project, thus emptying out the oak tree as a signifier. In an oft-cited conversation with Richard Demarco in 1982, Beuys said, "I think the tree is an element of regeneration which in itself is a concept of time. The oak is especially so because it is a slowly growing tree with a kind of really solid heartwood. It has always been a form of sculpture, a symbol for this planet ever since the Druids, who are called after the oak. Druid means oak. They

used their oaks to define their holy places."[167] Framing his work within the context of holy Druid sites led authors such as Sean Rainbird, Stefan Körner, and Florian Bellin-Harder to infer a relationship between Beuys's use of the oak tree and his deep interest in Celtic culture during the 1970s and '80s. In *Joseph Beuys and the Celtic World*, Sean Rainbird notes the prominence of oak trees in Beuys's work, yet discusses them in relationship to Beuys's fascination with Celtic tradition, rather than within a specifically German nationalistic tradition: "oaks, which occur consistently in Beuys's art, were integral to Celtic culture, as the druids' sacred tree."[168] Indeed, as Rainbird points out, Beuys explored oak trees, Celtic culture, and a closeness with the earth in works such as *Ireland 1950*, a drawing in *Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland*, and *Loch Awe Piece.* While some of Beuys's artworks should certainly be read within an Irish and British context, I do not believe that *7000 Oaks* is one of them.

Materiality was of tremendous significance in Beuys's artistic practice, as a cursory investigation into his use of felt, fat, hares, and honey will attest (to name just a few of the materials the artist used). Stefan Körner and Florian Bellin-Harder acknowledge Beuys's remarks in the Demarco interview, but identify an important omission that is caused by the way in which the artist framed his choice in material. They write,

> The tree was an element of regeneration for Beuys, one that unfolds in the course of time. In particular, the oak as a slow-growing tree, in his opinion, clarifies the effects of time and has also been a cultic tree since the druids used it to mark holy places. What Beuys did not mention was that the oak also played a substantial

[167] "Interview with Richard Demarco, 1982," *Energy Plan for the Western Man* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1990), 111.

[168] Sean Rainbird, *Joseph Beuys and the Celtic World*, (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), 54.

> role in German nationalism as a "German Tree," for instance as the Bismarck oak or in war memorials.[169]

The oak, for Beuys, was an object that followed a biological model of regeneration; however, in his exhortation to "save the forest," Beuys failed adequately to address the more troublesome connotations that the oak had come to assume in his home country since the nineteenth century, and particularly the symbolism of the oak in Nazi culture. (In 1971, Beuys launched an Action called *Retten den Wald*, or *Save the Forest*. For this project, he and fifty students swept paths in the Grafenberger Woods outside of Düsseldorf, in an attempt to prevent the woods from being razed to make way for a sports center. For this project, Beuys implored people, "Overcome the dictatorship of the parties, save the forest!"[170])

As noted previously, Beuys and most scholars have framed *7000 Oaks* as an Environmental Artwork (a *"Verwaldung*," or afforestation project, in Beuys's verbiage) and a piece of Social Sculpture. It is significant because of its size and scope (both geographic and temporal), and because of the way it physically transforms and sublimates raw material, although I believe it does so in less literal or straightforward ways than most ecological readings claim. Literally grounded in wounded soil, *7000 Oaks* slowly contributes to a healthier environment, even while it gradually transforms loaded cultural signifiers. Beuys, always the utopian thinker, was as an artist who endeavored to make alchemical sublimations and proffer acts of repair, yet in *7000 Oaks*

[169] Perhaps the authors mean "Goethe Oak," rather than "Bismarck Oak," as I have found no evidence to date of the existence of the latter object. The former, however, was a well-known and beloved tree of mythic proportions, as I will explore later in this chapter.
Körner and Bellin-Harder, "The *7000 Eichen* of Joseph Beuys, 7.

[170] Allan Antliff, *Joseph Beuys* (New York: Phaidon, 2014), 69.

these gestures of repair are necessarily tethered to and grounded in tombstones, to the irreparable – or to things that take geologic time to repair.

Into the Woods

Perhaps not surprisingly, forests that act as liminal sites of transition, metamorphosis, and regeneration feature prominently in German fairy tales. In their introduction to the first edition of *Children's- and Household Tales*, Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm described the natural spaces in which fairy tales unfold, in which "all of nature is alive; the sun, the moon, and the stars are approachable, give gifts… birds (doves are the most beloved and the most helpful), plants, and stones all speak and know just how to express their sympathy; even blood can call out and say things. This poetry exercises certain rights that later storytelling can only strive to express through metaphors."[171] In fairy tales, nature is animated: stones speak, blood calls out, plants express sympathy. It is through the singular power of animism and shape shifting, rather than metaphor, that fairy tales exercise their unique ability to charm, comfort, and help. Hubert Zapf notes that "a number of the fairy tales assembled by the Brothers Grimm (1812) are also examples of that close kinship and mutual metamorphosis of human and nonhuman, spiritual and material worlds, in which… the 'symbiogenic' coevolution of culture and nature is inscribed into popular story-telling traditions."[172] Nature and culture interact in

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[171] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, "Preface to Volume 1 of the First Edition of Children's Stories and Household Tales," in *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*, ed. Maria Tatar (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), 437.

[172] Hubert Zapf, "Ecological Thought in Literature in Europe and Germany," *A Global History of Literature and the Environment*, ed. John Parham and Louise Westling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 274.

transformative, unique ways in fairy tales, and it is important to take note of the objects, people, animals, and spiritual forces that come into contact in these liminal zones. A quick scan of the Grimms' fairy tales reveals the frequent role of forests, and sometimes specifically oak trees. In "Twelve Brothers," for example, the forest acts as a safe refuge for the twelve brothers who hide, along with their cursed sister, from their murderous father. The tree in "The Juniper Tree" is both the burial site of the rightful mother and the place of rebirth for her decapitated son. Hansel and Gretel are abandoned in the depths of a forest by their parents, and in this arboreal space undergo trials – they are lost in the woods and then are captives of the witch – until by their cunning and luck they find their way back home (although, like all real trips away from home, when they return both they and their home have altered significantly since when they left). Jack Zipes, in his book on the Brothers Grimm, their legacy, and fairy tales, writes,

> Inevitably they [fairy tale characters] find their way into the forest. It is there that they lose and find themselves. It is there that they gain a sense of what is to be done. The forest is always large, immense, great, mysterious. No one ever gains power over the forest, but the forest possesses the power to change lives and alter destinies. In many ways it is the supreme authority on earth and often the great provider.[173]

Significantly, the space of the forest in fairy tales frequently is a site of flux, which may be used to work through trauma, and is a liminal space of as-yet unresolved conflict. It is a place where characters are tested, people face hardship, and they struggle to make difficult choices.

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[173] Jack Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 43.

To take one contemporary example, the 1986 Steven Sondheim musical *Into the Woods* takes as axiomatic not only that the space of the deep, dark woods is ubiquitous in fairy tales, but that it is the arena in which people undergo trials and transformations. This musical, contemporaneous with both *7000 Oaks* and Zipes's book *The Brothers Grimm*, is a modern-day mash-up of classic fairy tales, and the *mise-en-scène* is (not surprisingly) in the woods, as it is described in various Grimm and Perrault fairy tales. The woods, as it features in "Little Red Riding Hood," "Rapunzel," "Jack and the Beanstalk," and "Cinderella" is mined as the space in and through which various protagonists endeavor on quests and overcome obstacles.[174]

"Into the woods!" the wicked witch shrieks to the barren baker and his wife in the opening scenes of the 2014 live action Sondheim film, a close adaptation of the stage musical. There in the woods, the musical's characters must quest to find mundane objects that will magically enact a change so that the curse of ugliness will be lifted from the witch, the baker's wife's womb will finally bear fruit, and Jack's magic beans can lead the way to the golden goose.[175] In the movie, Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother even lives in a house constructed inside of a great oak tree. In *Into the Woods*, the forest is the space in which the narratives of four traditional fairy tales intertwine. Midway through the plot of the musical, it seems as though all narratives have resolved "happily ever after" – the characters celebrate weddings, childbirth, and newfound wealth. However, just as everything appears resolved, new disturbances in the woods cover up well-worn

[174] *Into the Woods* debuted in 1986 at the Old Globe Theater in San Diego, and the next year it ran on Broadway. Reflecting the renewed popularity of fairy tales in film and television that occurred in the 2000s and 2010s, a Disney film adaptation of *Into the Woods* hit the silver screen in 2014, which featured Meryl Streep, Emily Blunt, and James Corden.

[175] *Into the Woods*, directed by Rob Marshall (2014; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2015), DVD.

paths (narrative and spatial); the woods become a threatening, liminal, amoral zone in which a married Prince Charming tries to seduce the baker's wife, and it is the space of untimely death and absent parents. ("Sometimes people leave you halfway through the woods," sings the ghostly voice of someone who died in the woods.) Although I have not come across evidence that Beuys was aware of Sondheim's musical, it is this second, more ominous version of the woods, as Sondheim presents it, that I particularly wish to pair with my reading of Beuys's *7000 Oaks*: one in which fairy tale stories and landscapes do not have predicable meanings or necessary resolutions. Rather, like the second half of the musical, I understand Joseph Beuys's *7000 Oaks* to function as a dynamic, potentially radical space in which he and participants might work through difficult pasts and challenge existential realities. I interpret *7000 Oaks* as a means by which Beuys invites us (himself included) to suspend ourselves in an unresolved state of radical transformation while we are "in the woods," or going "through the woods," not "out of the woods," as it were. Here we might linger in an (often uncomfortable) unsettled liminality and try to process his work, documenta and Kassel, and the historical legacy of this confluence of connections.

Jack Zipes, in his chapter "Inventing and Subverting the World with Hope," from his book *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, describes the subversive qualities of some fairy tales. Those fairy tales that are experimental, in which authors such as Oscar Wilde and L. Frank Baum meant to subvert bourgeois norms, according to Zipes, implemented a "departure from the traditional mode [of storytelling and] prepared the way for even greater experimentation with fairy tales for children in the twentieth century, and numerous authors began cultivating what might be termed the 'art of

subversion' within the fairy tale discourse."[176] In a similarly subversive act, and in debt to experimental fairy tale authors and the authors who think about them critically such as Zipes, I argue that *7000 Oaks* serves as a model for how radical transformation might occur. This is achieved in large part because in my interpretation, Beuys employed the Kantian methodology of "negative presentation," that is, presenting or invoking the remembrance of absent objects and people via their traces and indices. Just as the premise for *7000 Oaks* has been reenacted numerous times after Beuys's original artwork – from re-plantings in Kassel in 2012 for dOCUMENTA (13), to volunteers planting native trees and bushes in Bolognano, Italy, to the Leech Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota – in Zipes's words, "the young king points a way to utopia by setting a model of behavior that he hopes everyone will recognize and follow."[177] However, this utopian effort is never ultimately achieved (just as utopia is an impossible, nowhere place) and Beuys's project does indeed hinge upon troubling methods, uneasy metaphors, and is grounded in Beuys's life experience as a German who was complicit with the Nazis for a portion of his life and as a person who came of age during the Third Reich. During the peak of his career, Beuys enjoyed the prestigious position as the artistic "young king" and post-War cultural savior of Germany, and the dubious tropes and mythology he cultivated around his artistic persona are based upon his mythological, ahistorical Story.

The challenge and the strength of *7000 Oaks* is, I believe, that it invites us (those who encounter it physically as well as those who contemplate it) to linger in a space of ambivalence and does not offer us a clear pathway out. It is our individual job (if we

[176] Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* (New York: Routledge, 1983), 107.

[177] Ibid*,* 123.

choose to engage with the challenge of *7000 Oaks*) to stay in an interstitial space (in the interstices between town and forest, civilization and wilderness, past and present, mourning and action, self and other) and focus on the process of working through and radical empathy. However, unlike Beuys's theoretical model, this process is not organic, linear, or progressive; the paths people take are varied, and while one likely ends this journey in a different form from which one entered, one is not guaranteed safe passage and delivery into a world of utopian resolution.

Make the Signifiers Productive

One of Joseph Beuys's most famous assertions is that every person is an artist ("*jeder Mensch ist einer Künstler*"). That is, Beuys believed deeply that every person has innate creative potential and thus is equipped to progress and elevate him- or herself from the state of being simply a person into that of the heightened state of artist. Importantly, in the belief system of Beuys, every person is not *already* or *yet* an artist, but rather everyone (even if they have never heard of Marcel Duchamp or don't go to museums) may *become* one, and always already possesses the necessary spark of creativity. Joachim Pissarro points out, in his essay in the exhibition catalog for *Make the Secrets Productive: Joseph Beuys*, that Joseph Beuys "was interested in matters of process, production, transformation, creation: he genuinely believed that what bound us all in common were that *Kraft*, or the *Schaffensprozeß* [creative process] that he extolled in all."[178] One might see this process of transformation in each of the 7000 oak trees that were planted in

[178] Joachim Pissarro, "Joseph Beuys: Set Between One and All," in *Make the Secrets Productive: Joseph Beuys*, (New York: Pacewildenstein, 2010), 13.

Kassel and continue to grow, as well as in each of the volunteers who planted a tree and stone; it may also be seen in Beuys's artworks that involve such pliable, convertible materials as beeswax, fat, and felt, and in his Social Sculpture. Indeed, Beuys's conceptual system, summarized by the claim "every person is an artist," took the form of a neo-Romantic organic and progressive model, and he believed that this would ultimately lead to freedom and liberation. Beuys claimed, in a quote that feels particularly apt alongside a reading of *7000 Oaks*, "The cultural revolution is no small affair: the old trees die away as new ones succeed them. These are the future. Only through evolution can the new concept of art become reality. Every person is an artist. *Make the secrets productive*."[179] Thus, one might read into his oak trees his vision of cultural revolution, a new tangible reality he envisioned, designed, and set in motion, and one that might be brought into being by thousands of volunteers who ostensibly were on their way to becoming sublimated as artists and prepared to join the revolutionary generation of the *avant garde* (a generation he cultivated).

Like the fairy tale story of Hansel and Gretel, Beuys's work may be understood as fundamentally about the creative process (*Schaffensprozeß*) or working through and transitioning, evolving and becoming, growth and incorporation. (The siblings rely on creative strategies to work through obstacles and by doing so emerge from the forest, their existential state greatly changed.) As Pissarro has suggested, Beuys's dictum "*jeder Mensch ist einer Künstler*," when taken at face value, implies that upon the realization of Beuys's statement, the world changes so that "the world is the art world; and vice versa": a truly radical concept that ultimately strives toward the dissolution of the boundary

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[179] Ibid.

between life and art.[180] Pissarro has ably demonstrated that Joseph Beuys was indebted to German early Romantic thought (incidentally, a philosophical tradition in which the Brothers Grimm were steeped and with which they were aligned). Pissarro writes of both the theoretical principles of the *Frühromantik* (Early German Romantic period) and Beuys's process:

> The work of art functions as an organic life world, a living system, and consequently, all life systems become sources of interest, inspiration and emulation to the early Romantics. Beuys did nothing else: he looked at the ways energy could be condensed, transmitted, preserved, stored, maximized. Art = life = energy…. Indeed, Beuys's 'Schaffensprozeß' is all-consuming. His work does not depict, allude to, or evoke nature; but it emulates natural forces, natural growth processes in as many forms as he could put his hands on various materials, and their possible permutations.[181]

Indeed, just as Beuys does not necessarily depict nature in his artwork, as in painting a landscape, and does not depict fairy tales, as in illustrating the witch's gingerbread house, he nevertheless emulates the forces, processes, and transformations of nature just as he does those of fairy tales. (In this aspect, his work is not unlike that of Louise Bourgeois, as discussed in Chapter 1, in that he does not rely upon the narrative anteriority of specific fairy tales, but facilitates their production in the moment of the now.) Beuys's working processes also bear similarities with the attentions of German Romantics – not only the Grimms, but also the great poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Hubert Zapf, who writes about the relationship between the Grimms, Romanticism, and ecology, notes that,

> German Romanticism, or more broadly the period known as the *Goethezeit* between c. 1780 and 1830, is gaining scholarly attention as an era that anticipated important developments in modern ecological thought. Johann Wolfgang von

[180] Ibid, 13.

[181] Ibid, 14.

> Goethe is a key figure here as in other developments: in his intense interest in a cross-disciplinary form of knowledge combining literature and science; in his biomorphological concept of the metamorphosis of plants… and in his literary works themselves, which can be read as different versions of negotiating the mind-body and culture-nature relations.[182]

Beuys, like Goethe, combined science and his art with a deep commitment to breaking down barriers between disciplines, in order to understand and utilize organic processes and as part of his broader goal of Social Sculpture. This organic process was one of continual becoming, unfurling, and progressive development and refinement. As we shall see later in the chapter, Beuys shared not only similar thematic concerns with the German Romantics, but we may trace the significance of oak trees in a German environmental context back to Goethe as well.

At the public launch of *7000 Oaks*, Beuys stated that "planting these Oaks is necessary not only in biospheric terms, that is to say, in the context of matter and ecology, but in that it will raise ecological consciousness; raise it increasingly, in the course of years to come, because we shall never stop planting."[183] Indeed, his work *has* benefited the environment and fostered communities in very concrete and tangible ways. The thousands of trees planted by innumerable and largely anonymous volunteers clean the air and benefit the environment. Reproductions of *7000 Oaks*, such as *7000 Oaks Minnesota,* resulted in members of the contemporary art and Native American communities coming together to plant trees in the state of Minnesota. One thousand

[182] Zapf, "Ecological Thought and Literature in Europe and Germany," 274.

[183] Antliff, *Joseph Beuys*, 136.

native trees were planted at Cass Lake on the Leech Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota. When volunteers planted a Beuysian cottonwood tree and stele at the Walker Art Center Sculpture Garden in 1997, a local Native drumming circle played adjacent to the planting and sang to commemorate and bless the event.[184]

Beuys's work has also enchanted audiences – from contemporary visitors to Kassel to Rudi Fuchs, the chief curator of documenta 7. In his 1982 invitation letter to the invited artists, called "Documenta 7: A Story," (a letter, incidentally, that Douglas Crimp notes was "the focus of art-world gossip" amongst those in the art community who were *not* invited as artists to documenta 7[185]), Fuchs wrote:

> How can I describe the exhibition to you: the exhibition which floats in my mind like a star?... One must come down and go into the woods. There one encounters the most beautiful trees, wonderful flowers, mysterious lakes and valleys – and people of different languages and customs. And then who encounters whom in the forest of the arts, and what experience he makes up – that should be our story.[186]

Fuchs's words, which evoke a majestic and mysterious arboreal landscape, echo those of Wilhelm Grimm, although ostensibly this is a coincidence rather than a direct reference to the fairy tale collector. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the younger Grimm brother wrote in his preface to a collection of Danish ballads, "In the fairy tales… a world of magic is opened up before us, one which still exists among us in secret forests,

[184] Joan Rothfuss, "The Western Man in the Midwest: Joseph Beuys in America," Walker Art Center, 1/2/2018, https://walkerart.org/magazine/joseph-beuys-in-minneapolis-chicago-new-york.

[185] Douglas Crimp, "The Art of Exhibition," *On the Museum's Ruin* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press,1993), 239.

[186] Rudi Fuchs, "Einladungsbrief and die Künstler," quoted in Christian Saehrendt, *Ist das Kunst oder Kann das Weg?* (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 2012), 101.

in underground caves, and in the deepest sea, and it is still visible to children."[187] Fuchs envisioned that documenta 7, like fairy tales themselves, would come from the secret forests and mysterious lakes and seas. Respectively, Grimm and Fuchs viewed fairy tales and documenta like a rare flower – a chthonic, indigenous, nationalistic cultural icon that emerges from the soil.[188] Finally, Fuchs wrote in his documenta 7 catalogue introduction, "*documenta 7*. Not a bad name, because it suggests an attractive tradition of taste and discrimination…. Therefore it may be followed by a subtitle as in those novels of long ago: *In which our heroes after a long and strenuous voyage through sinister valleys and dark forests finally arrive in the English Garden, and at the gate of a splendid palace* [italics original]."[189] For Fuchs, the forest was a necessary component of documenta 7 (and perhaps, as Baker and Müller suggest, the forest that Fuchs evoked in his letter prior to the art event served as the inspiration for Beuys's *7000 Oaks* project[190]). In order to reach the manicured, ordered English Garden of documenta 7, the heroes of art had to traverse "sinister valleys and dark forests," endure trials and hardships in order finally to arrive in an idyllic, verdant landscape of "beautiful trees, wonderful flowers, mysterious lakes and valleys." However, when read within the context of that which preceded documenta, *Entartete Kunst*, the English Garden Fuchs describes slips easily into the *Englisher Garten* in Munich, the beautifully manicured park which literally ends with the

[187] Maria Tatar, "The Brothers Grimm: Biographical Essay," in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*, ed. Maria Tatar, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), 426.

[188] This framing of contemporary art with metaphors from the natural world presages the major 1989 exhibition at MOCA, "A Forest of Signs," which showed a collection of critical contemporary art, including that of Sherrie Levine, Richard Prince, Cindy Sherman, Jeff Koons, and Barbara Kruger.

[189] Rudi Fuchs, as quoted in Douglas Crimp, "The Art of Exhibition," 238.

[190] Baker and Müller, "A Balancing Act," 106.

Haus der Deutschen Kunst at its southern end. The building, which, as described in Chapter 1 was originally fashioned as the National Socialist Temple of German Culture, displayed years of subsequent *Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellungen*, in which one prominent genre was that of the German landscape, a mythical natural world in which the ideology of "*Blut und Boden*" was grounded. Today, the *Haus der Deutschen Kunst* is called simply *Haus der Kunst*, and is acts as a museum of international contemporary art. While it is still the same blocky piece of neoclassical Nazi architecture, the current contents of its gallery would fortunately make Hitler, Speer, Goebbels, Ziegler, and those of their ilk roll in their respective graves. (From 2011-2018, the late Nigerian-born curator Okwui Enwezor, who was the artistic director of Documenta 11 in 2002, headed the museum.) Fuchs's evocation of the *Englischer Garten* and the *Haus der (Deutschen) Kunst*, while ostensibly accidental, demonstrates the ways in which fairy tale characters, locations, and tropes easily shape shift according to the whims and politics of the storyteller.

For Fuchs, the story of those artists who participated in documenta 7 entailed rites of passage and chance encounters in the dark forests that finally led to the gates of a splendid palace, and the fairy tale of documenta 7 was also something that was grounded in the particular locality of Kassel and its environs. This story was to be celebrated, and the fairy tale of one's idyllic and utopian journey through the forest was to be disseminated. For Fuchs as for Beuys, *7000 Oaks* becomes a happy microcosm, and Beuys's trees seem to ripple out, from the epicenter in Friedrichsplatz, through the manicured arbors of the baroque Orangerie garden, out into the deep Reinhardswald forests surrounding Kassel, and out and out. The Beuysian trees, for Fuchs, are the

antithesis of the wild and savage "dark forests," but rather are cultivated and cultural, and allow civilized "taste and discrimination" to radiate outwards from documenta's epicenter at the Fridericianum, and progressively transform the whole dark forest into a magical glen that "floats in [his] mind like a star." The forest of documenta, for Fuchs, was meant to tame savage nature, even as it might retain the wonder and taste inherent in the *avant garde* (or at least the capitalist- and modernist-tinged fine art of discriminating taste that Fuchs promoted). While Fuchs's metaphor is lovely and idealistic, it does, in my estimation, cast too rosy a glow on the event of documenta, and by extension on Beuys's contribution to it. Moreover, it is contingent upon the notion that art be in "good taste," and appeal to a discerning and discriminating palate.[191] This value and aesthetic set is not only at odds with Beuys's artistic production, which frequently veers toward the *informe*, the experimental, and intangible, if not that which at times appears to be in bad (aesthetic) taste, it also ignores the site specificity of Kassel, a city that I have already established, is host to deep and complicated scars, and important legacies.

Beuys's progressive, organic growth model (as well as Fuchs's privileging of good taste) is a problematic and outdated one, and something that fails to take into account the lessons of the Holocaust: ultimately, it is a framework that I wish to challenge. That is, it is a model is based on a faith in a lock-step march toward liberatory progress, to the exclusion of historiographies that descend into barbarism and "bad taste,"

[191] It is somewhat ironic that although Fuchs worked closely with Beuys, his theoretical underpinning of documenta 7 was to re-inscribe traditional artistic modes and venues – that is, Fuchs privileged paintings and sculptures shown in museum spaces over more experimental art forms and spaces. Crimp notes that during a press conference promoting documenta 7, Fuchs said, "I feel that the time one can show contemporary art in makeshift spaces, converted factories and so on, is over. Art is a noble achievement and it should be handled with dignity and respect. Therefore we have finally built real walls." Douglas Crimp, "The Art of Exhibition," 240.

as Benjamin described them (and as described in Chapter 1). As such, Beuys's model cannot allow *his* vision for *7000 Oaks* to coexist with *others'* vision of the artwork as a basalt stele pile-cum-pink triangle. Pissarro has demonstrated that Beuys's belief system is in many respects in alignment with German Romantic theory of the early nineteenth-century.[192] He writes that according to this system,

> a poem or a work of art 'function' analogously to a tree: they grow, out of their own, tapping their resources from a fecund soil…. The Beuysian system very much reflects this belief: in the same way as the tree feeds itself out of its sap, the human being/artist (the two are identical for Beuys) feeds him/herself out of his/her secrets…. The whole evolutionary process that leads from being a Mensch to being a Künstler is one of a long, patient, time-consuming progressive movement.[193]

It is certainly a pretty image to think that, by tapping into secrets and making them productive, and by engaging with individual creativity, everyone might unfold into their highest selves, their artist-selves. However, one must ask, what if the tree (or the poem or the work of art) does not have fecund soil, and the environment (or culture) is poisonous? Certainly, trees, poems, and artworks all emerge from both healthy and unhealthy environments, and as we move from the twentieth- into the twenty-first century, the physical and social environment seems to be only increasingly toxic. Additionally, what if, over time, previously rich soil becomes dry and stripped of its nutrients, and the environment around an old tree turns noxious and violent? How is it possible to create art

[192] The Grimms, their colleagues, and mentors such as Achim von Arnim and Clemens Bretano were active in the Romantic movement, and the Grimms' project of the preservation and reconstruction of an ur-Germanic culture by collecting fairy tales and creating a comprehensive German language dictionary were key to their broader nation-building project. Relatedly, throughout his career, Beuys habitually used materials and objects that evoked a primordial German past: for example, hares, honey, and oaks, in order to cultivate German cultural symbols that had ties to an ancient past.

[193] Pissarro, "Joseph Beuys," 13-14.

or be an artist in a toxic, post-Holocaust reality? Is the art produced in this environment necessarily also poisonous?

Theodor Adorno asserted in 1949 that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric," a notion that continues to haunt German cultural production and interpretations of it.[194] This idea is another clue, another pebble that I drop on my journey through the woods. While many writers have accepted Adorno's claim as a truism and interpreted it in various ways (frequently subtly misquoting him and divorcing his statement from its original context), Adorno understood bourgeois culture and barbarism to be bound together dialectically (barbarism itself being a term derived from linguistically-based xenophobia). His assertion builds upon Walter Benjamin's contention that "there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism."[195] As Michael Rothberg has demonstrated by considering Adorno's maxim as a part of its fuller context, "'Auschwitz' does not stand alone but is part of a historical process… Auschwitz is [in Adorno's words] 'the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism.'"[196] If Auschwitz marks the "final stage" of this dialectic, it is not an isolated event, but one that history has built up to; it stands as the high water mark in a long history of terror, and the histories now written must acknowledge the dialectical relationship between barbarism and civilization.[197] What kinds of barbarism must be included or attended to in the poems that are now written, in the artwork that is now made, after Auschwitz (and after Buchenwald and Dachau)? Surely, the artworks requiring "taste and discrimination," as

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[194] Adorno, quoted in Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, 25.

[195] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 256.

[196] Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, 35.

[197] Ibid.

advocated by Rudi Fuchs, which attempt to remove art from this dialectic and from social realities, must in reality enact and perform the very barbarity, in all its triumph, victory, and xenophobia that Adorno and Benjamin describe.

Michael Rothberg explores the relationships between culture and barbarism, and time and space, specifically as they relate to the historiographies and lessons of the Holocaust. The Holocaust, as a traumatic event, must be understood as something that could not be fully experienced in the moment and as such, it returns, haunts, and refutes the Enlightenment notion of linear, progressive time. For Rothberg, the Holocaust should be understood as a chronotype, as Mikhail Bakhtin formulated the concept. That is,

> the chronotype captures the simultaneity of spatial and temporal articulations in cultural practices: in the production of chronotypes, '[t]ime, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history' (Bakhtin, 84).[198]

Adorno's Auschwitz, as a chronotype, becomes not simply a place (an occupied, colonized place at that), but a charged temporal moment that *takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible*. It can be a node in a Benjaminian constellation – that is, "a sort of montage in which diverse elements are brought together though the act of writing… the in-between space that ties together the present and past," as Rothberg succinctly describes the notion.[199] This chronotype is a revenant that time travels and haunts both from the past and the future, yet it is no airy specter – it is also something that is visible and physical. Rothberg writes further, that "through constant reference to the site of murder, Adorno forces a reevaluation of the time of the modern world – now no longer

[198] Ibid, 27.

[199] Ibid, 10.

conceived as a progressive passage from before to after but as threatened from within by potentially deadly repetition."[200] Thus, there is a constant and present threat of the repetition of the Holocaust, the prevention of which requires constant vigilance.

Is it too much to suggest that the time Adorno and Rothberg refer to might also be understood as a kind of dystopian fairy tale time? Certainly, fairy tales are riddled with sites of murder, mutilation, and trauma, and they are stories that frequently include internal repetitions and have also been repeated for hundreds if not thousands of years. I think of stories such as "Hansel and Gretel," in which the children are led twice by their parents into the woods to die, only to face possible murder at the hands of a cannibalistic witch. In another tale of deadly repetition, "The Robber Bridegroom" (which bears similarities to "Bluebeard"), the Grimms tell a story in which a young beauty is engaged to marry a rich suitor. At the bridegroom's urging, the young woman visits his house, but is warned by the couplet of his bird: "Turn back, turn back, my pretty young bride, / In a house of murderers you've arrived." With the warning of the bird that she has entered the lair of serial murderers and the help of the bridegroom's old servant, the young woman is hidden just before the bloodthirsty and cannibalistic band of robbers returns. Only through her cunning does the bride-to-be escape and bring justice upon the man who intended to kill her, thus ending his long cycle of murdering those to whom he is betrothed.

Despite these fatal recurrences, the Grimm stories might be used to prompt one to think creatively when faced with dangerous scenarios and imagine how to construct better futures, just as Beuys's secrets and signifiers may be used to productive ends.

[200] Ibid, 29.

Rather than markers that chart the course of progressive history, they "threaten from within by potentially deadly repetition." However, it is particularly because of the constellation of the past and the present that the work of Beuys and fairy tales may be used (to quote Rothberg one final time) toward the "modest, if still elusive, goal of working through – instead of repetitively acting out – the traumas of the past."[201] That is, within the structure of repetition, one might experiment by taking different, potentially more productive, paths while still in a state of indeterminacy. The woods may be just the place to embark upon this working through process of mourning.

Within a constellation in which Beuys and Adorno are drawn together, Beuys's oaks, while they may offer a kind of liberatory cultural and environmental revolution, are nevertheless also indissolubly tied to the horrors of World War II. To frame the Beuys oaks straightforwardly as objects of utopian repair is not only naïve, but injurious and would ignore the complex post-War realities of Germany in the second half of the twentieth century; it would be to ignore the ways in which barbarism and civilization are dialectically bound. To be clear, it is not my intention to argue that Joseph Beuys unconsciously harbored Nazi sentiments or values throughout his whole life, which *7000 Oaks* magically reveals, like a frog that suddenly becomes a prince (or a prince a frog). This psychoanalytic exercise would likely be a futile and problematic endeavor, and simply stated, is not my project. Rather, I contend that *7000 Oaks* must be read within the historical context of post-War Germany, not only because of the history of the artist and the event of documenta, but also because of the artwork's material, metaphorical, and philosophical underpinnings. That is, while the argument could be made that *any* work by

[201] Ibid, 11.

any German artist who was active in the aftermath of World War II must be considered within this political and social context, situating the work of Beuys as such is particularly necessary and pertinent. As an artist who was part of the Nazi armed services, who intentionally crafted a mythology about his artistic persona that framed him as cultural leader and savior, as a recurring major figure at documenta, an event that, as we have seen, is linked specifically with post-War nationalism, and finally as an artwork that utilizes long-standing symbols, it is necessary to understand Beuys, and specifically *7000 Oaks*, as an figure and project that tie together in a singular way the parallel histories, objectives, and functions of documenta and fairy tales.

Show Your Wound

In 1980, Benjamin Buchloh published "Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol, Preliminary Notes for a Critique" in *Artforum*, which was a scathing response to the artist's 1979/80 retrospective show at the Guggenheim Museum. Although this article came out two years before Beuys began *7000 Oaks*, it nevertheless continues to serve as one of the strongest and most enduring criticisms of the artist's persona, methods, and work. One of Buchloh's central points of contention was Beuys's ahistorical approach to his artwork and persona, a problem that in Buchloh's view was related to fascist mythologies and methodologies. Buchloh wrote,

> Ahistoricity, that unconscious or deliberate obliviousness toward the specific conditions that determine the reality of an individual's being and work in historical time, is the functional basis on which public and private mythologies can be erected, presuming that a public exists that craves myths in proportion to its lack of historic actuality. The ahistoric mythology of fascism, to give an example from *political* history, could only develop and gain credibility as a

> response to the chiliastic and debauched hopes of the starving and uneducated masses of the German Weimar Republic and postmonarchic Italy….
>
> The private and public mythology of Joseph Beuys, to give an example from *art* history, could only be developed and maintained on the ahistoricity of esthetic production and consumption in postwar Europe.[202]

For Buchloh, the ahistorical way in which Beuys framed his persona and artwork resulted in the artist assuming the problematic role of cult figure.[203] From his position as artistic cult figure, Beuys then assumed the role of Germany's cultural savior and artistic leader.[204] However, considering Beuys's biographical background (that is, even if he was not a zealous member of the Nazi party, the fact remains that when he was young he was a member of the Hitler Youth, he attended the 1936 Nazi Nuremberg rally, volunteered for the Luftwaffe, and was decorated for the injuries he sustained during the war), his choice to position himself and his work outside of history, in the space of mythology, *is* troublesome and deeply flawed to say the least.

Buchloh notes that at the Beuys retrospective, the artist's *24 Stations* spiraled down the corridors of the Guggenheim like contemporary stations of the cross, and the critic queried insightfully, "whose martyrium, whose mysterium?"[205] Corinna

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[202] Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol, Preliminary Notes for a Critique," in *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy*, ed. Gene Ray (New York: D.A.P., 2001), 200.

[203] One would be right to think back to Grasskamp's criticisms of Bode here, as described in Chapter 1, in which he accused Bode of insufficiently counter-attacking previous art historical arguments, and instead crafting an ahistorical mythology to surround documenta.

[204] Pamela Kort, in her chapter "Beuys: The Profile of a Successor," argues that Beuys assumed the role of "the long awaited successor [to the great lineage of German artists] who could revive culture in Germany and lead a younger generation of artists to distinction." Specifically, Beuys framed himself as inheriting this artistic crown from Wilhelm Lehmbruck, whose sculpture *Kneeling Woman*, I discussed in Chapter 1. Pamela Kort, "Beuys: The Profile of a Successor," in *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy*, ed. Gene Ray (New York: D.A.P., 2001), 36.

[205] Buchloh, "Beuys," 199.

Tomberger, in her analysis of Beuys's environment, *Show Your Wound*, asks similar rhetorical questions: "Whose wound is exhibited here? Who or what has to be healed? And from what?"[206] Is it not correct to challenge Beuys's self-proclaimed role as enlightened artist, cult figure, and martyr? This question is particularly important for Buchloh because of the historically inaccurate, mythical story Beuys propagated concerning his experience after he crashed his airplane during the war over Crimea. More strategy than mere falsehood, "the Story" functioned so that Beuys could decontaminate himself from the taint of Nazism, fashion himself as a resurrected cultural martyr, and in an art historical context ultimately reconcile Germany more broadly with Western *avant garde* modernist and postmodernist art practices (the latter is an objective that documenta shares). The narrative Beuys circulated about his airplane crash in 1943, near-death experience, and ultimate "rebirth" as a non-German tribal nomad and artist-shaman, is important to take into consideration, particularly because of the ways in which the artist avoided direct confrontation with this dark and uncomfortable period of his and his country's life. Buchloh writes that this myth

> does not necessarily tell us and convince us about the transcendental impact of his artistic work (which is the manifest intention of the fable). What the myth does tell us, however, is how an artist, whose work developed in the middle and late 1950s, and whose intellectual and esthetic formation must have occurred somehow in the preceding decade, tries to come to terms with the period of history marked by German fascism and the war resulting from it, destroying and annihilating cultural memory and continuity for almost two decades and causing a rupture in history that left mental blocks and blanks and severe psychic scars on everybody living in this period and the generations following it.… But of course, the repressed returns with ever-increasing strength, and *the very negation of*

[206] Corinna Tomberger, "Show Your Wounded Manliness: Promises of Salvation in the Work of Joseph Beuys," *Paragraph*, Vol 26 (2003), 73.

> *Beuys's origin in a historic period of German fascism affirms every aspect of his work as being totally dependent on, and deriving from, that period* [my italics].[207]

I agree with Buchloh that it is imperative to demythologize Beuys and locate the artist and his work squarely within their historical and cultural contexts. Additionally, it is important to consider Beuys as a person who came of age in Germany in the 1940s and '50s, a period in which cultural memory was ruptured and defined by many silences, which proved traumatic both for those targeted by the Nazis and also for many former Nazis, sympathizers, and ethnic German citizens. Beuys's relationship to his past echoes that of the German scientist with whom Primo Levi worked (Levi as a Jewish slave, the other as a free German) at the Auschwitz-Buna chemistry lab (see footnote 163). Levi describes his encounter with Herr Müller after the war, in which (to reprise Levi's quote), "it was obvious that he wanted from me something like an absolution, because he had a past to overcome and I didn't…. [This] could only be explained by a very naïve ex post facto wishful thinking; perhaps it was an incident he told a lot of people and did not realize I was the one person in the world who could not believe it. *Perhaps in good faith he had constructed a convenient past for himself*."[208] This seems to me a particularly generous way of understanding both the story Herr Müller told himself and his peers, as well as the Story Beuys told about his wartime experiences, even as it does not absolve them of their guilt.

Similarly, we might ask within the context of documenta, "Whose wound is exhibited here? Who or what has to be healed? And from what?" Is it the Protestant,

[207] Buchloh, "Beuys," 203.

[208] Levi, *The Periodic Table*, 220.

ethnic German majority's cultural monuments that are being redeemed and rebuilt at the exclusion of minorities' history and cultural touchstones? Are those who come from majoritarian spaces now the ones recovering primarily from the self-inflicted trauma that came in the form of Allied bombs and self-proclaiming themselves to be cleansed of the values and tendencies that led to fascism? Does framing documenta as an event that helps the city of Kassel recover from near-annihilation run the risk of foregrounding German losses while assuming a certain amnesia regarding the local history of concentration camps, the expulsion of Jews, and locally-sourced terror? Who were the ones whose generational wealth and access to power allowed them to buy and plant Beuys's oaks and stele across Kassel?

Goethe's Oak

Über allen Gipfeln Ist Ruh, In allen Wipfeln Spürest du Kaum einen Hauch; Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde. Warte nur, balde Ruhest du auch.	Over the hilltops all Is still, Hardly a breath Seems to ruffle Any tree crest; In the wood not one small bird's song. Only wait, before long You too will rest[209]

-Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Wanderer's Nightsong II," 1780

The so-called "Goethe Oak" stands in the middle of what used to be a grove of beech trees outside of the city of Weimar, Germany. Or rather, it stood there for centuries

[209] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Wanderer's Night Song II," *Goethe: Poems and Epigrams*, selected and trans. Michael Hamburger (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1983), 25.

until 1944, when it was hit by an incendiary bomb. The oak, already mature two and a quarter centuries prior to its death, when Johann Wolfgang Goethe lived in Weimar, came by its appellation because according to legend, the famous Romantic poet wrote his first "Wanderer's Nightsong" while seated under the boughs of the great tree.[210] He wrote his second "Wanderer's Nightsong," articulated above, in a gamekeeper's lodge in the woods, also in Thuringia. This second poem, which is still learned by heart by many Germans, and which many scholars of German literature consider to be a nearly perfect poem, when spoken out loud encourages a speaker to sigh and aspirate sounds that mimic the rustle of leaves in a breeze. The gentle calm described in Goethe's short poem descends from the quiet peaks of hills, down to the tops of whispering trees, and hushes the song of small songbirds, until a kind of active rest settles upon the "you" about whom Goethe writes. The dense poem elegantly describes nocturnal quiet descending upon a forest even as it simultaneously encapsulates the cycle of life and eventual death. For centuries, the Goethe Oak has been revered as natural monument, a living relic imbued with the spirit of Germany's great poet.

The Goethe Oak must be read with another layer of significance, however, from the vantage point of post-World War II history. In 1937, Nazis forced their prisoners in the area to chop down the beech forest in order to clear land for what would become the Buchenwald concentration camp, and the camp was named after the beech forest that was razed (in German, "*buchen*" means beeches and "*wald*" is forest). The only mature tree left standing in the camp was the Goethe Oak, rooted prominently in the heart of the compound, its ancient branches gnarled and twisted, its roots thirsty in the dry, compact

[210] Michael Gorra, *The Bells in Their Silence*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 16.

soil (fig. 2.5). According to Peter Young, some of the 56,000 prisoners murdered at Buchenwald were hanged from the old tree.[211] In spite of the horrors that sometimes hung from the boughs of the Goethe Oak, according to various testimonies, the Goethe Oak was nevertheless a beacon of hope for many of the prisoners in the concentration camp, a reminder to them that poetry and beauty might still exist in the world. However, the Goethe Oak was also a site of Nazi pilgrimage, a symbol of the brand of Germanic nationalism that developed during the nineteenth century, even while it was inside the Buchenwald compound.[212] When an Allied air raid bomb hit the Goethe Oak in 1944, the dry old thing burnt like kindling, or perhaps burnt like a body in the nearby crematorium, and all that exists today of the Goethe Oak is a stump and a square stone marker that identifies it, which are surrounded by a low stone fence (fig. 2.6).

After the war, the East German authorities in charge of the site of what had been Buchenwald razed the barracks, just as the beech forest had been cleared in 1937; the position of each now-invisible, ghostly building was demarcated by a stone post, a grave marker that reminds a viewer of that which is absent and has been swept clear from the landscape.[213] The memory work at Buchenwald, like that at Auschwitz, as well as, I assert, at *7000 Oaks,* takes the form of Kantian "negative presentation," a concept I gestured toward previously in this chapter. That is, these markers bring to mind the barracks that once stood there and those victims they housed, who are absent. Although

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[211] Peter Young, *Oak*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), 128.

[212] Joshua Cohen, "Points of Departure: 'A Place in the Country,' by W. G. Sebald, *New York Times*, March 21, 2014. Accessed 6/1/17, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/23/books/review/a-place-in-the-country-by-w-g-sebald.html?_r=0.

[213] Gorra, *The Bells in Their Silence*, 21-22.

Beuys never explicitly connected *7000 Oaks* to Buchenwald or the Holocaust, or to memory work and mourning for that matter, both spaces use trees and stones as archives of history. While they serve as site markers for memory and loss, they simultaneously gesture to fraught cultural legacies. As Michael Gorra writes of his journey to Buchenwald, "Any student of German culture must learn to negotiate the contradictions and connections that the Goethe Oak implies; must worry at the question of how one might get from the poet to the prison, and back again; must worry at the question of their coincidence in something more than space."[214] Gorra, of course, here evokes Theodor Adorno's assertion that to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. He also echoes the sentiments of George Steiner, a scholar of Adorno, who in his analysis of poetry and the German language in the period "after Auschwitz" wrote, "[w]e know now that a man can read Goethe or Rilke in the evening, that he can play Bach and Schubert, and go to his day's work at Auschwitz in the morning."[215] Indeed, poetry and barbarism fold in upon each other at Buchenwald, and in *7000 Oaks*, under the incinerated and no longer existent boughs of the Goethe Oak and next to the stone cenotaphs that mark the destroyed, invisible barracks; the space and people they used to contain are now only shrouded by an imaginary, spectral shell of a building. In turn, the materials Beuys used in *7000 Oaks* are the same as those that were used at the concentration camp after the fall of the Nazi regime. Given that some of Beuys's lesser-known works engage directly with the Holocaust (more on this later), this connection is worth making, particularly because no scholar to my knowledge has made it previously.

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[214] Ibid, 16.

[215] George Steiner as quoted in Rothberg, *Traumatic Realisms*, 31.

When my mind turns to Buchenwald, I think of a forest containing stories: stories told around hearths that might someday become the stuff contained in books, forests that will provide the raw material of pulp and fiber for books, as well as their content. (In German, the word for "book" is "*das Buch*," the plural of which is "*die Bücher*," a word strikingly similar to the word for "beech tree," which is "*die Buche*.") As in a fairy tale when a magic incantation is pronounced, Buchenwald may be transformed into a forest of stories – the poetry and the agony, the sublime poetry and the anguished poetry – that emerged from those woods, in the form of the great poems and fairy tales of the Romantic era, as well as the searing Holocaust survivor narratives published after the war, and the whispered laments that were lost into the night air, like a breeze descending down a hill. The stones there bear testimony to the now-silent voices of those thousands of people who inhabited the place, the spaces no longer contained by walls. The Frog Prince might well be speaking to Buchenwald itself, the forest of stories, rather than the Princess, when he moaned, "stones would be moved to tears if they could hear you."[216] The morning dew on the stone markers at Buchenwald become blood tears that will never fully dry but will burst forth continually with each dawn.

Buchenwald also might provide the forest backdrop for the Grimms' tale "Little Brother and Little Sister," in which the protagonists seek refuge, but fall prey to bewitchment and danger. In a story that bears similarities to "Hansel and Gretel," Sister and Brother flee their home and escape into the woods in order to get away from their cruel stepmother, a woman who turns out to be a witch. Faced with dire thirst, the

[216] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, "The Frog Prince," in ed. Maria Tatar's in *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*, ed. Maria Tatar, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), 6.

siblings come across babbling brooks, all of which, unbeknownst to them, are enchanted by their stepmother. The streams threaten alternately to transform the person who drinks from them into a tiger, a wolf, and a deer, and Brother, unable to tolerate his thirst, kneels and drinks from the final stream. In an instant, he is hexed and transformed into a fawn, and it is in this vulnerable state that Brother, along with Sister, are forced to confront the perils of the forest and look for safety, even as Brother is hunted by a royal gaming party.

Similarly, in my fairy tale reading of Buchenwald and oaks, in an instant, objects may transform into something other than what they originally appeared to be. We might think of this as a fairy tale hermeneutics where animals are enchanted, things are not what they first seem, and there are difficult journeys and trials. A Beuysian stele may transform into either a tombstone or a Greek herm, and Hermes may fly onto the scene, turning word into flesh and flesh into word. A story may be told about an oak tree, only for that oak tree to be transformed into a storybook, its solid core giving way to shapeless pulp, its gallnuts ground for ink. A solid oak stump may provide the raw material for a sculpture of suffering, as in Karl Albiker's *Der heilige Sebastian (St. Sebastian)* (fig. 2.7), and it may provide the block for prints, as in Käthe Kollwitz's[217] sorrowful *Gedenkblatt für Karl Liebknecht (Memorial Sheet for Karl Liebknecht)*, in which positive becomes negative and negative positive (fig. 2.8). In fact, Stephanie Barron, in an exhibition catalogue essay about the second generation of German Expressionism, notes that artists from this interwar generation "frequently turned to wood, either in sculpture or

[217] Kollwitz, a prominent German artist after World War I, made vociferous anti-war prints and sculptures. By now, however, it should come as no surprise that her progressive political views resulted in her work being conspicuously absent from documenta 1, and as such, she is yet one more "ghostly mother."

woodblock, to convey their images of anguish."[218] However, rather than peeling away metaphorical layers down to a stable or necessary core, these fairy tale metaphors are heavily layered and shifting. Some privileged objects and people can time travel and do not age a day, like Briar Rose, while others might sleep for twenty years like Rip Van Winkle and wake up with beards cascading down their bellies, aged and awakened in a remarkably altered world. In my fairy tale reading, just as juniper and hazel trees can function as magical, protective mothers (as in "The Juniper Tree" and "Cinderella"), stones might become corpses. Fruit, like the two-toned poison apple in Snow White, might be Janus-faced and transform either into a nourishing plant cultivated amidst horror and starvation or a ghostly membrane, the desiccated reminder of what is no longer inside.

What stories are still carried by the wind and whispered by tormented spirits over the hilltops at Buchenwald? What tales are possible to hear and read there, despite the silence and the emptiness, in the trees and the bunkers that are no longer there? How might the silence, the voids, and the secrets be productive and given voice? What stories do they tell, and how do they tell them in a way that we might hear and work to comprehend?

Thousands of individuals struggled to survive in the now-invisible barracks at the camp, their emaciated bodies turned into shells, their minds and spirits fighting desperately to cling to the vestiges of humanity. I imagine what whispered theological conversations Elie Wiesel and Dietrich Bonhoeffer might have shared at Buchenwald. I think about the possible exchanges between Jean Améry and Bruno Bettelheim, their

[218] Stephanie Barron, "Introduction," *German Expressionism 1915-1925: The Second Generation*, ed. Stephanie Barron (Los Angeles: Prestel, 1988), 33.

profound despair masked by proclamations of hope both inside and outside the camp. I wonder what stories the woods and Buchenwald told these and other prisoners at the camp.

After his release from Buchenwald, Bruno Bettelheim moved to the United States, and at the University of Chicago enjoyed a celebrated (albeit controversial) career as a child psychologist.[219] Perhaps best known for his book *Uses of Enchantment*, Bettelheim argued for and documented the therapeutic potential of fairy tales. Bettelheim dedicated his post-war life to working with severely troubled children, some of whom served as case studies in *Uses of Enchantment*, and in this book, he demonstrated how children engaged strategically and imaginatively with fairy tales in order to overcome particular challenges. However, Bettelheim's life story became proof that fairy tales are not always therapeutic, they do not always have happy endings, nor are they always enough to uplift and transform a deeply troubled spirit. In 1990 at the age of eighty-six, he took his own life by asphyxiation.[220]

Perhaps the Goethe tree might begin to transform and bear similarities to the Juniper Tree, a central feature from the macabre Grimm tale of the same name. In this story, a woman dies shortly after giving birth to a son and is buried underneath a juniper tree, where her husband mourns her death. Eventually, he remarries and one day his new wife, in a fit of resentment and rage, decapitates her step-son. She cooks the boy into a

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[219] A substantial reason for the controversy surrounding Bettelheim is the charge, after his death, that he plagiarized substantial portions of *Uses of Enchantment*.

[220] One can imagine how shallow and insensitive it would have been, at the end of his life, to recommend Bettelheim to read a fairy tale in order to feel better: at this point he was a widower, partially handicapped after a stroke, and under the weight of crippling depression. Even he was unable to enchant himself out of all of life's burdens.

stew, which she then feeds the unwitting father. However, the boy's step-sister, bereaved, collects the boy's bones and places them under the juniper tree, and there he is magically transformed into a radiant bird. The bird flies throughout town singing a horrifying, morbid song that is nevertheless enchantingly beautiful: "My mother, she slew me, / My father, he ate me, / My sister, Marlene, / Gathered my bones, / Tied them in silk, / For the juniper tree. / Tweet, tweet, what a fine bird am I!"[221] Eight times throughout the story, the bird sings this song which enraptures everyone who hears it, and with it he is able to collect objects as payment from a goldsmith, a shoemaker, and mill workers. These objects he gifts to his family: a gold chain for his father, red shoes for his sister, and a millstone for his step-mother, which he drops upon her head and crushes her to death. At this moment of retribution, and with a flash of light, the bird is transformed back into a boy, and he is reborn.

In the story of the Juniper Tree, trees and stones, like at Buchenwald and in *7000 Oaks*, are the sites of magical transformation. A loving mother who dies prematurely is transformed into a magical tree, and it is at this site that the bones of a slaughtered boy are turned into a magical bird.[222] It is, however, also the site of irreversible death, where both the kind mother and the murderous step-mother, who, viewed through a twentieth-century lens, might be read allegorically as Weimar and Nazi cultures in Germany, will not come back from the grave. The tree is both the place where the phoenix-like bird

[221] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, "The Juniper Tree," in *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*, ed. Maria Tatar, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), 221.

[222] These tropes are similar to the magical tree in the Grimms' version of "Cinderella," in which the girl's mother's protection and spiritual presence may be found in a hazel tree, and Cinderella is assisted by a magical white bird; here, the tree is the source of magic and transformation.

gave voice to the beautiful and horrifying song that described his trauma, and the place where that song was silenced.

From the vantage point of post-War Germany, Goethe's second "Wanderer's Nightsong" takes on a chilling pall. The silence and stillness, or "*Ruh*," where one cannot even hear "one small bird's song," becomes sinister and morbid in the context of Buchenwald – it takes on the silence of those who were executed there, and those who survived but whose lives were irrevocably traumatized, their ability to give voice to their experience muted, and it assumes the silence of those who visit the concentration camp, who struggle with the language to describe it (the silence at concentration camps today is typically palpable). One of the most iconic and elegant poems in the German language is shrouded in the silence of death and it takes on chilling valences when given a modern-day re-reading.

Another ghost that hangs from the boughs of the Goethe Oak brings us to a different concentration camp, and then back full circle to Kassel. (In ghostly moves, this last haunting whizzes through time and space, following that which may be quiet but nevertheless beckons us toward it.) Korbinian Aigner, a Bavarian priest, was imprisoned in the Dachau concentration camp near Munich because of his public anti-Nazi sentiments. He preached from the pulpit against Adolf Hitler, sympathized with Georg Elser's 1939 assassination attempt on the dictator, and did not acknowledge the swastika as Germany's national symbol. While the Nazis forced him to labor at Dachau, Aigner was tasked with maintaining a garden, where he surreptitiously cultivated new strains of apples, which he called KZ1-4 (the abbreviation for *Konzentrationslager 1-4*, or

Concentration Camp 1-4). Each new strain of the apple was named for a year of his imprisonment at the camp.

After his time in Dachau, Aigner crafted roughly nine hundred delicate, postcard-sized portraits in gouache and colored pencil of his apples, the fruit born at the Dachau concentration camp, bastard hybrids conceived of righteous defiance and tender love, that surreptitiously defied the so-called purity of race, genus, and thought that the Nazis attempted to create and maintain in Germany. Many of Aigner's loving fruit "portraits" were on display in 2012 at dOCUMENTA (13), and according to Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, the artistic director of the event, they, as well as the trees themselves, may be seen as symbols of "the Holocaust as the fall of modernity," (fig. 2.9).[223] In a move that spliced together the legacies of the Beuysian Oaks and Korbinian Apples, Christov-Bakargiev and the American artist Jimmie Durham together planted a rare Korbinian Apple tree and an Arkansas Black Apple tree (a breed native to Durham's hometown) in the Karlsaue park in 2011 for dOCUMENTA (13). Sadly, in July of 2015, for unknown reasons, vandals uprooted the Korbinian Apple tree violently and ripped the branches from the stem.[224] The index of resilience in the middle of a concentration camp was simply intolerable for this anonymous vandal. As the fates of various Korbinian Apples

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[223] As Lars Bang Larsen wrote in the Guidebook to dOCUMENTA (13), "Even if Aigner's cultivation of new apple strains was a poetic act of resistance in the face of genocide, the names that he gave to them suggest that no manifestation of life could remain untouched by fascism's abuse of enlightened thought. In this light, Aigner's KZ apples poignantly symbolize the Holocaust as the fall of modernity (Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev)."
Lars Bang Larsen, "Korbinian Aigner," in *Das Begleitbuch/The Guidebook: Documenta (13)* (catalog 3/3). (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 34.

[224] Karen Archey, "Jimmie Durham documenta 13 work destroyed in Kassel," *e-flux conversations*, accessed July 7, 2017, https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/jimmie-durham-documenta13-work-destroyed-in-kassel/2036.

and the Beuysian Oaks attest, their presence in the ground is not neutral. They frequently stir up strong emotional reactions and they serve as the object of violence and animus as well as memorialization and repair. It is as though invisible bones, once tied in silk, are integrated with their roots, and feed the sap that courses through their boughs.

Beuys, the Holocaust, and Mourning

The next silver pebble I drop comes from a symposium in 1998 that Gene Ray organized on Joseph Beuys at the Ringling Museum of Art at which various art historians, critics, and artists explored different facets of the artist's legacy. From this event, Ray edited and published *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy*, a collection of the papers that were presented at there. Among the various perspectives on Beuys, Ray interpreted the late artist's work as rife with mourning over the events of the Holocaust.[225] In his essay, Ray argues that,

> a consistent pattern of direct and indirect allusions to the Holocaust can be found across the whole of Beuys's mature oeuvre. This pattern should be read as a second project, a project of mourning in parallel to the declared project of social sculpture, or the 'expanded concept of art.' This second project produced some powerful late installations capable of function as openings for mourning or working-through.[226]

Ray admits that Beuys's secondary project of mourning, however, is one that has but a marginal role in the literature on Beuys and is a component of his work that the artist

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[225] Ray has a much more favorable opinion of Beuys than Benjamin Buchloh, who was also part of the symposium. Buchloh presented a follow-up response to his 1980 article "Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol" referenced earlier in the chapter, entitled "Joseph Beuys at the Guggenheim."

[226] Gene Ray, "Preface," in *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy*, ed. Gene Ray (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2001), 3.

himself largely did not acknowledge, or did so obliquely.[227] According to him, the marginalization of this secondary project is due to complex reasons, including the unease many Americans had regarding Beuys's work after Buchloh's criticisms. I am, however, indebted to Ray for his argument for and insights into this secondary project of Beuys, which is woefully underdeveloped in the broader scholarship on the artist. Furthermore, as I will demonstrate over the course of this section, I believe that viewing *7000 Oaks* through the lens of a project of mourning (even if this artwork is typically understood as Social Sculpture), not only makes more sense within the context of documenta and Beuys's life, but adds nuance and complexity to his overall project, transforming *7000 Oaks* into an anti-monument of colossal proportions.

As evidence for his argument, Ray examines the most iconic Beuysian materials, fat and felt, those materials that, according to the Story, the Tatars used to warm Beuys after his plane crash. Ray notes that some of Beuys's artworks *do* engage directly with the history of the Holocaust, such as *Auschwitz Demonstration* and *Fat Corners*, and in both artworks, the artist used fat. In accordance with Beuysian iconology, the materiality of fat has traditionally been understood by the artist and scholars to function as a dynamic form of potential energy: that is, it is energy resting in an inert solid state until heat is applied, and the energy is expressed. Ray, however, argues that the fat should first of all be read as an allusion to the crematoria of the Nazi concentration camps, and notes that "it must be said unequivocally that fat first of all refers to the body and to the vulnerability of the body to fire."[228] He continues to make an even more compelling,

[227] Gene Ray, "Joseph Beuys and the After-Auschwitz Sublime," in *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy*, ed. Gene Ray (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2001), 56-57.

[228] Ibid, 62.

haunting, and unorthodox reading of Beuys's use of felt, which he argues does not have so much to do with the material with which the Tatars used to wrap him after the plane crash, but with the Nazi's creation of felt out of human hair. It is widely known that upon arrival at the concentration camps, victims of the Holocaust were shorn and showered; what is less widely known is that the hair from these millions of people was saved, collected, and shipped to factories where it was processed into bolts of felt. Ray writes about this gruesome re-use of human remains:

> This felt was used for a range of wartime products, including slippers for U-boat crews and stockings for railway workers. Seven tons of human hair, packed and ready for shipment, were discovered at Auschwitz when the camp was liberated in 1945 [fig. 2.10]. Whatever Beuys's personal experience of this pressed material may have been, and whatever its sculptural properties may be, felt has a place in the history of the Holocaust that cannot be erased or avoided.[229]

In light of this horrific Nazi practice, felt and fat, oak trees and stone markers, may not be read as neutral media. Noting the standard interpretation of Beuys's use of fat and felt (that is, within the framework of Beuys's rehearsal of his rescue by the Tartars), Ray contends, "I would suggest that they have as much to do with the old Christian ascetic tradition of donning a hair shirt to mortify the body and atone for sins. This is the sense as well of the famous *Felt Suits* of 1970. And in Block 6 of the museum at Auschwitz, the gray suits of the prisoners are displayed high on the wall, just as Beuys often hung his *Felt Suits*."[230] Whether or not Beuys consciously used these materials from the Holocaust as shrouds and objects of atonement, there is a sense in much of his work that the very

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[229] Ibid, 63-64.

[230] Ibid, 66-67.

materials he chose for his artworks were intended to serve as tools of penance, and ultimately those tools might allow him to be cleansed of his previous sins and reborn.

Ray poignantly defends his argument by reading Beuys's 1985 installation *Plight*, an environment in which the walls of an L-shaped space are composed of stacked rolls of felt. A closed concert piano stands in one end of the installation; resting upon its lid are a chalkboard scored for musical notation and a thermometer (fig. 2.11). Ray describes this silent space as "densely funereal and claustrophobic…. This surveillance can now be named as the haunting of victims evoked by negative presentation."[231] The felt columns of *Plight*, he notes, bear an uncanny resemblance in size and form to the column-shaped sacks of human hair discovered by the Allies at Auschwitz II-Birkenau, and Beuys used approximately the same number of rolls of felt for the installation as sacks of hair at Auschwitz.[232] Although Ray does not provide evidence that Beuys was aware of the Nazi bolsters of hair, he concludes his chilling and convincing reading of *Plight*:

> The silenced piano encountered under the relentless gaze of the columns, and under the weight of the thermometer alluding to the crematoria, asserts the impossibility of conventional human art, even in that most abstract medium of music, to represent this catastrophe for mourning and rememoration. Beuys's piece becomes a staggering allegory of ineffability that responds to Theodor Adorno's famous 1951 dictum: after Auschwitz, no more poetry. An art that would offer itself as an object or gesture of mourning, even more the art of a German of Beuys's generation, must refuse both the beautiful and the direct or "positive" modes of traditional representation. It must, like Beuys's art at its strongest, produce its effects according to different rules—those of the sublime. Only an art in that register, an art which evokes and avows, which strikes, hits and hollows, can hope to honor the major trauma of the historical referent.[233]

[231] Ibid, 67.

[232] Ibid, 68.

[233] Ibid.

In a post-Holocaust context, poetry in its conventional, "positive" form of representation becomes impossibly caught up in barbarism (as Adorno would have it) and as Benjamin describes it in "The Storyteller," those who have experienced the horrors of war are now "silent – not richer, but poorer in communicable experience."[234] Ray argues that only the sublime can capture the horror and unthinkability of the Holocaust, and only negative presentation can evoke and honor that which cannot be memorialized through traditional methods.

Reading Beuys's artwork outside of the framework of his problematic and mythical Story, and within the historical context of post-Holocaust Germany, is infrequent in the literature on the artist. However, this is a way of framing the artist that is historically grounded and productive, rather than slavishly reliant upon the artist's carefully crafted cult status and hermeneutic practice of encoding meaning. If an author approaches the artist in this way, she does run the risk of foregrounding the penitence of Beuys and minimizing the fact that he frequently failed to make explicit the connections between his work and the project of rememoration and mourning "after Auschwitz," thus minimizing the efficacy of mourning and memory work. My hope is that in making these connections more explicit, I might honor Buchloh's poignant criticisms while simultaneously addressing the critic's charge of Beuys's "ahistoricity," thereby proffering an expanded reading of *7000 Oaks*. As such, while this project of reframing is important and belated, one must nevertheless hold Beuys accountable for his silences that did not facilitate or encourage the work of negative presentation in a specifically post-War German context. Ray writes, and it is a position to which I subscribe, "[w]hatever their

[234] Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Leskov," 86.

relation to Beuys's private history may have been, his art actions and objects also relate to the Holocaust. Even if they did not refer to the Holocaust at all, they would still, so to speak, refer to the Holocaust. They must by virtue of the fact that their maker had served in the Luftwaffe while Jews and others were systematically murdered in Europe."[235]

Given the significance of the oak tree in Germany during the early nineteenth century, its prominence in Germany for centuries prior to Goethe, and particularly the way it functioned as a symbol for the newly emergent nation state in the nineteenth century, it is perhaps unsurprising that the oak tree assumed special meaning in the context of the Third Reich, when the Nazis whipped up nostalgic, essentialist nationalistic fervor. Oak trees have long served as cultural symbols in Germany, emblems of good luck and fecundity, and may also evoke the mythical and primeval forests that occupy such a place in the German cultural imagination. Since the early nineteenth century, when Goethe sat under his famous tree, the oak functioned as the national tree of Germany. However, as Peter Young notes in his history of oak trees, the Nazis appropriated the oak as a symbol, evocative of their notion of "blood and soil," and thus the oak crown was a symbol of the Nazi Party, as well as a sign of victory. Recounting the frequency of the oak within Nazi awards, badges, and actions, Young points out the *Totenkopfring*, or "Skull Ring," which Heinrich Himmler gave to Nazi officers. This macabre piece of jewelry was worn like a wedding band: engraved upon the inner portion of the band was the name of the award's recipient, and the outside incorporated swastikas, "several runes and oak leaves topped off with a death's head" (fig. 2.12). Young writes that,

[235] Ibid, 58-59.

> Oak leaves with swords and diamonds to the Knight's Cross were instituted in 1941…. The Hitler Youth badge of honor also featured oak leaves. Hitler's personal bookplate comprised an eagle, swastika, and oak leaves [fig. 2.13]. Hitler had a plantation near his birthplace, Branau am Inn, Austria, from which several hundred tiny oaks were taken to be planted throughout Germany and other occupied territories on his birthday, 20 April. Ceremonies, at which attendance was compulsory, often featured extolling the promise of acorns, the deep roots of the oak and comparing its longevity to the Thousand Year Reich – which was to last just over twelve years.[236]

Beuys's choice of the medium of the oak tree in *7000 Oaks* therefore taps into long-held German folk motifs, yet it also hinges upon symbols the Nazis appropriated. The moonlit pebble marking the trail is magically transformed into a sparkly diamond on the Knight's Cross, and again transforms into shiny coin, a post-war 1 Deutsche Mark coin, oak leaves on the obverse and the German eagle on the reverse… or perhaps it is the 50 pfennig piece, on the reverse of which is engraved a young German woman planting an oak sapling (fig. 2.14).

Beuys, a member of the Hitler Youth and a Luftwaffe pilot who had received decoration for the injuries he sustained, *meant* to take the Germanic symbol of the oak (as well as other symbols) back from the Nazis. Caroline Tisdall, a longtime interlocutor with Beuys, notes that these attempts to rehabilitate Germanic imagery and symbols were grounded in the German language. She said in an interview with Sean Rainbird, "The oak is the symbol that you find on the Iron Cross. The Nazis had really tried to subsume it into their hierarchy of symbols. As Beuys always said, it is terrible to deny the 'oakness' of your countryside just because of the Nazis. If you do that, you deny your own culture,

[236] Young, *Oak,* 120.

your own history."[237] Indeed, Beuys's choice to implement a tree that had previously served as a Nazi emblem did not go unnoticed by some of his fellow German artists. Otto Mühl wrote a letter of support to Beuys, in which he stated: "You rinse the roots—of Wotan, through to Wagner, Hitler and the crusaders with their oak leaves and diamond filth—out of the branches of this innocent tree. I already hear the murmur of a new oak wood…. I admire your courage for having dug this tree out of the ideological swamp."[238] Beuys's primary motivation for using the oak tree was to restore its significance in Germany to that which it had prior to the Third Reich and use this symbolically laden object to heal both the environment and German sociopolitical culture. The art historiography surrounding this artwork, however, has hardly attended to this aspect of the artwork, and while Beuys frequently described the way he wanted *7000 Oaks* to rejuvenate Germany, he rarely explicitly framed this within the context of the troubled history of the oak in the twentieth century and his early complicity with that ideology.

One might also read the basalt columns Beuys used in *7000 Oaks* through a different lens if one takes into consideration both the artist's objectives and the legacy of the Holocaust. Rather than, as many art historians have, likening them to the naturally formed basalt columns of the Giant's Causeway of Ireland and their Scottish correlates (Caroline Tisdall captured the artist, who was fascinated with the Celtic world, in a photograph walking across the Giant's Causeway, which has led to this interpretive link), or to their materiality as once-liquid lava, another material related to energy expenditure,

[237] Caroline Tisdall in Conversation with Sean Rainbird, 2001, in Sean Rainbird, *Joseph Beuys and the Celtic World* (Tate Publishing, London: 2005), 80.

[238] Baker and Müller, "A Balancing Act," 107.

I wish to interpret them as ominous cleansing agents and funereal totems. Additionally, I understand the basalt stele to be site-specific, locally sourced markers, as they were quarried from an extinct Hessian volcano nearby Kassel. Baker and Müller note that "Beuys saw his project as a 'cleaning operation,' and once compared the appearance of the chosen crystalline basalt stones to a defunct brand of laundry starch granules."[239] (I have already noted Otto Mühl's praise of the way in which *7000 Oaks* could cleanse the roots of the oak tree.) Beuys considered his "cleaning operation" to be one that both literally cleansed the air and the environment, thus creating a greener city and planet, and also an operation that cleansed German culture.

Beuys's terminology feels ominous, however, considering his biography, the geography of his artwork, and his perceived legitimacy to become a self-appointed cultural custodian. (To use a geographical example, a few miles from Kassel the Nazis repurposed the monastery at Guxhagen, which they turned into a concentration camp, which I discuss in greater depth in Chapter 3.) Baker and Müller do not name the now-defunct laundry starch that Beuys referenced. However, with the tap of a wand, the crystals Beuys used to cleanse Kassel might transform into the Zyklon B granules. Zyklon B was the chemical that the Nazis originally engineered to use as a pesticide, but which through a macabre experiment, discovered could be pumped through the ventilation system of their gas chambers, and by doing so, refined the efficiency of their extermination campaign during the Holocaust (fig. 2.15). Similarly, the racial cleansing rhetoric that the Nazis used easily transforms into the rhetoric Beuys used about cultural cleansing, and the transformations and slippages associated with Zyklon B overflow their

[239] Ibid.

original container. The cyanide-based chemical that was used to exterminate so-called inferior races shape-shifts into a chemical that was developed originally to combat famine in Germany and shifts again into the poisonous and beautiful cyanide green dye that was used to create fashionable and deadly dresses for European ladies in the nineteenth century, to the demise of both working class seamstresses and bourgeois women at balls. Rusty old metal tins of the poisonous gas may still be seen at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum. Canisters that once contained the pale blue crystalline granules bear the faded label "*Giftgas*," German for "Poison Gas," under which a skull and crossbones is depicted. Perhaps this skull echoed perversely the German officer who administrated the gas, a *Totenkopf* on his hat or ring, as he gave a murderous, poisonous "gift" to his victims. Perhaps this ominous gift echoes the vengeful "gift" given by the uninvited fairy to Sleeping Beauty's christening – the gift of an untimely death. These pale blue crystals, reminiscent of a bluing laundry agent, are meant to scrub away clean any mar or stain that might threaten to blemish a perceived impurity, be it hygienic or racial.

The basalt stele that Beuys used in *7000 Oaks* bear a strong resemblance to one of his last artworks, titled perhaps ominously *The End of the Twentieth Century*, from 1983-5, of which there are four versions (fig. 2.16). The artwork comprises between twenty and thirty-one stele, depending upon the installation, also made of basalt, although unlike *7000 Oaks* it is meant for museum display, not for the open air. Each of the monoliths, which lie scattered upon the floor, has a conical hole at one end that Beuys bored. Inside the cavities, the artist smoothed a clay and felt lining before replacing the carefully polished stone core. Gene Ray notes that,

> the manipulated basalt columns [of *The End of the Twentieth Century*] evoke the human body by their scale and resemblance to stone sarcophagi and portrait mummies, and they recall disastrous human history by their resemblance to the fallen columns of a ruined classical temple. The funereal piece executed in the traditional medium of rememoration allegorizes the genocidal catastrophe at the same time that it counters the pompous monumentality of traditional history art.[240]

The jagged, rugged basalt columns feel anthropomorphized, as their sizes range between that of a child and an adult (they are between 3 and 7 feet long), and the round plug is roughly where a face would be. However, unlike the vertical basalt columns of *7000 Oaks*, the rocks in *The End of the Twentieth Century* are typically oriented to lie on the floor (the dimensions of the installation are variable). This is not an orderly graveyard, it is a disorderly heap of monoliths that have been mowed down and fell where they stood. No one is there to assemble them into tidy stacks or rows. These stones also evoke the crumbled columns of the Fridericianum after the war, the broken down architectural emblem of classical antiquity that the organizers of documenta meant so carefully to invoke.

When paired with the title, the artwork seems to be a melancholic meditation upon the horrors of the twentieth century, including war and the Holocaust, evocative of both the pile of stele on the Friedrichsplatz and the piles of bodies from concentration camps, as well as an unexpected site of loving care for those victims, in which the face-like conical plugs are gently polished and insulated before they are returned to their larger whole. Human-sized, there is metonymy and slippage as stone magically transforms into petrified human remains, steles become rolls of felt, and rolls of felt turn into sacks of hair. Beuys intended for this artwork to be another instance of a total work of art, and he

[240] Gene Ray, "Joseph Beuys and the After-Auschwitz Sublime," 70.

spoke of it as an animate entity, one that he caressed and burnished meditatively, perhaps as an act of atonement. He described his sculpture in this way:

> This is the end of the Twentieth Century. That is the old world, on which I impress the stamp of the new world. Look, the plugs, they are like plants from a stone age. I have drilled their funnel shapes with a lot of effort out of the basalt and then placed them back into their holds with felt and clay, so that they wouldn't hurt as much and stay warm. There is something moving, eruptive, living in this stiffened mass – just as the basalt itself was once pressed out of the interior of the earth.[241]

For Beuys, the basalt rocks are stones that he has injured – an injury that took "a lot of effort" – so that he might then repair and comfort them, caress them and ensure their warmth and comfort, and as such he injects a cyclical nature into the process of injury and repair. A part of that comfort is derived from felt fabric, a blanket of shorn hair, returned to anthropomorphized stone. Their "stiffened mass[es]" are not wholly dead, but as something borne of the earth, they can move, erupt, and live; their cores are a little like "plants from an old stone age," and contain the potential for regrowth. Basalt, for Beuys, is a crystalline material, something that occupies a liminal place between life and death, a material that traces the border of animation and sentience.

Joan Rothfuss notes that Beuys, in his final major speech, "Talking About One's Own Country," which he gave in 1985, "suggests that the healing aspect of his practice was not meant to function outside Germany. There, the language he invented (a synthesis of his objects, actions, and words) could actively bring about a change in cultural identity (which itself is a synthesis of language, history, and culture)."[242] A site- and culturally-

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[241] Antliff, *Joseph Beuys,* 136.

[242] Rothfuss, "Joseph Beuys: Echoes in America," 53.

specific artwork, *7000 Oaks* was meant to restore the "oakness" to Germany generally, and Kassel specifically, to change Germans' cultural identity. Basing his artwork in language and concepts, Beuys said, "was also the only way to overcome all the still racially-driven machinations, terrible sins, and not-for-describing black marks, without losing sight of them for even a moment."[243] While authors such as Gene Ray have demonstrated the ways in which much of Beuys's oeuvre should be read in direct relationship to the horrors of the Third Reich and processes of working through and mourning, it is nevertheless telling that (as Ray points out), while Beuys in this passage gestures to the terrible sins committed by the Nazis and the indescribable atrocities inflicted upon Jews and others, he either does not or cannot call them out by name. Certainly, an integral part of the process of working through this legacy is specifically naming those who experienced the trauma and those who inflicted it.

Breadcrumbs

As I meditate upon *7000 Oaks*, I return again to Hansel and Gretel, and the way Hansel first set out a trail of pebbles to mark his way. These stones shone bright and silver in the moonlight, a direct path that led the siblings back to their murderous parents. The second journey through the woods, however, he did not have a chance to collect shiny pebbles before the parents marched him and Gretel into the woods. Hansel had nothing but a small piece of bread to break apart and use to mark the trail, and of course this was subsequently picked away by birds, thus leaving Hansel and Gretel stranded in the woods. They had to venture aimlessly, at times trudging hopelessly and wearily

[243] Joseph Beuys, "Talking About One's Own Country," quoted in Ray, "Joseph Beuys and the After-Auschwitz Sublime," 55.

through the forest to try to get home safely – a home that was currently as dangerous as the forest – or at least find a semblance of security.

These same dark, ominous woods surround the city of Kassel, and are a useful lens through which to view documenta, as well as the work of Beuys. Lost in the woods, I too keep circling back and returning to where I was before, my mind swirling with metaphors that feel mixed, and even if productive, inadequate. My trail, like Hansel's, feels as though it is picked over by birds, dissolving into loamy soil. However, perhaps this space of moving through an ambiguous, troubled, and painful space is exactly what links Beuys with the story of Hansel and Gretel. Like the fairy tale, Beuys's work may be understood as fundamentally about the *creative process* (or *Schaffensprozeß*) of working through, transitioning, evolving, and becoming. In keeping with the spirit of Beuys and, as Tzvetan Todorov described Romanticism, I invite you here to linger with me in "the moment of formation [that] takes precedence over the already formed result."[244]

As my thoughts linger in *7000 Oaks*, I wonder if I might think of the artwork as both a trail through the woods and the woods itself. It is an artwork that is both a directional signpost and an invitation to linger productively in the state of being lost, simultaneously functioning as a tombstone and marker of new life. Might I understand *7000 Oaks* as a tool to meditate upon "evil times" and the "final solution" of the Holocaust, in the words of Anne Sexton, who reimagines the story of Hansel and Gretel in her poem from 1971, a poem in which she explores the transformative and brutal

[244] Tzvetan Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), 154.

powers of incorporation?[245] If so, I feel like the re-imagined Hansel and Gretel she describes in a post-Holocaust world: they are "blind as worms," and "turned like ants in a glove."[246]

Sexton, in one of her several poetic retellings of fairy tales in the volume *Transformations*, looks at the story of Hansel and Gretel from a post-World War II perspective. When Gretel thwarts the witch and pushes the old crone into the fire, she "see[s] her moment in history" and "[t]he witch is turned as red / as the Jap flag. / Her blood began to boil up / like Coca-Cola."[247] Sexton's poem evokes the horrors of World War II — the Holocaust and the nuclear bomb — as she recounts the familiar fairy tale in a way leans in on and juxtaposes the taboos of child abuse and cannibalism, the culture industry and the sacred, American junk food and the communion table. If one is to write poetry after Auschwitz, it must acknowledge the ways in which that which is sacred today — culture, religion, and the mythologies we create and tell ourselves about our history — is complicit in and the product of atrocities such as genocide, slavery, and war.

Scaffold

Late one August morning in 2017, thirty-five years after Joseph Beuys began *7000 Oaks*, I walked through the newly renovated Walker Sculpture Garden in Minneapolis with my family. The sky was bright and clear, children swung on kinetic

[245] Anne Sexton, "Hansel and Gretel," in *Transformations* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), 102.

[246] Ibid.

[247] Ibid, 105.

sculpture and teenagers took selfies with Katharina Fritsch's recently installed giant blue *Hahn/Cock*, a 15-foot tall ultramarine blue rooster. As I rounded a corner, I came upon a Beuys Oak planted in 1997, well after the artist's death (fig. 2.17). Todd Bockly, an independent curator who was inspired by Beuys, initiated the tree planting campaign in Minnesota; he planted one tree at the Walker with volunteers as a Native drum circle celebrated the event, but his larger project was to plant a thousand trees around Cass Lake on the Leech Lake Ojibwe Reservation in northern Minnesota. Like many of the Beuysian trees, the one at the Walker was not actually an oak, but a native cottonwood tree. The morning I walked through the lawns of the sculpture garden, the tree's boughs were festooned with wind chimes and as a gentle breeze rustled them, they played out an improvisational score composed by John Cage. The sturdy, mature tree dwarfed its accompanying basalt stone. Everything was lovely.

It had been a rough year, though. The transition from 2016 to 2017 had felt particularly hard. A steady stream of unarmed people of color killed by the police dominated the news: Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Alton Sterling, and closer to home, just miles from the sculpture garden in which I stood, Philando Castile. My heart sunk with the news of every new act of violence, and I was concerned about the safety of friends and family. The 2016 presidential election cycle was also particularly turbulent and resulted in the election of Donald Trump. Immediately after the election, reports of harassment, bullying, and racially motivated crimes spiked. Latin American families living in the United States became the target of violence of alt-right groups, Jewish Community Centers and temples received bomb threats, and Black Lives Matter protests marched down freeways. At a deadly Charlottesville, Virginia rally, white nationalists

proudly waved Nazi flags alongside Confederate banners and chanted "Jews will not replace us." In South Dakota, demonstrations escalated over the Dakota Access Pipeline, which was scheduled to travel through a corner of the Standing Rock Sioux reservation. Tribal members and supporters of Indigenous rights protested vehemently and peacefully, but were met with the National Guard, rubber bullets, and water cannons, fired when temperatures were below freezing. It was easy to feel cynical about the notion of cultural progress, question whether the lessons from the horrors of the twentieth century were truly learned, and feel that the emphatic proclamation of "never again" after the Holocaust was now simply a hollow platitude. The thousands of Syrian and African refugees — drowned in the Mediterranean Sea, neglected in squalid camps in Greece, rejected by the United States — seemed proof that in Euro-centric spaces, the lives of non-Christians and people of color still had little value.

The Beuysian cottonwood at the Walker and the gentle music from the wind chimes were lovely, though. It reminded me of the magical, brooding spaces of the Karlsaue Park during dOCUMENTA (13). The Beuys tree was not the only reminder of Kassel and Documenta in this corner of the sculpture garden, either. Earlier in the summer, roughly adjacent to the cottonwood, Sam Durant's monumental sculpture *Scaffold* was erected briefly, only to be dismantled within the space of a couple months, due to local protests. I recalled seeing *Scaffold* in 2012 at d(13): a large wooden structure, it was one of scores of sculptures and environments scattered throughout the sprawling Karlsaue (fig. 2.18). Documenta commissioned *Scaffold*, and after it traveled throughout Europe after its original stint in Kassel, it was one of the artworks that the Walker purchased for the renovation of its sculpture garden.

Durant's objective for *Scaffold* was to create an object that jolted audience members out of the spaces of overwhelming white privilege that pervade the art world. He wrote, "I made 'Scaffold' as a learning space for people like me, white people who have not suffered the effects of a white supremacist society and who may not consciously know that it exists."[248] At documenta, I remember climbing onto *Scaffold*, although I was not conscious that it was an object that was meant to make me examine my white privilege. It was a wooden construction that somewhat resembled a children's jungle gym, and which seemed to float eerily off the ground. Some of its several staircases terminated a yard or so above the grass, as did its implied architectural foundation. (The object was anchored to the ground by an internal steel armature that could easily fade from visual prominence.) At d (13), stir-crazy children, impatient with their parents' art walks, took the opportunity to climb over *Scaffold*, and bikes and strollers were scattered and stowed underneath it. Indeed, the artist seemed to encourage visitors to play on his sculpture. The dOCUMENTA (13) catalogue notes about this artwork:

> Durant engages with the issue of the death penalty in the United States. Scale models of historically significant gallows, ranging from the Haymarket Gallows to Saddam Hussein's scaffold, develop into units constructed from models of various gallows through the ages that have been chronologically stacked on top of and within one another. For dOCUMENTA (13), one of these constructions of entangled gallows has been turned into a public artwork, installed in a central spot in the Karlsaue park. People are invited to climb on the structure and use it for various activities, and by doing so to discover the original purpose of the individual construction elements. What at first sight appears to be a playground or picnic place is in fact a caustic anti-monument to the continuing history of execution.[249]

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[248] Andrea K. Scott, "Does an Offensive Sculpture Deserve to be Burned?" *The New Yorker*. June 3, 2017. https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/does-an-offensive-sculpture-deserve-to-be-burned. Accessed September 28, 2017.

[249] Eva Scharrer, *dOCUMENTA (13) Catalog: The Guidebook 3/3* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 252.

A playground or picnic place that melds into a stack of gallows. It made me think of, among other things, the outdoor luncheons white families in the United States would have during slave auctions and the mobs that enacted lynchings and attended public executions, not only in the American South, but in towns such as Duluth and Mankato of my native Minnesota. *Scaffold*, in this context, felt like an intentionally poorly sign-posted and ham-fisted attempt at facilitating "gotcha" moments, and I was startled that I hadn't made the connection between the artwork and gallows previously. Perhaps (like many people, I imagine) I had exhibition fatigue when I saw *Scaffold* originally, and perhaps I did not read the didactic label or leaf through my catalog as I first encountered it. Perhaps it was raining when I encountered *Scaffold* and I huddled underneath it primarily to shield myself from one of the rainstorms that frequently blow through Kassel. I saw the uncanny construction at documenta, but only very belatedly made the connection that it referenced gallows, one of which was from Mankato, Minnesota, a town only eighty miles from my home in Minneapolis. I did not realize that *Scaffold*, among other things, acted as an index of the largest mass execution in United States history, the slaughter of Native Americans who defied the spatial and legal encroachment of white settlers.

The mass execution of thirty-eight Dakota men in Mankato, Minnesota occurred in 1862 as a result of the U.S.-Dakota War of the same year. This war was a bitter event in history, although one frequently overshadowed by the American Civil War, and as such is a conflict often relegated to an historical footnote, an historical event poorly remembered even in Minnesota. In the 1850s and '60s, when the state of Minnesota was in its infancy, the United States government violated many of the treaties it had agreed

upon with the local Dakota people, as they did with many Native American tribes and nations across the continent. The U.S. government cheated the Dakota out of their land, and by 1862 many members of the tribe were on the verge of starvation because the payments and annuities from the government were not delivered in a timely fashion when they came at all. Adding to the problem, the encroaching settlers reduced the wild animal population upon which the Dakota relied for hunting, and the reservations to which the Dakota were shunted were not arable. In a crass and barbaric twist upon Marie Antoinette's famous remark "let them eat cake," when Dakota people came to the white trader Andrew Myrick to ask that he extend their credit at his store, he retorted, "so far as I am concerned, if they are hungry let them eat grass or their own dung."[250] This exchange proved to be a tipping point in Dakota-settler relations.

During the summer of 1862, through the fall, and into the winter, many Dakota rebelled and engaged in a series of vicious attacks upon settlers in an effort to drive them away. They killed hundreds of white settlers and traders, including Myrick; when his body was found, his mouth was stuffed with grass. However, after six bloody weeks, the United States government quashed the rebellions, imprisoned over a thousand Dakota, and condemned thirty-eight of them to death. On the order of Abraham Lincoln, thirty-eight Dakota were hanged *en masse* in Mankato, on December 26, 1862, the day after Christmas, an event that drew throngs of local residents to the outdoor, public event. After the hanging, the bodies of the Dakota men were dumped in a sandy mass grave along the banks of the Minnesota River, and some the corpses were subsequently

[250] "The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862: Taoyateduta (Little Crow)," Minnesota Historical Society. http://www.usdakotawar.org/history/taoyateduta-little-crow. Accessed September 28, 2017.

disinterred, not by their own people for a ceremonial reburial, but by white people so they might use the bodies for medical purposes. William Mayo himself dissected one of the thirty-eight, Mah-pe-o-ke-na-jui, or Stands on Clouds, the bones of whom Mayo varnished and kept in the office of his famous Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Taoyateduta, also known as Little Crow, a Dakota leader and spokesperson, who had attempted to negotiate peacefully with U.S. government officials before his involvement in the war, was murdered by a farmer in 1863 for stealing berries; his scalp, for which the government paid the farmer hundreds of dollars, was kept at the Minnesota Historical Society until its return to Little Crow's people over a hundred and fifty years later.[251] The government held roughly sixteen hundred Dakota non-combatants, mostly women and children, in a squalid concentration camp at Fort Snelling, Minneapolis, after the war. (In elementary school, I attended a school with a large Native population, which is now also an Anishinabe Academy; one of our field trips was to Fort Snelling. I remember white historical reenactors in military dress, but do not remember mention of the Fort being used as a concentration camp nor a clear explanation of why soldiers' presence was necessary.) Disease in the camp was rampant, food was insufficient, and roughly three hundred Native people died there as a result. In the following years, the government expelled the remaining Dakota from their ancestral Minnesota homeland, and the government offered $25 bounties for the scalps of any remaining tribal members.

It is not surprising then, that when Durant's *Scaffold* was erected, it met vociferous protest from many local Native Americans. The wounds of the U.S.-Dakota War and its aftermath have still not healed, in large part because of the failure of the

[251] Ibid.

white majority in Minnesota to retell the shameful history of it; in the racially-charged social climate of 2017, tensions were already high and nerves already frayed. Protesters attached signs to the chain link fence surrounding the construction area that read, "Take it Down," "Dakota Genocide is not Art," "$200 Reward for Scalp of Artist!!," and "They Paid a White Man $75,000 to Replicate a Weapon of Genocide" (fig. 2.19) Local Dakota felt particularly outraged because Durant and the Walker had not consulted with them in any way prior to the purchase and installation of the artwork. Not only did the sculpture "replicate a weapon of genocide," but, it must be noted, the land upon which the Walker and its sculpture garden lies originally belonged to the indigenous nation. The roots of this institution of visual culture are dug into stolen Dakota land, and only rarely have the Walker's representatives acknowledged, let alone honored, this fact. In an attempt to rectify the firestorm that resulted from this situation, the Walker organized a series of meetings between Dakota elders, Durant, and Walker director Olga Viso. As a result, the parties reached the decision to remove *Scaffold* in a ceremony led by Dakota elders and spiritual leaders. According to a statement issued by the Walker, "the wood will be removed and taken to the Fort Snelling area, because of the historical significance of this site to the Dakota Oyate, where they will ceremonially burn the wood."[252]

Scaffold raised several questions as a result of this conflict, questions that have no easy answers, but queries that are also relevant to my reading of *7000 Oaks*. That is, how should an artwork that indexes historical trauma function? What is the role of and responsibility of the artist to the event and to those affected by it? To what extent is it the

[252] Euan Kerr, "Walker Art Center's 'Scaffold' to be dismantled, burned," MPR News, May 31, 2017. https://www.mprnews.org/story/2017/05/31/walker-art-center-dismantle-scaffold-sculpture-burn-it. Accessed September 28, 2017.

artist's responsibility to make the ideational premises of his or her work transparent, as well as work in good faith with the communities whose stories and traumas are retold? How might an artwork simultaneously provoke, memorialize, and haunt, while resisting misappropriation, trivialization, and definition? In other words, how might the secrets be made productive? And so as I walked through the Walker Sculpture Garden that August day, I heard the uneasy ghosts still whispering from *Scaffold*. Those ghosts mingled with that of the Beuys Oak. They whispered an imperfect poem, a troubled and troubling story about anti-monuments, negative presentation, a sideways testimony. "I remember and now so do you. My boughs have borne strange fruit, my companion is a tombstone. And yet I still rise toward the sun and nurture those future poets who seek calm and solace in my shadowy embrace." The past, our history and others' history, is not closed like a book. The chapters have not all ended, but are ongoing and continue to evolve, their seeds carried by the wind. Perhaps the oak, whose lifespan is measured in centuries rather than decades, and stone, whose lifespan is measured in millennia rather than centuries, are beautiful and imprecise markers of history. They may serve as reminders that every history – and the ghosts of that history that continue to haunt us – are rooted in and grow from their precise locality, and these haunted localities are complex, painful, and sometimes, surprisingly, lovely sites. The work of repair and the quietening of these troubled places is not to be measured on a human scale.

> Über allen Gipfeln
> Ist Ruh,
> In allen Wipfeln
> Spürest du
> Kaum einen Hauch;
> Die Vögelein schweigen im

Walde.
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch

Chapter 3

Specters of *Suspiria*: Fairy Tales, Recombinant Narrativity, and Con/temporality

Intro

Suspiria: v. (*Italian*) to sigh, to breathe

> Breath itself gives 'spirit' from *spirare*, 'to breathe,' in Latin, and a galaxy of words spanning the far horizon from life to death: among verbs invoking active agency ('inspire, 'conspire,' 'inspirit') and physical states of many kinds ('perspire' and, finally, 'expire'); among nouns, it applies to concepts vast and tiny – the 'Earth Spirit,' the 'Spirit of the Age' (the *Zeitgeist*); it also names the kind of fairy known as a 'sprite,' as well as volatile essences of one kind and another. - Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria*[253]

The seeds of memory that float on breaths of wind, the unquiet ghosts that can be heard echoing from dark corners of forgotten spaces, were present in Kassel over the course of the summer of 2002, when spectral figures haunted the corridors of the Herkules Oktagon. A visitor to town could search for them by walking up the long, high road from the main train station to Schloß Wilhelmshöhe, the city's royal palace, which is now an art museum, then meander through the castle grounds, trek past the miniature medieval castle, water follies, pavilions and other architectural whimisies, through the manicured gardens behind the Schloß, then climb the steps flanking a water cascade that leads up to the pinnacle of the hill, upon which the Oktagon is perched, and finally go inside its labyrinthine corridors. The visitor would likely be out of breath and sweating (panting

[253] Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2006), 62.

with belabored *spirare*, perspiring, feeling ready to expire), but, alas, would not see the ghosts that haunted the interior of the Oktagon (fig. 3.1). What she would have seen from this summit is the city of Kassel spread out before her. Nestled between verdant arbors and ancient forests, the water cascade leads down a straight, wide, manicured path, which orients one's vision down to the Schloß Wilhelmshöhe, that neoclassical princely castle with slightly concave wings, which seem to embrace the vast park behind and above it as well as the person who looks out from this spot in her elevated position of visual authority (fig. 3.2). Laid out behind the Schloß one would see the red tile-roofed city of Kassel down below. The high road leading to the Schloß cuts like a knife with linear precision through the heart of the entire town and bisects the small city, which is nestled in the basin of a hilly valley.

If one made the journey up to the Herkules Oktagon, which is a rustic but elegant baroque stone structure topped by a towering spire upon which rests a colossal statue of the demi-god Hercules, and *if* one went inside the building, one would not see the ghosts that haunted the Oktagon in the summer of 2002. A visitor might see some surveillance cameras mounted on tripods, which would tilt and pan, and at night a large colony of bats flapping through the broad open-air, octagonal windows and arched semi-circular doorways might be seen (fig. 3.3). If one wanted to see the ghosts inhabiting this space and listen to the stories they told, it was necessary to reverse course, walk back down the switchbacks on the pathway through the pleasure gardens, traverse the descending high road, Wilhelmshöher Allee, through Kassel, take its curve to the left when one hit the city center, then turn right toward the end of the downtown commerce sector onto the Friedrichsplatz, to arrive at the Museum Fridericianum. There, in a gallery in the

museum, a visitor to documenta could see real-time black and white surveillance video footage of the interior of the Oktagon, and upon this video feed, superimposed digitally, were the ghosts. Moving through the hallways and stair-steps of the Oktagon, were characters plucked out of fairy tales, corporeally semi-translucent. They quested for gold and cut hands from corpses; mirage-like soldiers, their contours and flesh wavering in red, green, and blue light, jumped from magic sacks; and heroines made pacts with the devil (fig. 3.4).

This chapter will examine these ghosts, which comprised the artwork *Suspiria*, Stan Douglas's site-specific video installation from Documenta11. His work explores the specific and layered ways in which Kassel is haunted by its past, probes the radical potential of non-linear historiographies, and examines the utility, shortcomings, and limits of the Grimms' fairy tales in the contemporary moment. Douglas's video installation is a complex intersection of various rich and interrelated nodes, which I will unpack and interweave throughout this chapter. Ultimately, however, I argue that *Suspiria* interrupts and subverts several economies that are uniquely inherent to documenta and Kassel: the economies of narrativity, asymmetrical vision, and state power. As a kind of cyborgean artwork, *Suspiria* undermines origin myths, and by experimenting with anachronism, exposes the ghosts that haunt narrative and physical structures. Moreover, *Suspiria* proposes a form of storytelling in which ghosts from the past and future populate the present at random and asks what history might look like that is full of ghosts. If there are infinite possible versions of reality, might an experience that attunes our senses to these specters, or "fleetingly improvised characters" (a term I will

explain later), help to foster a radical awareness, empathy, and sensitivity to the animism of all things and possible forms of reality?

In *Suspiria*, Stan Douglas employs what George E. Lewis has called recombinant narrativity: that is, it is a kind of re-mix of pre-recorded narrative segments. For this artwork, the artist handed over authorial control to a computer algorithm that determined which audio-visual chunks would follow each other and combine in a randomly determined sequence. Specifically, the chunks that Douglas combined were narrative segments that he wrote, directed, and filmed, all of which were extrapolated from the Grimm Brothers' fairy tales. As I will describe more fully later, told in their classical form (that is, the basic form that the Grimms canonized in *Children's- and Household Tales*), these stories are related to state power and religious authority, just as more conventional academic historiographies employ linear, teleological models, which communicate and normalize culturally dominant values and storytelling arcs. These narratives normalize things such as patriarchal and Protestant ethics, ethnocentric worldviews, and histories in which all events build toward an eventual denouement and resolution; thus, in both fairy tales and histories, outcomes seem preordained or inevitable, as these narratives are built upon the implicit idea of progress and teleological organization. For example, in the Grimm fairy tales, industrious protagonists are most often rewarded with happiness and prosperity; virtuous and comely young women finally find their handsome, charming prince; in the end avaricious and cruel antagonists are exposed and punished; and seats of power that were once in the hands of false rulers are replaced by true monarchs who reign with justice and benevolence. However, I argue, if fairy tales are employed as Douglas uses them – that is, remixed randomly to tell a story

with no beginning, middle, or end, and rather are told in such a way that they employ non-linear historiographic strategies, they might disrupt the economy of linear narrative and tell stories that not only open up possibilities for new means of memory but disrupt the ways in which histories frequently promote and support entrenched systems of power. If nothing else, this manner of storytelling also acknowledges the uncomfortable truths that avarice often leads to reward rather than punishment, structures built with the purest and most noble of intentions sometimes become host to compounding cruelties, history is more random than we wish to imagine, and the tales we half-remember from our youth might turn out to be more macabre, cruel, and uncanny than we realize.

Many of our ideations about life, love, money, violence, and morality come from the fairy tales we learn from our youth. By the time we become adults, frequently the ethics and moral structures contained within these narratives are so naturalized as to become invisible and have already built a moralizing scaffolding that supports the way in which we understand, interpret, and form predictions about the world in which we live. However, as Douglas suggests in *Suspiria*, these stories we tell and that we use to define reality are in actuality composed of readymade narrative chunks, easy units that may be reassembled into a pastiche that is much different from their original form. By disrupting narrative continuity as it is normalized in our contemporary moment, we might make strange that which is familiar and begin to see history, storytelling, narrativity, and institutional power (as wielded by governments and cultural institutions) in new ways that make the invisible ghosts of entrenched power and historic violence visible, although in this way of storytelling, their power may appear less inevitable. While this disruption may not give us an entirely new set of possibilities with which to build history, and while

the narrative chunks are not free of ideology, by reassembling them randomly, a new language or syntax of storytelling might be established, one that in part evades the predetermination of meaning that frequently attends histories and fairy tales alike. Over the course of this chapter, I mean to demonstrate that we may get a fuller or different understanding of history if we refuse to assemble these readymade pieces into a linking, linear, causal narrative that resolves in a pat terminus or a messianic resolution, but rather interpret history as a series of continually forking paths. One way of doing this is to imagine the role of the artist as that of a storyteller and a cyborg (this is one of many possible roles for the artist, certainly, but a role that Douglas takes on specifically in *Suspiria*). The artist as cyborgean storyteller, as Douglas instantiates it, is a figure who experiments with the topics and stakes of ontological boundaries and Western traditions, as Donna Haraway described them in "The Cyborg Manifesto." That is, she writes,

> By the late twentieth century [or in Douglas's case, early twenty-first century], our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation. In the traditions of 'Western' science and politics – the tradition of racist, male-dominant capitalism; the tradition of progress; the tradition of the appropriation of nature as resource for the production of culture; the tradition of reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other – the relation between organism and machine has been a border war. The stakes in the border war have been the territories of production, reproduction, and imagination.[254]

Douglas, working in close conjunction with a computer to produce, reproduce, and imagine *Suspiria*, created a work the politics of which broke with the traditions of science

[254] Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, 2nd edition, ed. Amelia Jones (New York: Routledge, 2010), 588.

and politics Haraway describes. By embracing the chimerical quality of our time through the storytelling medium of fairy tales, which are composite amalgamations built by generations of storytellers, and are stories that frequently normalize shape-shifting, hybridity, transformation and the anachronism, Douglas experimented with telling a hi/story that exposed as mythological the narrative constructions that have supported racist, male-dominant, capitalist systems, particularly the forms of storytelling that have attended fairy tales and documenta. Another way he experimented with new modes of writing history was to take hauntings seriously so that his audience might listen for the specters from the past or future that disrupt linear chronology and narrative expectations.

By unpacking the ideas that Douglas raises and mixes in *Suspiria*, I intend to write a history of the artwork that acknowledges the artificiality of the linear narrative form, communicates with specters and revenants, and analyzes how *Suspiria* brings both past and future into an ever-unfolding, dynamic present, what Christine Ross calls the "thicken[ing] of the 'now' of the viewer's perception."[255] Additionally, as with my other chapters, I will engage performatively with Douglas's work and endeavor methodologically to emulate and learn from recombinant narrativity; as such, this chapter is structured like a remix album of sorts. That is, it is meant to allow several simultaneous voices, suspended on ether, to breathe with cacophonous and ghostlike interruption throughout the chapter. The several sub-sections of the chapter are meant to function like tracks on a musical album, and as in *Suspiria*, each mini-narrative is preceded by an epigraph. Although this chapter is meant to be read linearly (it is not a Choose-Your-Own-Adventure book that invites readers to choose between different narrative tracks

[255] Christine Ross, *The Past is the Present; It's the Future Too* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 10.

that lead to different conclusions), the sub-sections at times may jump in tone and topic, and themes might be reprised or information frustratingly delayed. To this end, I hope you, reader, feel invited to play (with) the text in order to make the dissonant gaps productive and make associative leaps, seek out the rhythmic parallels, thematic harmonies, historical intersections, and pulses that scratch through space and time. When read in aggregate, as a constellation of ideas and historical moments, it is my goal that the "tracks" of this chapter work together to unpack the rich amalgamation of themes upon which *Suspiria* draws, assemble a community of fleetingly improvised characters, and with them I mean to expose and resist the systems of power and origin stories that are re-entrenched by traditional forms of writing history – historiographies whose history fairy tales and documenta share.

Ghosts in the Labyrinth

The time is out of joint – O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!
Nay, come, let's go together. -Hamlet (I.v.188-90)

In 2002, Stan Douglas presented *Suspiria* to the visitors of Documenta11. A complex work that brings multiple localities and temporalities together, it is necessary at the outset that I describe the work in some detail. At its most foundational level, *Suspiria* linked two prominent eighteenth-century structures in Kassel: the Museum Fridericianum (which, as I have demonstrated previously, is central to documenta) and the Herkules Oktagon, both of which are early modern monuments in the city. In the opening years of the eighteenth century, the ruling Landgrave Karl of Hessen-Kassel employed the architect Giovanni Francesco Guerniero to design a grand baroque structure to crown the

summit of his new princely pleasure garden. The resulting monument was a colossal three-story tall octagonal structure that supported a towering spire, which in turn served as an impressive base for a twenty-seven-foot high copper statue of the mythological figure Hercules (fig. 3.5). The statue was adapted from the Lysippos's well-known *Farnese Hercules*: the nude, bearded demi-god gazes down with weary authority from his perch as he supports himself upon his club, which is draped with the Nemean lion pelt; behind his back, he clutches loosely the apples of Hesperides.[256] The façade of the octagonal building below was constructed of intentionally rusticated concrete meant to look like rough-hewn, cyclopean rocks, and the interior of the Oktagon contains labyrinthine corridors that curve at odd angles, empty into stone chambers, lead to staircases, and are pierced by open air windows from which far-reaching vistas might be seen.

From these dim, windy, cool interior spaces of the Oktagon, Douglas captured live black-and-white surveillance footage from thirteen different computer-controlled video cameras. As the cameras moved on their tripods, they transmitted the information they took to a central computer that used a live algorithm to choose which camera's feed would be combined digitally with a pre-recorded fairy tale narrative segment (which was in color, as opposed to the black and white surveillance camera footage). Thus, the computer transmitted in real time the two different superimposed video channels into an exhibition hall a couple of miles away in the Fridericianum for documenta. Additionally, the computer remixed a series of creepy prog-rock musical tracks as part of this

[256] The sculpture was a replica of the Classical Greek third century BCE *Farnese Hercules*, created by Johann Jacob Anthoni, a goldsmith from Augsburg.
"Hercules Monument," Stadtportal: Kassel, documenta Stadt, accessed February 16, 2018. http://www.kassel.de/datenerfassung/gebaeude/20010/index.html.

transmission, and between each vignette played one of several audio epigraphs that Douglas had excerpted from Karl Marx's first volume of *Capital*. All of these elements succeeded each other seamlessly when viewed in the Fridericianum gallery space. Layered upon each other, the two video channels presented moving images that appeared to depict a haunting within the walls of the Oktagon (or at least a video projection of figures onto the interior spaces). At night, the live video footage from within the Oktagon was broadcast on the local Hessian *Arte* television station. The interior of the Oktagon, host to one of Germany's largest bat colonies, was the nocturnal set for clouds of bats swarming through its damp, dark stone corridors and Douglas's uncanny fairy tale remix.

Tellingly perhaps, in light of my exploration into the role of the forest in Chapter 2, Douglas noted in his essay contribution to the Documenta11 Catalogue that the labyrinth of the Oktagon was meant to serve as a stand-in for the space of the forest in fairy-tales.[257] The forest, Douglas writes, "is typically the scene of an enchanted confrontation or acts as an obstacle preventing escape to the outside world."[258] Indeed, this space with its invisible cast of characters seems bewitched, as the fairy tale figures embark on the kinds of endeavors that are most common in fairy tales. In the various story snippets, narratively discontinuous with each other, Douglas's characters quest for goals, execute morbid feats and punishments, encounter giants, and travel through the woods.

The characters seeming to haunt the Oktagon maintained an uncanny, disembodied, ghostly presence not only because the colors by which they were

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[257] Stan Douglas, "Suspiria" in *Documenta Catalog* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 557.

[258] Ibid.

constituted were far from naturalistic, but because they appeared to be immaterial – they had a wavering, semi-transparent, luminescent quality when combined with the surveillance camera footage, so that a viewer could "see through" them to the naked walls of the Oktagon, to greater or lesser degrees. As Douglas developed the basic elements of *Suspiria*, he extracted from the 210 Grimm stories in *Children's and Household Stories* 250 basic narrative elements, which subsequently served as readymade narrative components that he recombined. These commonly occurring fairy tale elements were then transposed onto characters he created, who appeared in a series of different micro-narratives. For example, the protagonist from Douglas's fairy tale snippets is a young woman named Else, who travels through the woods, homeless and perpetually in a state of wandering throughout an unpredictable and perilous world.

Actors from Douglas's native Vancouver, Canada, comprised the cast of characters who played out the live action fairy tale sequences in *Suspiria*, dressed in contemporary clothes. Else, played by a Canadian actress of Asian descent who wears a pale blue velvet blazer throughout her scenes, is Douglas's interpretation of the frequently occurring "Hans" figure from the Grimm stories (such as the characters from "Dummer Hans," "Hans[el] and Gretel," "The Poor Miller's Boy and the Cat," and "The Boy Who Set Forth to Learn about Fear.") (fig. 3.6). Else travels with a magic sack, from which she can make obedient soldiers appear for her use, and she encounters other fairy tale characters in the woods. For example, she meets an Innkeeper (he is a homicidal maniac who works alongside the Devil, played by a bespectacled balding white man), a Servant who works for the Innkeeper (she steals hands from corpses and gets drunk while

on errands for the Innkeeper), the Devil (with whom Else signs a contract), a Dwarf (who saves Else), a Giant (whom Else tricks), and a Witch (Else's friend).

By exploiting quirks in the NTSC television system (or National Television System Committee, the somewhat archaic and increasingly obsolete analog television system used in North America), Douglas was able to create characters whose bodies shimmered between the primary colors of light: red, green, and blue, and who might seem more or less corporeal depending upon the quality of sunlight that penetrated into the interior spaces of the Octagon (fig. 3.7). Douglas describes succinctly the way in which he manipulated the video feeds of *Suspiria* in the Documenta11 Catalog:

> NTSC was, initially, a black and white system. When color was introduced, the standard was not reconfigured but simply adapted by using the black and white picture information (luminance) as a carrier signal over which the color information (chromalence) could be superimposed – the color television system in North America is, in effect, *a system of ghosts* [my italics]. If two video signals share a common "time base" or synch, their luminance and chrominance components can be interchanged by simply switching a few cables: using the same technique, scenes taken from the Grimms' *Fairy Tales* [were] superimposed over live images from the Herkules.[259]

If we read *Suspiria* in light of Marshall McLuhan's aphorism that "the medium is the message," then Douglas's artwork becomes a project that is composed of "a system of ghosts;" by establishing a common "time base," the Oktagon becomes a space that is haunted by a multiplicity of ghosts; over and over again the ghostly videos synch to the time base of the (then) present moment. And the ghosts kept coming: they came out of the shadows to hit their marks only to temporally topple over each other as the work

[259] Douglas, "Suspiria," 557.

unfolded in real time.[260] Ranging from nineteenth century German thinkers to campy horror film to post-humanism, Douglas combines the Grimm fairy tales, Marxist writing, references to the B-movie cult classic also called *Suspiria*, and assumes the role of cyborg-artist in this work. As a result, *Suspiria* is haunted by the past and the future, even as it proffers a storytelling model that resists classical narrative structures.

In the case of *Suspiria*, "medium" here takes on a secondary meaning: not only is video projection an important artistic medium in Douglas's work, but his artwork also functions as a kind of spiritual medium – a conduit through which otherworldly, spectral messages might be channeled – and this secondary sense of "medium" also becomes the message. Marina Warner, in her hauntingly insightful and supernatural book *Phantasmagoria*, writes about the Fox sisters, who hailed from upstate New York in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The three young women were instrumental in establishing and popularizing the Spiritualist movement, from which, among many other things, ghost photographs emerged. Warner describes the women who led séances and attuned their senses to table tippings, rappings upon the walls, and the frothy ectoplasms that emerged from facial orifices (and which were sometimes photographically documented). Taken out of the context of her description of Spiritualism, Warner's words might aptly describe Douglas's artistic practices in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. She writes, "the medium of the messages — the light waves of the ether — and the interpreter became one and the same. The new technologies offered a model for understanding that was extended to mysteries beyond the reach of scientific

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[260] Following the debut of *Suspiria* during Documenta11, Douglas modified the work so that it could be presented in gallery settings. Hence, the present-ness of *Suspiria* unfolding in real time in Kassel during the summer of 2002 is now a past incorporated into innumerable presents and futures.

empiricism."[261] So too is Douglas a conduit who channels ghosts from the nineteenth century, the late eighteenth century, the turn of the millennium, as well as potentially other time periods, which are then broadcast on light waves of the ether. He deftly interweaves uncanny transmissions, voices whose stories refuse to stay locked in the past, and he uses the inherently ghostly and uncanny medium of film. That is, he employs a series of photographs that are animated, that frequently seem to breathe and seethe with life, yet are always indexical referents to the moments in time which are no longer. Nevertheless, he summons fantastic referents — and recalls them potentially infinite numbers of times into the present and all the presents that are still in the future.

Finally, *Suspiria,* and Documenta11 more broadly, were haunted by the events of September 11, 2001. This momentous and tragic event occurred less than a year before Documenta11 opened in Kassel and six months before the first Documenta "Platform" event occurred in Vienna (there were five global platforms for the event), and as such happened well after the main preparations and conceptualizations for Documenta11 were already complete. September 11 was an historical rupture the reverberations of which continue to be felt nearly two decades after the event; in 2001 and 2002, the attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. shook not only those in the United States, but prompted immediate international reactions. In his preface to the Documenta11 catalog, artistic director Okwui Enwezor opened with the language of haunting when he nodded to both 9/11 and broader global disturbance and events that framed documenta such as former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic's trial for war crimes, the international refugee crises, and political unrest in African countries such as the Ivory Coast, Algeria, and the

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[261] Warner, *Phantasmagoria*, 221.

Congo. Enwezor wrote, “Almost fifty years after its founding, Documenta finds itself confronted once again with the specters of yet another turbulent time of unceasing cultural, social, and political frictions, transitions, transformations, fissures, and global institutional consolidations.”[262] Although, to my knowledge, Stan Douglas never made explicit connections between *Suspiria* and the paradigm-shifting events of 9/11, they nevertheless also haunt his contribution to Documenta11, simply by virtue of their timing. There is perhaps no greater example of an attack on liberal democracy and capitalism, the two main interrelated institutions of Western hegemony, than when the militant jihadists hijacked airplanes and flew them into the World Trade Center. Although it will not be the focus of this chapter, it is necessary to note that Douglas's project is haunted by the “radical spatial and temporal violence of the actions of September 11,”[263] and does gesture to the tension between capitalism and Communism, through the incorporation of Karl Marx as well as the use of recombinant narrativity. The specters of turbulent paradigmatic change, palpable in the months following 9/11, haunt *Suspiria*, as they did those who saw it during the summer of 2002.

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The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too. -Eugene O'Neill[264]

[262] Okwui Enwezor, “Preface,” in *Documenta Catalog* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 40.

[263] Okwui Enwezor, “The Black Box,” in *Documenta Catalog* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 47.

[264] Quoted in Ross, *The Past is the Present; It's the Future Too*, 3.

As Stan Douglas developed *Suspiria*, he chose to film the fairy tale segments that constituted his work at home rather than on location in the Oktagon in Kassel, and as such used actors from his hometown and filmed the fairy tale scenes in Vancouver, Canada. He constructed sets that replicated spaces within the Oktagon exactly and filmed the actors against green screens there, then used computer imaging to simulate the actors inhabiting the interior of the Oktagon. The location of the cameras used on set for shooting the actors and the focal lengths employed were in precise alignment with the surveillance cameras inside the Oktagon, so that when the computer superimposed both video feeds, the result looked as though spectral actors were inhabiting the real space of the Oktagon, even though they had never set foot in the German building. When viewed in the gallery space of the Fridericianum, it was impossible for a viewer to determine whether a video of the actors was projected *into* the spaces of the Oktagon or if the superimposition of videos was a trick that took place within the technological apparatus itself.

In an artist talk he gave at AA School of Architecture, Douglas described how his organization of these narrative elements was such that “each story has a tag on it based on Else’s location (is she in the inn, woods, underworld, accused of a crime, etc.) and economic situation (is she rich, poor, or it doesn’t matter). Each of the narrative chunks recombined to tell an endless story.”[265] The tags on the story, which Douglas reduced to single letter abbreviations, read like a cipher produced from a *ouiji* board, the letters strung together by forces that come from another ontological dimension: A, G, I, U, W,

[265] Stan Douglas, AA School of Architecture, “Stan Douglas – Artist Talk.” Feb 15, 2008.

etc. Douglas also created rules for his script, which are similar to both performance art scores and computer codes. The script for *Suspiria* and its tags appeared as follows:

Intros [soundtrack remixes and excerpts from Marx's *Capital*] and story segments [videos of Else and characters] are chosen at random according to Else's spatial location:

A = Else is Accused of a Crime
G= Encounter with Giants
I = Tales of the Inn
U = Events in the Underworld
W = Travels in the Woods
> = continue from/to next segment in the series

…and her relative wealth or poverty:

R = Else is Rich
P = Else is Poor
* = Else is either Rich or Poor[266]

In addition to these story segments, Douglas overlaid his video projection with a soundtrack, which was also mixed and recombined. Musicians Scott Harding and John Medeski from the jazz group Medeski, Martin and Wood composed a score of tracks mixed from already extant musical compositions and gave their tracks ominous titles such as "Schlauraffen Land" (Peasants' Heaven) and "The Girl Without Hands." They composed their soundtrack of six songs and thirty-five tracks, seven to five of which were to play together simultaneously and then be remixed in real time with the same computer that determined the sequence of surveillance camera views and video segments projected into the Fridericianum. Finally, each grouping of story segments was preceded with a randomly generated Marxist epigraph in which the economist-philosopher invoked

[266] Stan Douglas and Michael Turner, "Rules for the Script: Suspiria Script, Draft 7," as quoted in George E. Lewis, "Stan Douglas's *Suspiria*: Genealogies of Recombinant Narrativity," in *Stan Douglas: Past Imperfect – Works 1986-2007*, eds. Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler (Hatje Cantz: Stuttgart, 2008), 54.

the fairy tale imagery of vampirism, witchcraft, and magical transformation. All of these elements (epigraph, music, and video) were recombined by the computer, which used an algorithm randomly to mix the elements and broadcast them to the Fridericianum – a vignette might be followed by a few still or panning shots from a camera, which then may be followed by more vignettes or overlaid with music.

The constantly modulating way in which *Suspiria* unfolded was such that it never repeated itself over the course of the documenta summer, and the succession of narrative chunks did not contribute to a broader over-arching plotline. Rather, *Suspiria* took a temporal turn, as Christine Ross terms it, which she notes is a trend particular to contemporary art. That is, Douglas's work treats time as something malleable, manipulatable, and which blends past, present, and future. "Contemporary art partakes of the time-models," she writes, such as "the simultaneous deployment of micro-narratives non-causally related; and narrative recombinations in which a sequence of images is cut off from a larger narrative and reshuffled to endlessly mix with other narrative fragments…. They historicize that trope ['O time, suspend your flight'] to reorder the modern alignment of past, present, and future. They are closer to Eugene O'Neill's realism ('The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too.')."[267] *Suspiria* mixes up and complicates past, present, and future by showing how the boundaries of these categories are porous and ever-circulating, and interact in layered, twisted ways, not unlike intertwining brambles. In doing so, *Suspiria* is not necessarily utopian, but operates according to the idea that "the modern ideal of progress has been hollowed out of its

[267] Ross, *The Past is the Present*, 7.

content" in order that it might "make room for the re-imagining of the future."[268] Douglas hollows out the literary form of the fairy tale to void it of teleological and progress-oriented storytelling arcs in order to make space for recombinant narrativity. In doing so, the fairy tale elements of his work are international and diverse, suggest polygenesis rather than origin stories, which in turn lead to a multiplicity of narrative directions, and ultimately work to challenge the ideals of progress inherent in both fairy tales and the narrative surrounding the goals of documenta.

In 1941, Jorge Luis Borges wrote the short story "The Garden of Forking Paths," a tale that invents the hypertext novel. The story takes the form of a written confession of a World War I British spy for the Germans, Dr. Yu Tsun, a former English professor. The action begins when Dr. Tsun realizes that an MI5 agent, Captain Richard Madden, has discovered his location and is on his way to arrest or murder him. Forced with the conundrum of how to respond to the imminent threat and with the knowledge that he possesses one last Secret he must communicate, the location of a British artillery park, Dr. Tsun flees his apartment and takes a train to the nearby town of Ashgrove to see one Dr. Stephen Albert. Dr. Tsun discovers that Dr. Albert, an eminent Sinologist, has long studied his ancestor Ts'ui Pên's novel and has worked to translate it into English. Ts'ui Pên had been a learned governor who, mid-life, had given up all creature comforts and pleasant hobbies in order to embark on his twin pursuits of constructing an impossibly complex, infinite labyrinth and writing a novel. However, upon his death, no labyrinth could be found and his novel was a compilation of senseless and contradictory drafts.

[268] Ibid, 6.

While the two men talked, Dr. Albert produced a letter written by Ts'ui Pên that, he announced, cracked the secret to this mystery of the undiscovered labyrinth. The letter stated: "I leave to the various futures (not to all) my garden of forking paths." This, Albert announced, indicated that Ts'ui Pên's labyrinth was not a physical maze, but rather his novel was the labyrinth and the maze was not spatial, but temporal. According to Albert's description,

> In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others; in the fiction of Ts'ui Pên, he chooses—simultaneously—all of them. *He creates*, in this way, diverse futures, diverse times which themselves also proliferate and fork. Here, then, is the explanation of the novel's contradictions. Fang, let us say, has a secret: a stranger calls at his door; Fang resolves to kill him. Naturally, there are several possible outcomes: Fang can kill the intruder, the intruder can kill Fang, they both can escape, they both can die, and so forth. In the work of Ts'ui Pên, all possible outcomes occur; each one is the point of departure for other forkings. Sometimes, the paths of this labyrinth converge: for example, you arrive at this house, but in one of the possible pasts you are my enemy, in another, my friend.[269]

In the world of "The Garden of Forking Paths," each event or decision leads not to one outcome, but to many possible outcomes, each of which themselves lead to other ensnarled chains of events, worlds that are porous and sometimes interweave. This universe, as Albert explained, contained:

> an infinite series of times, in a growing, dizzying net of divergent, convergent and parallel times. This network of times which approached one another, forked, broke off, or were unaware of one another for centuries, embraces *all* possibilities of time. We do not exist in the majority of these times; in some you exist, and not I; in others I, and not you; in others, both of us. In the present one, which a favorable fate has granted me, you have arrived at my house; in another, while

[269] Jorge Luis Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths," in *The New Media Reader* ed. Noah Wardrip and Nick Monfort (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003), 33.

> crossing the garden, you found me dead; in still another, I utter these same words, but I am a mistake, a ghost.[270]

At this moment in Borges's story, Tsun saw Captain Madden walking up the garden path toward them in Albert's house. When Albert turned his back, Tsun shot the old Sinologist in cold blood, for which he was sentenced to death. However, this murder signaled to the Germans the location of the artillery park (in a town called Albert), and thus the Germans were able to bomb this strategic location.

Borges's "Garden of Forking Paths" bears similarities to the recombinancy of *Suspiria* in that it allows for the coexistence of many, potentially infinite, versions of the past, present, and future. One question that *Suspiria* asks is — granted that we can agree that fairy tales, not unlike history itself are made up of readymade modules — what if, rather than told classically, with a predictable narrative arc, fairy tales were more like a remix or a Choose-Your-Own-Adventure book, in which characters may choose from a set of choices, which then unfold into potentially infinite different outcomes of stories? Moreover, what if the stories we told about history itself became this broad? Is there a way to understand history, not as an inevitable series of events that lead to where we are right now, result in victors assuming power, to the eventual demise of dark forces and the triumph of justice, etc.? What if we viewed history and the moment we live in as but one of many possible different outcomes, and could see the ghosts of possibility populating the space around us?

Certainly, as Borges's own story indicates, there is a danger to conceiving of the world as such. In a world in which all paths fork and the realm of possible realities is

[270] Ibid, 34.

infinite, the importance of life and death as we experience it *this* reality could be trivialized. (If all possible iterations of reality are equal, does it matter if a person is murdered in this life, if in a parallel reality they are alive?) However, the Garden of Forking Paths simultaneously gestures toward a way of understanding the world that enables us to attune our senses not only to the world of those living around us, but to the ghosts of possible pasts, presents, and futures too. Is there a way to frame history that does not condone real death and acts of violence, but rather, when we attune our senses to not only live figures who occupy our present, but to all the possible ghosts around us, inspires a radical awareness, empathy, and sensitivity to the animism of all things? Is this a fairy tale lesson that we can apply to the creation of history writing?

Suspiria Suspiriorum Suspirior

Suspiria is a project through which sighs and whispers float, through which asthmatic wheezes crackle. A direct reference to Dario Argento's 1977 horror movie *Suspiria*, winds whip Douglas's and Argento's project together, and Douglas chose his ghost by name. Argento's *Suspiria* breathes down the neck of Douglas's *Suspiria*, a twin as uncanny as Diane Arbus's double portrait of twins, subsequently re-doubled in Stanley Kubrick's thriller film *The Shining* (figs. 3.8 and 3.9). Argento's film is campy, creepy, and notable for its use of super-saturated colors: red, blue, and green dominate, as they also do in Douglas's work for Documenta11 (fig. 3.10).

In his witchy slasher flick, Argento tells the story of a young American ballerina, Suzy Banyon, who comes to study at a prestigious dance academy in the German Black Forest. Upon her arrival at the school on Escherstraße, she quickly discovers that, like in

an M. C. Escher drawing, the objects around her, which at first glance seem stable and certain, quickly shape-shift and transpose into forms other than those in which they originally appeared. (In the opening scenes of the movie, Suzy sees the movie's first victim run away from the dance academy in the middle of a torrential rain storm. Before this student, Pat, is brutally murdered, she finds temporary refuge at a fellow dancer's apartment, the walls of which are decorated with Escher's *Sky and Water* tessellation, in which fish transpose into geese [fig. 3.11].) As a string of beautiful but curious young students meet savage deaths in the film (female curiosity being a trait frequently punished in both fairy tales and horror movies), Suzy discovers that the academy is run by an ancient coven of dark witches, including the headmistress of the academy, the ironically named Madame Blanc. However, the blood-red wine she is fed with dinner is laced with a drug that makes her forgetful, sleepy, and foggy-headed, which she must overcome if she is to discover the secret hidden in the school. In one scene, still reeling from the soporific effects of her drugged wine, she is commanded by the instructor to dance, and, as though bewitched, is compelled to do so. She twirls *en pointe* with increasing speed, as though wearing the stepmother's red-hot iron shoes from "Snow White," or as though she is a marionette who cannot control the movement of her limbs. Suzy reels and eventually collapses from her dancing frenzy, a trickle of neon red blood dribbling from her nose. It is at this point that she renews her efforts to overthrow the spell that is cast upon her.

Argento's *Suspiria* is twisted, grim, and gratuitously gory (cue the open ribcage with a still-beating heart, bodies impaled by broken stained glass windows, and a mutilated, crucified corpse [fig. 3.12]). However, in his own words, Argento devised his

work to be modern-day "fairy tale for adults,"[271] and Argento referenced deliberately and recreated the color palette characteristic of Walt Disney's animated fairy tale films. Using lush Technicolor film, Argento splashed rich poison apple reds across walls and dripped electric red blood from dangling feet and slack mouths; he draped sleeping young women in toxic emerald greens, and traced labyrinthine hallways in velvety underwater cobalt blues (fig. 3.13).[272] Argento particularly wished to recreate the color palette from Disney's "Snow White" (Suzy was originally based upon this character),[273] and like in the Grimms' version of "Snow White," in Argento's film the whites are as white as snow, the reds as red as blood, and the blacks as black as ebony window frames.

Throughout Argento's *Suspiria*, a score by the Italian prog-rock group (and appropriately named) Goblin drives the plot and maintains a keyed-up level of suspense. A musical theme that sounds like a sinister nursery rhyme played on a tinny music box is accompanied by charging beats, experimental noises made by a synthesizer, the occasional tinny voice that exclaims "*witch!!!"* and always the sound of heavy breathing. The breathing is tense and labored, as though the hot breath of an invisible assailant is coming from just around the corner (which indeed, it sometimes is). The original score for the film was later the source material that Medeski and Harding used when they composed their remix for Douglas's *Suspiria*. Medeski and Harding name three of their tracks "Lachymarum," "Suspiriorum," and "Tenebrarum," in reference to Argento's keen

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[271] Dario Argento, "Argento on Suspiria – Video Inquiry," interview by Leigh Singer, *Sight and Sound,* January 12, 2018, video, 6:45, *https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/video/suspiria-dario-argento-interview*.

[272] Argento went out of his way to acquire the last stocks of Technicolor film as it became an obsolete commodity.

[273] Argento, interview.

interest in the three "Ladies of Sorrow": Our Lady of Tears (Mater Lachymarum), Our Lady of Sighs (Mater Suspiriorum), and Our Lady of Darkness (Mater Tenebrarum). (*Suspiria* is one of three films by Argento that explores each of these three supernatural mothers.) The antagonist of Argento's *Suspiria*, Helena Markos, is a rasping, invisible, ancient witch who threatens to swallow up the story whole. Like Eugène Atget's 1910 photograph of *Cabaret de L'Enfer*, the portal into this dark fairy tale is an infernal mouth that pants and breathes fire (fig. 3.14).[274] Suzy passes into the labyrinth of the story and the literal labyrinth within the dance school through the labia of the mouth – through a sinister witchy mother's mouth that pants and casts spells, a mouth that is a portal into an upside-down realm – and endeavors to find her way out of the dizzying maze back to the world she is accustomed to living in, alive.

Although Douglas does not use the characters or plot line of Argento's *Suspiria*, his work is informed by many of the formal qualities of the horror film. That is, Douglas appropriates the light, color, sound, and fairy tale theme of the horror film. Moreover, as in the fairy tale video segments he used in *Suspiria*, chopped up and dismembered into narrative chunks that ultimately cannot be traced back to their original narrative bodies, so too does Douglas pull apart Argento's work and put pieces of it back together to create a new form — a form of storytelling that, according to George Lewis, resists a broader moralizing function.[275] His working methodology, therefore, is evocative of the dolls (or "*poupées*") that Hans Bellmer created in the 1930s, sourced from a life-size mannequin of a pre-pubescent girl, nude but for bobby socks and patent leather Mary Janes, whose

[274] This is one of many photographs Atget took of Paris as the face of the city was rapidly and irrevocably changing in the face of twentieth century modernization.

[275] Lewis, "Stan Douglas's *Suspiria*," 48.

ball-and-socket joints were interchangeable. A spherical belly, four legs, four breasts, an upper torso, three pelvises, a pair of arms, head and hand: Hans Bellmer assembled and reassembled his monstrous, erotic constructions obsessively, popping hips, knees, and torsos in and out of place in order to photograph them in impossibly contorted and tortured combinations and positions; afterwards, he hand-tinted the photographs, like prizes of a sadomasochistic abductor or *carte de visites* of strange automata. One poupée is all legs: like the bottom half of a girl's body seen through a fun house mirror or perhaps a girl morphing into a cross-legged spider, this puppet has two conjoined pelvises (fig. 3.15). The gap between her upper thighs is painted a soft red, the opening labial.

While the differences between Bellmer and Douglas's work are numerous, there are some intersections that are curious. Bellmer's first doll constructions coincided with the arrival of a beautiful teenage cousin from Kassel to his home city of Berlin in 1932. Additionally, around this time in the early 1930s, he attended Jacques Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann*, which tells the story of "The Sandman," in which an ill-fated young man falls in love with an automaton – a favorite story of Surrealists like Bellmer and an inspiration for Stan Douglas's work, which I shall turn to in the latter half of this chapter.[276] Perhaps more importantly, Bellmer explored the articulation, disarticulation, and re-articulation of bodies (typically female) and physical distortion at a time when the Nazi party promoted a cult of bodily perfection, and exploration such as Bellmer's was certainly considered a form of "degeneracy" in Germany (he moved from Germany to France in 1938 following the death of his wife and after being labeled a degenerate artist

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[276] Sue Taylor, "Hans Bellmer in the Art Institute of Chicago: The Wandering Libido and the Hysterical Body," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 22, no. 2 (1996): 151.

in his native country). Friends with and an admirer of George Grosz and Otto Dix, both of whose artworks featured prominently in the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition, Bellmer's ball-jointed dolls bore uncanny resemblances to the hysterical patients documented by Jean Martin Charcot at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris, where Freud researched as a young man. Their backs arch into bridges that seem almost to be suspended from above, limbs intertwine strangely, and women twist as though beckoned by spectral voices.

Unlike Bellmer, Douglas's work is not misogynist nor does it commit acts of violence toward the female body as both Bellmer's and Argento's works do. Douglas's *Suspiria* is not a Surrealist construction that draws from "exquisite corpse" drawings, nor does he deal with the reductive and violent gendered tropes that Bellmer perpetuated. However, like Bellmer's uncanny creations, there is physical mutilation in *Suspiria*: in one scene Else chops off her own hand, which a mischievous cat steals, resulting in the Innkeeper's Assistant chopping off a replacement hand from a corpse; in another scene, the protagonist gouges out one of her eyes as payment for a meal. Like Bellmer's endlessly modifiable ball-and-socket constructions, Douglas created an artwork whose visual and audio components could be popped back and forth into innumerable narrative contortions. His work was designed never to repeat over the course of the documenta summer,[277] or to be more specific, was designed to repeat but never to be strung together in the same order, like beads on a string. As the Surrealists and Dadaists looked to chance as a strategy, so too did Douglas employ randomness in the computer-generated order of video and audio segments of *Suspiria* in order to create novel narrative possibilities.

[277] Douglas, "Suspiria," 557.

Finally, the breath of "suspiria" is not just present in the sound of panting and wheezing in Goblin's original soundtrack or in the way the horror movie breathes down the neck of Douglas's artwork. Even as Suzy Banyon is tugged like a marionette by forces beyond her control, so too are narrative snippets plucked randomly in Douglas's work. In addition to the literal sound of breath, Douglas's artwork also explores the dividing line between human and machine; or, perhaps, it would be more accurate to say that he lingers in the cyborgean overlap between the two, as he gives over partial authorial control of his work to an algorithm, a computer program he endowed with authorial choice and the ability to generate stories. *Suspiria* skirts the limen (the mouth, as it were, the threshold, replete with Atget's pointy cuspids and all) between human and machine. Breathlessly, *Suspiria* asks whether respiration (a vivifying spark necessary for animation and life, but also something that relies upon bellows-like machination) gives life or imitates life, and so *Suspiria* lingers in the place where, when labored, panicked, halting, and choppy, breath quality is an indicator that one is about to give up the ghost.

Grimm Moralities

There is a paradox at the heart of the Grimm fairy tales. The paradox is that although the Grimms endeavored to publish stories that that were *biedermeier* (that is, homey, folksy, or cozy) and over the course of their careers they increasingly geared their fairy tales to children, the stories for which they are known are marked as particularly, notoriously violent and gruesome, and frequently include overt instances of child abuse, xenophobia, and sadism, as we have seen in previous chapters. The Grimms, it must be said, though, were industrious, thrifty, devout Protestants, who strove to present

themselves as bourgeois intellectuals: in their personal and professional lives, they were far from the brooding, dark, or swashbuckling adventurers as popular culture sometimes portrays them, but rather they were relentless, compulsive scholars who were inseparable from each other and broadly demonstrated close familial piety. Over the course of their professional lives, the Grimms, particularly Wilhelm, edited and tweaked the stories they collected, and they eventually published seven editions of *Children's and Household Tales*. From 1812 until 1857, they modulated the tales in order to scrub them clean of any pagan and explicitly sexual remnants, inject them with overt Protestant ethics, and iron the sometimes-lumpy original narratives out smooth.[278] Theirs was a task of cultural preservation aimed at a broader political goal: claiming a native Germanic folk patrimony based in language that might be used to bolster a nation-building project.

In addition to removing actively the bawdy and overtly incestuous elements from fairy tales such as "Rapunzel" and "The Girl Without Hands," the lurid details of which would alternately delight and horrify mixed audiences around the hearth or as women spun flax, the Grimms injected Christian expressions, removed non-sequiturs, and consistently embellished their stories over subsequent editions. Segments of fairy tales that the Grimms originally published in the first volume of *Children's- and Household Tales* in 1812/15 as straightforward, densely narrated paragraphs mushroomed over subsequent editions into three or more paragraphs, which were filled with descriptive language, dialogue, and psychological underpinning. For example, separately, Jack Zipes

[278] The Grimms' political bent is most overt within the context of the 1848 German Revolution, when both brothers solidified careers in politics when they were elected as representatives to the National Assembly in Frankfurt am Main. During this period, the brothers worked actively to enact the unification of the German principalities and democratic reform.
Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm*, 8-9.

and Maria Tatar contrasted different versions of “Rapunzel” in *Household Tales*. Not only did Wilhelm Grimm bulk up two sentences of the story from the first edition into three paragraphs in their last edition,[279] but from the first edition to the second, he removed the overt reference to Rapunzel’s sexual encounters. The naïve sexual trysts between Rapunzel and the king in the tower in the earliest version of the tale (Rapunzel wonders out loud to the witch why her dress has suddenly become so tight) are ultimately replaced by Rapunzel meeting a chivalrous and chaste young man whose love and affection she yearns to earn, and the two of them undergo arduous trials to seal their union.[280]

In his biography of the Brothers Grimm, Zipes compares the brothers to two tailors who “kept mending and ironing the tales that they collected so that they would ultimately fit the patriarchal and Christian code of bourgeois reading expectations and their own ideal notion of pure, natural German culture.”[281] This mending and ironing – a laborious, scholarly, masculine version of the kind of feminine domestic labor they both appropriated from contemporaneous bourgeois female storytellers and advocated for in stories such as “Snow White” – were not only tailored to the bourgeois moral codes of the day, but also reinforced what Hayden White theorized a century and a half later about the function of narrativity itself. White notes, “narrativity, certainly in factual storytelling and probably in fictional storytelling as well, is intimately related to, if not a function of, the impulse to *moralize reality* [my emphasis], that is, to identify it with the social system

[279] Ibid, 13-14.

[280] Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales,* 18.

[281] Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm*, 23.

that is the source of any morality that we can imagine."[282] In short, the Grimms worked to better narrativize their stories in ways that reinforced the mores and morality of their bourgeois, Christian audience. Stories that described young women embracing and enjoying their budding sexuality were replaced by tales of virginal young women who pined for and gave their power over to young men who could be hero, prince, and husband (the male fairy tale hero was typically the manifestation of a trifecta of power – messianic savior, state head, and ideal mate – three in one, indeed). Young female characters such as Snow White, who initially had only to cook for the seven dwarves to gain their protection, were later tasked with more specific and arduous household chores: "If you keep house for us and cook, sew, make the beds, wash and knit, and keep everything tidy and clean, you may stay with us."[283] The Grimms rarely, however, eliminated violence and sadism from the stories they collected, and often intensified punishments, embellishing retribution and justifying revenge and punishment as they told their tales. In "Cinderella," for example, the wicked stepsisters are spared corporal punishment for their misdeeds in the first version the Grimms published, whereas in the second, the doves who have acted as Cinderella's helpers pluck out the two jealous girls' eyes with relish.[284] In both latent and manifest ways, the later forms of the fairy tales assumed the authority of authenticity, even as they normalized and proscribed particular kinds of behavior and moral codes. In addition to the character development and plot of

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[282] Hayden White, *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 14.

[283] Snow White's expanded domestic chores as dictated by the Seven Dwarves in the Grimms' 1857 edition of the story.
Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm*, 13.

[284] Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, 5-6.

the tales, the narrative form the Grimms imposed upon their tales reinforced specific kinds of ontological knowledge, as I will explore in more nuance throughout this section.

There was a definite politics to the Grimms' fairy tale project. The brothers began their careers during the Napoleonic Wars at a time when the state of Hessen-Kassel was occupied by the French, and Jacob Grimm's first job was as King Jérôme Bonaparte's private librarian in Kassel. Inspired by their philological studies at university and early work collecting folk tales and songs, and simultaneously inflamed by the French occupation of Germany, both brothers longed ardently for their homeland to be a modern, united country. They imagined a modern nation-state that was consolidated under democratic principles, a goal toward which they oriented all their academic endeavors – from their volumes of fairy tales to their philological work (Germany would not become a modern nation until 1871).[285] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's life goal was the project of unearthing, preserving, and crystalizing a chthonic Germanic culture through a common language – that is, they believed in an essentialist, linguistic conception of what it meant to be German, and their brand of nationalism would later be described through the rhetoric of "blood and soil," as noted in previous chapters. Even if Germany was not yet centralized politically, the Grimms labored under the belief that if they could establish a common linguistic base and body of indigenous literature, this could serve as the bedrock of a cohesive German culture. (Relatedly, one of their lives' most grand projects was the creation of a comprehensive German dictionary, although they only got up to the word *Frucht*, or "fruit," a word pregnant with ripe possibilities.) As part of this nation-building project, the Grimms' fairy tale work was meant to cultivate a new generation of proper,

[285] Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm,* 5.

bourgeois children, foster pride in folk culture, and function as a unifying cultural touchstone.[286] And so, the two brothers endlessly edited and refined the stories that were to gain such incredible popularity in Germany, and later, globally.

The frontispiece and decorative title page from the 1819 Second Edition of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, designed by Ludwig Emil Grimm, may illuminate the moralizing impetus of the Grimms (fig. 3.16). On the verso side of this double page is a scene taken out of "Little Sister and Little Brother," or "*Brüderchen und Schwesterchen*." Little Sister reclines and snuggles into the flank of Little Brother, her sibling who was magically imprisoned in the form of a fawn by a jealous stepmother/witch. Although in the story the young pair are vulnerable to the hazards of the forest, they appear in this illustration to be protected by the open arms of a guardian angel who proffers a white lily in each hand. (The story as told by the Grimms does not mention a winged angel who looks out for the two, but rather focuses on the threat of a princely hunting party that progressively closes in upon Little Brother-turned-fawn.) On the recto decorative title page of this edition of stories, the gothic script of the book's title is encircled by a garland of roses, violets, and lilies of the valley, which echo the flowers proffered by the angelic apparition, and the bucolic environment in which Little Brother and Sister repose. The world of fairy tales illustrated in this edition emphasizes the ideal, harmonious relationship between siblings and the areas of the woods in which good little boys and girls will always receive divine protection when they need it.

However, flowers are a *vanitas* motif *sine qua non*, that is, an essential element of the genre that is meant to remind one of the transience of existence and the folly of

[286] Ibid, 9.

attachment to the passing vanities of life. The wreath of flowers depicted by Ludwig Emil Grimm, which relates to the natural environment of the woods, the guardian angel's pristine lilies, the ladylike domestic activity of flower arrangement, and the contemporaneous symbolism of flowers,[287] is simultaneously composed of cut flowers that are already dead and actively in the process of decay. The wreath of posies (blue flowers, forget-me-nots, violets, peonies, lilies of the valley) may be seen to bear an uncanny resemblance to the bouquet that Ophelia delivers to her brother and the royal couple in *Hamlet* when she is mad with grief after her father's murder and Hamlet's withdrawn affections. The flowers she plucks for her bouquet are a collection of the emotions coursing through the play.

> Ophelia: There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray you, love, remember.
> And there is pansies, that's for thoughts
> Laertes: A document in madness, thoughts and remembrance fitted.
> Ophelia: [*To Claudius.*] There's fennel for you, and columbines. [*To Gertrude*.]
> There's rue for you, and here's some for me; we may call it herb of grace a' Sundays. You may wear your rue with a difference. There's a daisy. I would give you some violets, but they wither'd all when my father died. They say 'a made a good end – (IV.v.175-186)

As in the painting *Ophelia* by Sir John Everett Millais (fig. 3.17), Ophelia is surrounded by flowers, yet her blossoms assume an ominous, foreboding tenor. The flowers she distributes are associated with unfaithfulness, bitterness, grief, and memory;[288] flowers with which she might compose a history of sorts. Later in her addled state, while resting near a weeping willow that stood against a brook, collecting more posies for a "fantastic

[287] Nineteenth century German writers such as Novalis, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and Goethe, understood flowers, such as the blue flower, to function within a distinct symbolic economy.

[288] Footnote, William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare,* 2nd Edition, 1182-1245. Ed. G. Blakemore Evans. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 1222.

garland" ("crow flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples… [which maids] dead men's fingers call them" [IV.vii.169, 171]), Ophelia succumbs to the pull of the stream and slowly drowns, singing all the while, surrounded by a wreath of flowers, yet lacking a guardian angel who might pull her to safety.

Similarly, despite the Grimms' intentions to publish *biedermeier, heimliche* (homey) stories, they nonetheless published their fairy tales during the first half of the nineteenth century, a period known for great Romantic and Gothic works of literature such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann* (published in 1818 and 1816, respectively). The brothers' sanitized, Protestant-ized stories were not brooding works that plumbed the twisted psychological depths of their characters and the limits of what it means to be human, but the stories in their volumes *are* sprinkled liberally with lopped off toes, games of ninepins played with skulls and femurs, pious girls whose hands are cut off by the devil, and general themes of violation and violence.[289] As Freud theorized (in consultation with the Grimms' dictionary as well as other foreign dictionaries), it is not a far slide from *das Heimliche* to *das Unheimliche*, from the hom(l)ey to the unhom(l)ey, from the canny to the uncanny; indeed, they are opposite sides of the same Möbius Strip, continually twisting around each other, turning constantly between upside and down, recto and verso, comforting and discomfiting.[290] Or, if we look to imagery from Argento's *Suspiria*, they are like the fish and bird tesserae, creatures of air and water constituting each other, the figure and ground (air and

[289] See "Cinderella," "The Boy Who Set Forth to Learn about Fear," and "Maiden Without Hands."

[290] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" in *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003), 125-134.

land) of which flip back and forth like a gestalt psychology visual puzzle, as they flap and swim in their various elemental planes.

Freud notes in his essay on the uncanny, "German usage allows the familiar (*das Heimliche*, the 'homely') to switch to its opposite, the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*, the 'unhomely'), for this uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed."[291] The uncanny, for Freud, is not just that which is frightening and horrible, but that which is simultaneously foreign and familiar: it is the tingle down one's spine that occurs when a still-forgotten dream is evoked. That which feels a little too close to home, it is based upon returns and *doppelgängers,* as the double is doubled and reduplicated yet again, as in Kubrick's ghostly twins in *The Shining*, and may also be seen in curiously crafted figures such as waxworks, automata, and dolls. If Freud could have looked into the future or had looked to the past, he might have paused upon both Bellmer's dolls and some of the Grimms' tales[292] as he wrote, "severed limbs, a severed head, a hand detached from the arm…, feet that dance by themselves… - all of these have something highly uncanny about them, especially when they are credited, as in the last instance, with independent activity."[293] He might also have looked to *Suspiria*, in which

[291] Ibid, 148.

[292] Freud notes that most fairy tales are not uncanny, because as a rule they break the rules of nature and normalcy, and as such suspend real life expectations. In these stories, it is commonplace for characters to possess omnipotent thoughts, have their wishes fulfilled, and live in a world governed by animistic laws. However, it is when tales blend with or seem part of real life (as in the case of *Suspiria*) that they become uncanny. The uncanny quality of a story might be achieved by either the bones of the story or the telling of it.
Ibid, 156.

[293] Ibid, 150.

Else, destitute and hungry, sells her eye to a friend in the woods for food (fig. 3.18), when she chops off her hand in front of the Innkeeper and reattaches it the next day with a magical balm, or when she is awoken by three half-men (three uppers and three lowers). And perhaps here, Freud touches upon the magic of the Grimms' fairy tales: they are, by definition, both homey and un-homey, both *heimlich* and *unheimlich*. The twist in the Möbius strip is precisely what captivates readers – the morbidity and violent actions in the stories give way to the safety of the home, and vice versa, in a compelling loop. No matter how the Grimms tried to scrub the tales clean, impart the ethics of hard work, perseverance, and Christian family values, they simultaneously cleaved to the macabre, the cruel, and the uncanny. It is as though the stories themselves have feet that dance by a strange outside volition: they keep time to wholesome Germanic family values, dance wildly and provocatively when it suits them, and simultaneously skip toward a nationalist rhetoric later in the twentieth century when the war of fairy tales was waged between Weimar-era progressives and the Nazi cultural machine. For every footstep towards filial piety and Protestant work ethics, the other foot steps toward matricide, anti-Semitism, and other cruel acts of violence.

The Grimms used their collection of fairy tales to bolster nationalism, to retain an indigenous folklore and oral culture, and lay a foundation of *Naturpoesie* to undergird a nascent political state. Roughly a century later, the Nazis reinvigorated this Romantic impulse, twisted the Grimms' academic endeavors into an ideologically-driven pseudo-intellectual pursuit of Germanic-Norse mythological origins, and used fairy tales to extreme pedagogical and didactic ends. If, as Linda Dégh suggests, the Grimms worked to establish national values and cohere Germans through language, religion, poetry, and

heroic narratives, then Nazi ideologists "exploited Jacob Grimm's idea that tales are direct descendants of German mythology. They saw tale heroes as pioneers of the racist causes and models for the desirable 'fundamental German' prototype."[294] The Nazis sponsored the publication of several editions of the Grimms' fairy tales, established the anthology as required reading in German schools, and used German folklore to educate young and old in the new *Weltanschauung* they promoted – one that lauded the peasantry and looked back to an idyllic, mythologized agrarian past that might provide the foundation for a unified *völkish* future.[295]

Christa Kamenetsky notes that under the Nazis, the *Reichskulturkammer* (Reich Cabinet of Culture) and National Socialist Teachers' Association redoubled its efforts to inject the Grimm fairy tales, the so-called heritage of their "Nordic Germanic peasant ancestors," into popular culture by making inexpensive, handsome volumes of the stories widely available in schools, bookstores, and libraries. [296] In addition to the scrubbing and ironing the Grimms gave their tales, the ideologists of the Third Reich also believed that the Grimms' beloved stories necessitated an additional course of editorial manhandling. That is, because some of the tales in the Grimm collection were not purely German but came to the country by way foreign channels, such as the French Huguenots who settled in Hessen ("Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Little Red Riding Hood," for example, were all part of Charles Perrault's seventeenth century *Histoires ou Contes du Temps passé*), Nazi party folklorists, such as Karl von Spiess and Edmund Mundrak, endeavored

[294] Dégh, "Grimm's 'Household Tales' and its Place in the Household," 95.

[295] Christa Kamenetsky, "Folktale and Ideology in the Third Reich," *The Journal of American Folklore* 90, no. 356 (April-June 1977), 168-169.

[296] Ibid, 169.

to dig beyond foreign corruption in order to excavate folklore in its true, pure German form. In their 1939 book *Deutsche Märchen – Deutsche Welt*, von Spiess and Mundrak wrote that the German folktale, "due to an intrusion of foreign elements, had suffered a gradual decay, and it needed a thorough cleansing process to restore it to its original form and meaning," a task they and their colleagues endeavored to undertake.[297] Using dubious methods and vague evidence, this generation of politicized folklorists tried to demonstrate that the origins of Germanic folklore might be traced back far beyond Perrault and d'Aulnoy to Nordic Germanic roots stretching back as distantly as the Bronze, or possibly even Stone Age.[298]

The Nazi folklorists who traced the Grimms' fairy tales back to their supposed Nordic-Germanic roots may have done so looking back to the writings of the Grimms themselves. The Grimms wrote in the Preface to Volume 2 of their First Edition of *Children's- and Household Tales*,

> The true value of these tales must really be set quite high; they put our ancient heroic poetry in a new light that could not have been produced in any other way. Briar Rose, who is put to sleep after being pricked by a spindle, is really Brynhild, put to sleep after being pricked by a thorn – not the Brynhild of the *Niebelungenlied*, but the Old Norse one herself. Snow White sleeps peacefully with the same glowing red colors of life on her cheeks as Snæfrid, the most beautiful woman of all, at whose coffin sits Harald Fair-Hair.[299]

However, the folklorists who toed the Nazi Party line demanded that their theory of folktale evolution comply with their ethnocentric racial theory and adhere to their

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[297] Ibid, 172.

[298] Ibid.

[299] Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, 261.

ideology even if it contradicted historical evidence. As such, within the scholarly debate about whether fairy tales and folklore were poly- or monogenic in origin, they rejected the notion that folktales were universal or hybrid narrative forms, which shared common motifs and structures across cultures, the common strains of which could be traced back as far afield as, say, China, Persia, and tribal North America.[300] While Nazi scholars of folktales brought increased attention to a Nordic German folk tradition that they framed as inordinately pure in origins, so too did they manipulate the meaning and symbolism of classic fairy tales to suit their own ideological objectives. Kamenetsky observed that "faith in the Nordic forces of 'blood and soil' was offered as a substitute for scholarly investigation, which implied simultaneously an unquestioning loyalty to the Nordic Germanic past and to the National Socialist future."[301] For example, the Nazi folklorist Ulrich Haacke denied the French origin of "Little Red Riding Hood," ("*Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*" in Perrault's volume) and insisted that it actually came to France from the Germanic Franks. He then interpreted the story of "Little Red Riding Hood" as a narrative in which the hooded young girl symbolized the German populace, while the predatory wolf symbolized the global Jewish threat, as noted in Chapter 1. This differed significantly from other readings of the popular story over the course of the previous century, in which interpretations ranged from reading the story as a metaphor about the ultimate triumph of solar forces over darkness, to interpreting it as a cautionary tale about adolescent girls' sexuality, to a tale about incest. Suffice it to say, the interpretation of fairy tales tells more about the values and objectives of the person or group interpreting

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[300] Kamenetsky, "Folktale and Ideology in the Third Reich," 171.

[301] Ibid, 173.

the story than it is indicative of an inherent signification. The Nazis, like the Grimms, used fairy tales to promote a notion of essentialist nationalism, which might serve as a means to cohere socially those they perceived as "true Germans," through origin stories and unbroken linear narratives that, in the case of the Nazis, traveled from a Nordic Germanic past to a National Socialist future. As described in Chapter 1, so ideological and robust was their fairy tale campaign that after World War II, the Grimm fairy tales came under heavy fire. The Allied occupying forces removed volumes of *Children's and Household Tales* from libraries and banned them in some cities from classrooms.[302] Tatar noted that "The Grimms' stories came to be viewed as nourishers and reflectors of a cruel, perverse national mentality. The only question that remained open was whether to see them as causal contributors to the horrors of the Hitler regime or simply as early signs of what was to come."[303] In terms of the Grimm fairy tales contributing to the origin story of German *Naturpoesie*, the Nazis use of the stories demonstrates the perverse ends to which the quest for nationalist origins and essentialist roots may lead.

Once again, narrativity was politicized and moralized when Arnold Bode created documenta to revive modernism in Germany after the smear campaign against avant-garde art during the Third Reich, this time in a cultural context that eschewed the legacy of fairy tales, even if the event of documenta shared a town with the Grimms. Walter Grasskamp and Vesna Madzoski have both written about the ways in which the first documenta especially, and the first three documentas generally, presented a safe, sanitized version of modern art to the German populace, a fairy tale that buffered the

[302] Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, 185.

[303] Ibid.

truth of raucous, polymorphic forms of modernism that led up to the Third Reich. That is, documenta re-presented modernism to Germany as something that was devoid of overtly leftist politics or social satire, excluded German-Jewish and women artists, and promoted modernism as a classical form that could align with bourgeois, democratic values. As I demonstrated in Chapter 1, this was a deliberate attempt create a useable past in order to tell a story of modernism that was palatable and innocuous to average German citizens, seemed contiguous with ancient and classical traditions, and could help construct an imaginary present. Madzoski notes that the task of the first three documentas was “the revival of modernist art and a *remodeling of German citizens* [my italics],”[304] a goal that was similar to the Grimms’ attempt to use fairy tales to model well-mannered, bourgeois, Protestant children, and a project that feels eerily similar to the Nazi fairy tale projects; the difference is simply the value system promoted by each relative group.

Recombinant Transmission

> Where you see an epigraph or a quotation, I am standing in the place of another, speaking in the voice of another, repeating the words of another. I am compressing and distorting time.[305]
>
> -Jane Blocker, *Becoming Past*

In *Suspiria*, Stan Douglas employed a technique that is commonly described as “recombinant narrativity,” a narrative technique he has also used in several of his previous works, such as *Journey into Fear* (2001), *Inconsolable Memories* (2005), and in

[304] Madzoski, “Ghostly Women, Faithful Sons,” 49.

[305] Blocker, *Becoming Past*, 125.

a proto-form, *Der Sandmann* (1995). That is, he designed a live-algorithmic computer program to "mix" a chosen set of video and audio segments, a bit like a DJ might mix various musical tracks, although this mixing is meant to generate innumerable permutations of stories over time. Time is, as Hamlet would put it, out of joint, and as Iris Dressler describes it, Douglas's narratives generate arrivals "without arriving" and demand "new and contradictory varieties of readings and conclusions: as a performative interpretation, which not only 'transforms what it interprets' but also places this transmutability at the disposal of the viewer."[306] As a result, *Suspiria* is radically non-teleological, non-linear, relies upon the Barthesian idea of the death of the author, and bears resemblances to the Garden of Forking Paths. To this end, the work moves against the historical and philosophical belief in progress and exists in the temporal state of the past imperfect, as Dressler describes it. This state of past imperfect does not just refer to the grammatical construction in which an action in the past was ongoing ("the ghost was haunting"), but also gestures toward a more conceptual return to imperfection in the past. It is this attention to the past's imperfections and their continued existence in and reverberations into the present that concerns Douglas, and which he endeavors to reveal. George E. Lewis writes that "this work can be read not only as a ghost story or a dream (although recombinant narratives recall the nonlinearity of dreams) but also as a glimpse into a possible world, a parallel universe."[307] While Douglas carefully crafted the basic material and rules for his installation, for it to function he gave control over to a machine,

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[306] Iris Dressler, "Specters of Douglas," *Stan Douglas: Past Imperfect – Works 1986-2007*, eds. Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 13.

[307] Lewis, "Stan Douglas's *Suspiria*," 46.

which produced an endlessly changing narrative that skipped and jumped around, transforming in real-time a finite set of tracks into a never-ending story: upon the surveillance camera cutting to a particular hallway at the direction of the algorithm, one of several strange and potentially sinister environments and interactions between characters may unfold (Else tries to swindle a homicidal Innkeeper, the Devil shoots Else). The structure of storytelling in *Suspiria* is not based upon the currently conventional narrative form of history and storytelling, in which linking, causal events unfold and arc over the course of a singular narrative's beginning, middle, and end; rather, as Lewis has pointed out, Douglas's work bears significant similarities to the annal form of historical writing, an antiquated historical form, which Hayden White described in *The Content of the Form*.

Since at least the Kantian philosophy of the eighteenth century, historians generally agreed that the writing of history necessitated a narrative form, as the narrative provides insight into the underlying structures of historical events, while it also proffers wisdom and discernment.[308] However, White identified two other forms of historical writing that are "non-narrative:" the chronicle and the annal. Narrative authors seek to establish causal connections between historical events, mean to unearth and tell the "real story" from a sea of chaotic small events, and weave a narrative connective tissue between people and events that may at first glance appear isolated. Many of these linking elements are absent in the annal and chronicle, which according to White, historians have traditionally considered to be "historically imperfect" because of their "failure to attain to

[308] White, *The Content of the Form,* 5.

full narrativity of the events of which they treat."[309] White examines a text from within Volume I of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, the *Annal of St. Gaul*, which was written between the eighth and tenth centuries. For the period of time between 709-720, it lists the events in Gaul as follows:

709. Hard winter. Duke Gottfried died.
710. Hard year and deficient in crops.
711.
712. Flood everywhere.
713.
714. Pippin, mayor of the palace, died.
715.
716.
717.
718. Charles devastated the Saxon with great destruction.
719.
720. Charles fought against the Saxons.[310]

This record of the real challenges in eighth century Gaul appears to a modern reader to be riddled with lacunae. It is unclear why the author (or authors) chose to record the events that they did and omit others; the text also does not indicate causality between the events or connect them with a narrative tissue (if Charles's army devastated the Saxons with great destruction in 718, why did they fight again two years later?). However, White observes that the historical events the annalist chose to record were all outlying events — hard winters, floods, and war — writing, "all of the events are extreme, and the implicit criterion for selecting them for remembrance is their liminal nature."[311] The years for

[309] Ibid, 4.

[310] Ibid, 6-7.

[311] Ibid, 7.

which events were not recorded indicate to White chronological continuity and also imply that those years were the ones free from radical occurrences. Thus, the quest to provide a full account of historical events is approached very differently by the annalist and the modern historian who writes in a narrative form; the former historian assumes an implicit understanding of what "normalcy" looks like and only bothers to note extreme outlying data (or perhaps the most noteworthy moments when the paths in the garden fork), whereas the latter seeks to create a narrative thread that strings together both major events and the smaller ones that may have contributed to historical crescendos in a seamless, causal, linear narrative, a story in which the outcome or point of resolution often feels fated by the preceding events. However, White asks rhetorically: "The modern scholar seeks fullness and continuity in an order of events; the annalist has both in the sequence of years. Which is the more 'realistic' expectation?"[312] For the annalist, as the years pass by, no news is typically good news, whereas the modern historian seeks out comprehensive sets of clues that might be stitched together to create the illusion of realism and an omniscient packaging of the past. To put it in other words, if we take a critical stance toward the totalizing visions frequently claimed by modern historians and incorporate the methodology of the annalist, we might understand history to be "Bits & Pieces Put Together to Present the Semblance of a Whole." This phrase is both the title and wall text comprising Lawrence Weiner's 1991 conceptualist artwork, which simultaneously describes and deconstructs the job of the historian, the ways in which museums frequently purport to possess collections that are encyclopedic in their scope, as well as myriad other collections of things, such as dictionaries and authoritative

[312] Ibid, 9.

collections of lore (fig. 3.19). The joints between narrative bones – connective tissue, stringy tendons, watery meniscuses, well-oiled hinges – are frequently fictionalizing flourishes that function to create a reality effect: they present the semblance of a whole that often seems more real than (and different from) its constitutive parts. However, linearity and teleology are but storytelling tropes, historiographic norms, framing devices that are normalized and have become as invisible as white plinths in a gallery, stacks of neatly organized bookshelves in a library, or dolls fashioned as anatomically precise facsimiles of bodies.

The trouble with the narrative form of historical writing, its structural form flat, horizontally oriented with occasional ripples and crashing waves, is not that it is necessarily less precise than chronicles or annals (which often are formatted vertically), but rather that it is privileged with a particular scientific quality and truth value to a modern reader. Objective historical elements ("714. Pippin, mayor of the palace died") are mingled with the fictive, fanciful elements of storytelling so that the connective tissue between events, passions, actions, and circumstance creates the impression of causality, objectivity, fate, or divine intervention when in actuality histories are the results of agency, action, and causality *and* randomly generated happenstance and chance, as well as unknowable emotional and affective drivers; the chain of events that lead to any historical outcome is but one possible reality among a nearly infinite range of possibilities. (If a narrative is to be told about Pippin, likely this would not only include his tenure as mayor and his death, but elements that flesh him out as a person, such as his temperament, appearance, his diplomatic and familial relationships, and so on, and would rarely include the possible choices he could have made, but did not. These kinds of

elements frequently become pliable and modulate to support the broader structure of the story, and inconsistencies and non sequiturs are often eliminated, as we saw occur in the Grimms' fairy tale retellings over time.) Additionally, historiographic forms that naturalize causality are by necessity teleologically-driven. They work toward progress and narrative resolution and also typically preclude the possibility of multiple temporalities co-existing – that is, the past and the future inhabiting presents, and the ghosts of possible alternate realities.

According to White, "Narrative becomes a problem only when we wish to give to real events the form of story. It is because real events do not offer themselves as stories that their narrativization is so difficult."[313] Although we frequently package up our life events through a narrative lens and enact a degree of agency and control in the way we tell our own life stories to ourselves, as well as narrate broader histories, this is a way of understanding events that is very much conditioned by forms such as narrative histories *and* classical fairy tales. White follows up his previous observation with a question that feels as though it were taken from the context of fairy tale scholarship (which it was not):

> What wish is enacted, what desire is gratified, by the fantasy that real events are properly represented when they can be shown to display the formal coherency of a story? In the enigma of this wish, this desire, we catch a glimpse of the cultural function of narrativizing discourse in general, an intimation of the psychological impulse behind the apparently universal need not only to narrate but to give to events an aspect of narrativity.[314]

[313] Ibid, 3-4.

[314] Ibid, 4.

White suggests that there may be more magic, desire, and wishful thinking in the form of the scholarly historical narrative than we might originally suppose, and the field of historiographic opportunities is vastly broader than the modern Western historical narrative tradition would imply. Moreover, in historical narratives there might be more fantasy, wish fulfillment, and psychological gratification in the implementation of resolution (sometimes manifested in happy endings), than scholars had previously wanted to admit.

To turn back to George E. Lewis, who wrote that *Suspiria* might be interpreted as a dream, a ghost story, or a parallel universe, it is worth noting that he made the keen observation that *Suspiria* bears similarities to White's description of the annal. In his chapter "Stan Douglas's *Suspiria*: Genealogies of Recombinant Narrativity," Lewis provides an example from the "Real Time Event Log" Stan Douglas kept from *Suspiria*:

059-1 Servant makes a mess instead of sausages.
104-2 Merchant scams Friend, E is pissed.
104-3 E encounters Woman on bike.
091-1 E agrees to look for Kings daughter.
091-2-a Dwarf knocks E unconscious.
104-5 E tells her Friend about stupid people.
179-1 E carries a Witch on her back.
179-2 E sees an "Old Woman" remove her face
046-1 Devil tells E not to enter 13th room.
046-2-a Devil shoots E because of dirty Egg.[315]

This log documents the succession of scenes from *Suspiria* from one particular day at Documenta11, although, like the annal, there is no explication regarding how or whether the narrative chunks relate to each other sequentially or whether there is any causal

[315] From Stan Douglas, Michael Turner, and Peter Courtemanche, "Suspiria Stories: Real Time Event Log," in Lewis, "Stan Douglas's *Suspiria*," 48.

relationship (according to Douglas there is no relation or causality other than Else's current economic situation that prompts the algorithm to choose from a set of narrative segments to follow the previous micro-narrative). Given that we know that Douglas's various narrative chunks will generate randomly and never repeat, it is futile to seek out or establish causality, an overarching narrative, undergirding morality, or underlying meaning. Reading with the logic of the annalist, it makes no sense to ask whether the Devil shot Else *because* she found a dirty egg in the 13th room after he had told her not to enter, even if this sequence of events bears close similarities to "Fowler's Fowl" (a tale related to "Bluebeard," in which the evidence of a young woman trespassing in a forbidden room is a bloody egg). As in an annal, there is only an implied, unarticulated state of normalcy, which we glean is that Else navigates the woods/interior of the Oktagon, and within this itinerant zone she experiences different economic situations. Additionally, while on her journey she encounters new people, who may be either helpful or harmful. We may, however, wonder what may happen narratively if Else's story took a different branch — if rather than carrying a Witch on her back, she went into an inn to eat sausages. (Would Else not be shot by the Devil then?)

Douglas employs a storytelling structure that is emphatically non-narrative, something akin to the annal, yet *Suspiria* is grounded in fairy tale mini-narratives, which are suspended in a middle place (there is neither introduction nor conclusion as such, neither original conflict nor resolution), then mixed randomly. He does, however, splice in various epigraphs from Marx between his reinterpretations of the Grimms' fairy tales, thus compressing and distorting time, in the words of Blocker. That is, he brings into simultaneity the various temporalities of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth

centuries (construction on the Bergpark Wilhelmshöhe and Oktagon that began in 1696, continuing to the completion of the Herkules statue in 1717), 1812/15 (when the Grimms published their first volume of fairy tales), 1848 (both the year of the German Revolution and when Marx and Engels published *the Communist Manifesto*), 1857 (the Grimms' last edition of *Children's- and Household Tales*), 1867 (Marx published the first volume of *Capital*), 1977 (Argento's release of *Suspiria*), and 2002 (the summer of Documenta11 and Douglas's *Suspiria*). (There are likely ghosts from still other time periods inhabiting Douglas's project as well, as we have seen.) In doing so, the artist subverts the classical narrative process and its functions, even as he calls our attention to the historical narrative mode that typically is invisible to us. Viewers who encountered the project in the Fridericianum were plunged into the story *in media res* (as often happens unintentionally in this type of art environment), although the film of course never looped back to its beginning, as visitors might have expected and anticipated for quite some time. While this may have been a frustrating or boring experience for some, for others it was easy to fall into the hypnotic space of story time. Like a never-ending bedtime story (what many children beg for), Else continued her travels and travails endlessly, and viewers had to make the conscious choice to break away from this fairy tale environment at some point and move to another exhibition space.

Susan Stewart has observed, "while 'lived' history is perceived as open work, work without established beginning or established ending, it is the accomplishment of narrative to provide both origin and eschaton, a set of provisions that are profoundly ideological in the closure they present. Narrative is 'about' closure; the boundaries of

events form the ideological basis for the interpretation of their significance."[316] In light of Stewart's perspective, *Suspiria* functions more like "lived" history than narrative history or story; it refutes closure and takes on a life of its own in its infinite modulations (indeed, Douglas designed *Suspiria* to be so vast in its possible permutations that it might never repeat over the whole course of human history, but constantly branch and splice in ever-new permutations). The animate characters who inhabit the halls of the Oktagon are zapped with a lifelike animation in the histories they trace. *Suspiria* also refuses to provide the kind of overt ideology and moralization that is implicit in both narrative histories and the Grimm fairy tales (although because of its non-standard narrative form, the inclusion of fairy tale motifs, and excerpts from Marx, there are nevertheless certain politics to the work). All the more subversive and unsettling is that Douglas turns the controls over to a computer, thus creating a kind of living, cyborgean story generator, one whose governing ideology and morality (if we can describe it as such) is dictated by a human-made code, which can create nearly infinite new combinations of Else's epic journey – a journey that becomes lifelike in its endlessly meandering quality and lack of resolution.

The Spectral Eye of the Surveillance Camera

> And this being-with specters would also be, not only but also, a *politics* of memory, of inheritance, and of generations.[317]

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[316] Stewart, *On Longing*, 22.

[317] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (New York: Routledge, 1994), xviii.

> A spectral asymmetry interrupts here all specularity. It de-synchronizes, it recalls us to anachrony. We will call this the *visor effect*: we do not see who looks at us.[318]
>
> -Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*

When Jacques Derrida described what he calls the "visor effect" in *Specters of Marx*, he referenced the ghost of Hamlet's father. In Shakespeare's tragedy, the dead king's ghost, dressed in armor from head to toe ("Armed at point exactly, cap-à-pe" [I.ii.200]), haunts the melancholic Danish prince and enjoins its son to avenge its murder. The figure of the specter who speaks to the living, who haunts and sometimes occupies the same spaces as the living is, for Derrida, one who "comes to defy semantics as much as ontology, psychoanalysis as much as philosophy."[319] The specter (which is paradoxically a spirit in bodily form, both intangible and corporeal) inhabits the present from a position of the past and sometimes even the future, and peers out from a visually asymmetrical, advantaged position. The ghost of young Hamlet's father wears a helmet with the visor down, only a narrow slit permitting its vision, and the gaze of the specter may look out at Hamlet and also by implication, at us, but we (both Hamlet and we in the audience) cannot return its gaze: if we see anything at all, it is merely the shell of the specter, the exterior of the armor, the anachronous husk, the exoskeleton.

This specter, and all specters, *could* be an imposter posing as another entity for all we know, just as it could be a figment of our confounded imaginations. As Hamlet's companions Horatio and Marcellus warn the prince, the ghost they see could be a maliciously intentioned shape-shifter that lures victims to the edge of a precipice only to

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[318] Ibid*,* 6.

[319] Ibid, 5.

addle their minds and coax its trusting followers to jump into the void, to drown themselves in a river, or in the context of the Herkules Oktagon, to jump over an antiquated, moss-covered parapet. However, a leap of faith *must* be taken if we are to engage with ghosts, and Derrida demands that we not only acknowledge but speak to specters if we are to learn how to live. Learning to live happens in the liminal space between life and death for Derrida, and understanding haunting is necessary for our understanding of the world.[320] This haunting might also take the form of attention to those ghosts not only of the past and future, but also the ghosts from parallel realities. Derrida created the term "hauntology" to describe this mode of understanding the fundamental nature of the world in which we live via the ghosts that haunt us (hauntology bears a close relationship to ontology — it is a slip of the tongue, a slip in philosophical underpinning — the branch of philosophy devoted to the study of the nature of being, but the two are also fundamentally different in their philosophical approach). This hauntology, for him, "would harbor within itself, but like circumscribed places or particular effects, eschatology and teleology themselves."[321] Hauntology both resists and incorporates teleology and final matters, it bends the paths of linear narratives back in upon themselves, it asks us to learn from that which skirts the border between sensorial perception and invisibility, and it takes seriously those unquiet ghosts that haunt our understanding of the structures that define and govern the world around us and the inheritances they bestow.

[320] Ibid, xvii.

[321] Ibid, 10.

Iris Dressler points out that Derrida suggests that specters may function in ways other than they have frequently been conceived. That is, she writes,

> In general, specters mark the return of a suppressed guilt, of the deceased, the mourning of whom has failed, with whose return a past present does not want to cease subsisting, as we are not able to properly bury, to immobilize it/him. Instead of (or as) the work of mourning, Derrida suggests speaking to and with the specter: showing *responsi*bility thereto. Speaking with and to the specter would mean acknowledging the absence in the presence, connecting being with what no longer is and has yet to be. It assumes the thinking of the specter as a potentiality: as the potentiality of a radical anachronism, of a time that is radically out of joint, of an *other* time or of an *other* per se.[322]

Ghosts not only indicate guilt, trauma, and inadequate mourning practices, but also function as guides that bring about potentialities of different ontologies and temporalities, of a hauntology which might undermine modernist conceptions of progress (be they capitalist or liberal) as well as make possible inter-temporal relationalities. They provide us with opportunities with which to connect and be aware of radical *otherness*. That is, specters might allow us to recombine time in novel new ways and allow the past and future a voice in the present.

In *Hamlet*, both the Ghost of Hamlet's father and the play-within-a-play that Hamlet arranges are revenants and illusions to greater or lesser degrees, elements that enact breaks from conventional time and space, glimpses into possible parallel universes, although they are keys that nevertheless effect outcomes upon the "real world." Marina Warner writes, "Shakespeare plays with stagecraft, and then circles around theatre's powers of illusion…. The condition of Shakespeare's apparitions is strictly uncanny."[323]

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[322] Dressler, "Specters of Douglas," 9.

[323] Warner, *Phantasmagoria*, 133.

At the bidding of the Ghost, Hamlet vows to avenge the death of his father, who was murdered by his jealous uncle Claudius, the man who not only usurped the throne but also married Hamlet's recently widowed mother. In "The Mouse Trap," the play Hamlet stages for the court, actors retell a story that is eerily similar to the actual events the ghost of Hamlet Senior tells his son played out during his horrible murder. When the story told on stage too directly interpolates the new King Claudius and insinuates that he poured poison in the ear of his brother, Claudius calls for the lights to come up and the play to end; he shatters the fourth wall and effectively suggests his own guilt. Again, Warner writes, "The convergence between the dream space of magical metamorphoses and the theatrical space of performance makes the one flow and mingle into the other, both inside the plays and outside them…. Life and art become mixed up: this is the dangerous magic of acted words; this is the basis for casting spells, as the weird sisters [from *King Lear*] demonstrate with their oracles."[324] Just as life and art mingle in Shakespeare's play within a play and in incantations within plays, so too does *Suspiria* (both Douglas's and Argento's breathless doubles) mix up art and life, rely upon magical metamorphoses that take place in the real world, and so too also do they hinge upon the visor effect and spectral vision.

Dario Argento uses the visor effect to a creepy, suspenseful effect throughout *Suspiria*. In his horror movie, the cackles and incantations of the witches who run the dance school are frequently heard at night; their voices echo down twisting, technicolor hallways and lure all-too-curious ballerinas out of bed to their deaths. At the climax of the film, the inquisitive and suspicious Suzy finally overcomes the effects of her drugging

[324] Ibid, 135-6.

and is able to venture out into the school hallways at night. She finds a familiar room on which an Escher-eque cityscape mural is painted (a mural that echoes the fish and bird wall décor from the early scene in the film). The cityscape is also a labyrinth, replete with twisting steps and arched doorways, which twist confusingly into spatially impossible realms, which fork into branching paths. In the foreground of the mural are serpentine flowers, and the interior of the room Suzy is in is bathed in blood red light. The mural is monochrome with the exception of the three flowers, which are bright primary colors ("There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray you, love, remember. And there is pansies, that's for thoughts").

When Suzy identifies and revolves the blue iris, which is both a tool that unlocks a door flush with the wall and is a rebus in floral form for the optical aperture (to her surprise, the blue iris is not part of the mural painting, but is a camouflaged door latch), she unlocks both a visual and spatial portal: a hidden door springs open that leads into a covert world within the dance academy (fig. 3.20). Through this passage, a threshold that is evocative of double-edged floral passages (as in, the portal into the Grimms' story and Ophelia's floral transition into death), as well as keener insight and the garden of obedient dancers that the school cultivated, Suzy enters into a labyrinthine hidden realm, the "brain center" of the coven. While exploring the hidden corridors within the school, which are decorated with floral motifs, the text of magical spells in different languages, and diaphanous curtains, Suzy discovers that the dance school directors — the witchy mothers — are plotting her murder, and in fact are in the very act of chanting spells that are designed to lead to her death. To escape discovery of the witches, Suzy hides in a room festooned with occult symbols, in which she hears snoring but sees only a vacant

bed. In a moment of panic, the young dancer accidentally wakes up an invisible person sleeping there, who turns out to be the queen of the coven, Helena Markos, the so-called Black Queen, who summons all of her metaphysical powers, veiled by a visor effect, to destroy the young ballerina.

So too in Douglas's *Suspiria* are life and art mixed up, and the materials the artist draws upon enact a performative kind of magic: they lure inhabitants of the real world to interact with the artwork, to traverse unknown hallways or leap onto a precipitous promontory after the apparition of a ghost, as it were. Indeed, during the artwork's run in 2002, people jumped fences that closed the Oktagon off from the public and climbed around the building to graffiti its interior so that the live video feed might broadcast their rogue political messages into the event of Documenta11 (performative spells, indeed). At night, activists protesting the deportation of refugees entered surreptitiously into the corridors over which Douglas's surveillance cameras panned to tag slogans on the walls upon which the pre-recorded videos of the actors were superimposed digitally in the Fridericianum. Under archways reminiscent of the mural in Argento's *Suspiria*, the backdrop of Douglas's work for a time read "Stop Deportation!!!" and "Kein Mench ist Illegal!" ("No Person is Illegal") (fig. 3.21). The live video remix further intermingled with life during the nocturnal broadcasts (between the witching hours of midnight and 8 a.m.) onto Kasselers' television sets: Douglas's fairy tale characters zoomed through the ether, like the spectral, floating witches in Argento's *Suspiria*, and crept unbidden into

sleepy domiciles via television – another medium that relies upon visual asymmetry.[325] Surveillance cameras captured in real time the dark, bat-infested interior of the Oktagon and mixed it up with the wavering characters of the fairy tale stories (which were themselves ghosts, lifted and distorted from the pages of the Grimms' books of fairy tales), and finally intermixed the ghosts from the history of Kassel – those ghosts whose stories are rarely told and who have been doomed to wander the region in silence and solitude. That is, the specters of the poor peasantry from those blue Hessian hills from whose labor the Landgraves built their considerable wealth, as well as marginalized people from the region whom the state institutionalized at the nearby Breitenau monastery, which later became the Breitenau concentration camp during World War II (about which I will write more in the following segment, "Grimm Marks/Grim Marx"). Douglas employed the surveillance mechanisms and tools of power and control in order to expose and subvert the very institutions and structures they propped up by turning the all-seeing eye of the Herkules back into the tower to survey its internal structures (literally and figuratively).

A dominant strain throughout much of Stan Douglas's work is that of the power and politics of vision (and thwarted vision), particularly as it is in service to the state. One place this curiosity is most succinctly demonstrated is in a photograph he made for his 2004-5 series *Cuba Photos*. The photo *Panopticon, Isla de Pinos/Isla de la Juventud* (2005) is a view of the interior of one of the four panopticon cell blocks in the now-defunct Cuban Presidio Modelo (Fig. 3.22). Five stories of prison cells, now doorless,

[325] This is perhaps increasingly creepy from the perspective of a decade and a half after the Documenta summer, when computers and televisions are routinely fitted with cameras that potentially allow companies to peep through the cameras and surveille those using their devices, even when they are turned off.

form a ring around a central surveillance tower. When it was in use during the mid-twentieth century, each cell would have been exposed perfectly to the gaze of guards in the tower, although the inmates would have been unable to see any of the other prisoners housed nearby. According to Douglas, the Cuban guards were allowed to shoot and kill any inmate at will, and the constant state of surveillance was made even more ominous because inmates were never sure of the number of guards in the darkened turret, where black horizontal slits functioned metonymically as ever wakeful and vigilant eyes.[326] The tower in the prison panopticon replicates a Derridean "visor effect" to an extreme degree and makes possible a 360-degree panorama of vision for the guards. While the guards had extreme access to vision and control, the inmates were reduced to passive objects, locked in a relationship in which, to use the words of Michel Foucault, "vision is a trap."[327]

In *Panopticon*, Douglas shot the guard tower with a camera, from his own light box, a darkened chamber that too employs a spectral asymmetry. Even though the Panopticon is decrepit and crumbling now since Fidel Castro closed it in 1967 (both he and his brother Raúl were imprisoned and tortured there), it is nevertheless still chilling and ominous. The ghosts of guards still seem to haunt the tower, gun in hand, doubly invisible. If the tower has any fairy tale element, it might be that it bears a similarity to the free-standing, doorless turret in which the witch imprisoned Rapunzel (a girl named after the bitter green herb, rich in iron, that her mother craved when pregnant with her, and which blooms into the rampion bellflower). If we were to labor, scale and summit the

[326] *Stan Douglas: Past Imperfect – Works 1986-2007*, eds. Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler (Hatje Cantz: Stuttgart, 2008), 221.

[327] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 200.

tower and look inside, we would certainly encounter the trickster crone rather than the lovely young woman. Once we were high enough and could look through the chink in the façade, like the young prince, we would most certainly be tossed from the summit, our bones broken on the crumbling concrete, our eyes pierced and lacerated by briars growing through cracked concrete, gouged out like Else's, our sight and insight blinded.

The notion of surveillance that comes in an invisible form from a high up tower is also used to a subtler, though perhaps no less ominous effect, in *Suspiria*. It is not by happenstance that Douglas chose the Herkules Oktagon as the set of his fairy tale-cum-horror movie, and within this space employed the cinematographic idiom of surveillance cameras, which monitored the interior hallways of the structure. Both the tower and the surveillance camera reproduce the dramatically asymmetrical relationships of vision as described by both Derrida and Foucault. Foucault describes the function of the panopticon as devised by Jeremy Bentham as an environment for the inmate (or patient, madman, student, or worker) in which "he is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject of communication."[328] This power dynamic, writ on a grander spatial scale, is replicated in *Suspiria* within the space of the town of Kassel.

Grimm Marks/Grim Marx

Long, long ago there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent and above all frugal élite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living…. Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the

[328] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 200.

latter sort finally had nothing to sell except their own skins.[329]

-Karl Marx, *Capital*

The Herkules Oktagon has long functioned not only as an emblem of the local governance from the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries when the Landgraves ruled Hessen- Kassel,[330] but it also assumes the power of a potentially all-seeing eye. As noted previously, the Landgrave Karl, born in the mid-seventeenth century, commissioned the construction of the Herkules Oktagon, as well as other baroque monuments throughout Kassel. The towering figure of Herkules, as Douglas describes it, "represent[s] Karl's ego-ideal…. This in a way functions as a church spire in a medieval town, where you're always seeing this church spire everywhere in the town, so the eye of God is always upon you. The same for the people who live in Kassel and Landgrave Karl."[331] Although the landgraviate experienced acute economic hardships during the reign of Karl, due to the Thirty Years' War and the influx of French Huguenot refugees, the ruler nevertheless spared no expense while constructing the Herkules – a brooding demi-god who loomed over the populace of Kassel. This massive twenty-seven foot tall sculpture atop Kassel's highest hill embodies all the connotations of the gigantic as Susan Stewart describes it: "the gigantic represents infinity, exteriority, the public, and the overly natural."[332] The Herkules statue, proxy of the Landgraves, embodies the power of

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[329] Stan Douglas, *Suspiria* (2002), quoting Karl Marx, *Capital* (1867), who in turn, referenced Adam Smith's concept of primitive accumulation in *Wealth of Nations* (1776).
Karl Marx, *Capital, vol. I* (New York: Penguin Books, [1867] 1990), 873.

[330] The Landgraves of Hessen-Kassel were local royalty who ruled over the principality before Germany unified into a modern nation-state.

[331] AA School of Architecture, "Stan Douglas – Artist Talk," YouTube Video, 1:31:57, July 14, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Y_L-Ebccb8

[332] Susan Stewart, *On Longing*, 70.

the all-seeing eye, which is infinite and all knowing, is very much surveilling the public, and yet it is uncannily, "overly" natural – as natural as the one-third scale gothic castle and manicured gardens and domesticated woods that surround Schloß Wilhelmshöhe. The Herkules statue particularly functions as a metaphor for the ruling sovereign, who presents himself as a giant among men. Stewart notes that "in Germanic tradition, giants usually wear nothing at all, but sometimes are described as wearing garments made of gray moss, the skins of animals, or the bark of trees."[333] The Herkules is indeed not wearing clothes, his lion pelt draped over his club, but he is clothed in heroic nudity: the soft green patina on the copper statue is not mossy but rather provides a classical touch, and Landgrave Karl exploited all the antiquarian valor, heroism, and authority the Herkules statue implied, as his "ego-ideal." Herkules may not be a god, but his power surpasses that of common men, and as a demi-god, he has audience with the Olympian realm.

The colossal statue of Herkules continues to this day to serve as an emblem for the city of Kassel: it is the official symbol of the town and appears on things ranging from the city's official website to collectible china plates. The Herkules statue also appeared in an extremely miniaturized form on a German banknote, which was rendered obsolete when Germany adopted the Euro in 2002, the same year in which Douglas presented *Suspiria* to the audiences of documenta. The Tausend Deutsche Mark note foregrounds an iconic double portrait of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (Jacob in a three-quarters view pose and Wilhelm in profile), while a stylized cityscape of Kassel is depicted on the left of the bill (fig. 3.23). A keen eye can pick out a miniscule image of

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[333] Ibid*,* 74.

the Herkules monument in the background, just to the left of the vertical metallic band on the note; the controlling eye of Herkules is poised slightly above eye level of both brothers, surveilling them from afar and on high, as did the state when they worked within the walls of the Fridericianum. The miniature and the gigantic are collapsed here in a peculiar way, as the towering Herkules is rendered so far in the distance as to be almost imperceptible. The banknote itself is on a human scale, roughly the size of an average adult's hand (178 x 83 mm), and could be easily stowed in a billfold and kept close to the person carrying it. However, the denomination of the bill, 1,000 DM, makes the note rare, impractical and inaccessible to the average person. The 1,000 DM was the highest denomination of a bill printed in Germany and was also physically the largest (as DMs increased in monetary amount they also increased in size – by a precise 8 x 3 mm per note). As such, the banknote upon which the Grimms and the Oktagon were printed collapses both the very small and the very large, as Stewart describes them. She writes, "the miniature is considered […] as a metaphor for the interior space and time of the bourgeois subject. Analogously, the gigantic is considered as a metaphor for the abstract authority of the state and the collective, public, life."[334] The 1,000 DM note allowed the person who carried it to assert his control over money and power inside of a capitalist society; it let him put both the cultural capital the Grimms symbolized and the power of the state in his pocket. Paper money, the consummate embodiment of commodity fetishism, is grasped tightly and reified by the bourgeois subject. Like the straw spun into gold in "Rumplestiltskin," gold is transformed into paper. The person who had the 1,000 DM in his or her pocket could be tricked into thinking that he or she wielded enough

[334] Ibid, xii.

capitalist power to domesticate (that is, miniaturize) the power exemplified by the state and by culture, and ultimately, control history. For, as Stewart argues, "in the final phases of late capitalism, history itself appears as a commodity,"[335] and the Grimm Mark potentially allowed one to believe that one could return the gaze of the panopticon, gaze at the two famous brothers who are posed in a manner such that they could never gaze back, and ultimately buy one's way into history, even while existing ultimately as an object within the late capitalist machine.

Although the legacy of Landgrave Karl loomed over the world in which the Grimms lived, another landgrave's reign also haunted the region. Landgrave Friederich II, Karl's grandfather, ruled over Hessen-Kassel as an enlightened despot from 1760 to 1785. This prince famously built the Fridericianum, which became Europe's first public museum, and established the first foundling hospital in Germany.[336] However, his reign is equally famous (or infamous) for capitalizing on the sale of his own citizens as mercenaries. In short, the Landgraves' dealing in men and profiting off of blood money provided them with the financial resources to construct the expensive Fridericianum, as well as other sumptuous buildings such as the Orangerie, and renovations of the Karlsaue Park that extends before it.[337] (Now the Fridericianum, Orangerie, and Karlsaue are all used as exhibition venues for documenta.) Friedrich II rented out tens of thousands of local soldiers to the British during the American Revolutionary War, and most often these

[335] Ibid, xiii.

[336] Rodney Atwood, *The Hessians: Mercenaries from Hessen-Kassel in the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 2.

[337] Baker Müller, "A Balancing Act," 98.

fighters were economically disadvantaged young peasants from the misty blue Hessian countryside who faced seasonal unemployment or poor job prospects, and whom the local government forcibly conscripted.[338] These auxiliaries (the term "mercenary" is technically inaccurate from a legal standpoint), who were rounded up to serve as indentured fighters and gun fodder, were none other than the notorious Hessians maligned frequently in American history books, many of whom were killed in their sleep by George Washington's army after he crossed the Delaware River. Like Douglas's protagonist Else, who had a magic sack from which appeared soldiers who existed to do her bidding, so too could Friedrich pluck so-called "lazy rascals" from his countryside so that he might accumulate almost infinite wealth. Friedrich was under the illusion that he could get something for nothing, and his magic sack of soldiers did indeed bring him considerable wealth. Unlike the those in the epigraph from Marx, however, this "other sort" of people could not even sell their own hides.

According to Edmund Slafter, nearly 30,000 German troops were hired by England and came to fight on behalf of the British during the Revolutionary War; of this group, roughly little more than half, only about 17,000, returned home to Germany. The remaining soldiers who never came back to Hessen, about 12,500 in number, were either killed in combat, died of disease, deserted the army (Slafter sites that roughly 5,000 Germans elected to do this, or one in six soldiers), or ultimately chose to stay in America after the war's end.[339] These figures indicate not only the bloodshed of the American

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[338] The English King George II was Friedrich's onetime father-in-law; Friedrich and George's daughter Princess Mary formally separated in 1755 and she passed in 1772. Friedrich later rented out Hessian troops to an excessive degree to his nephew, King George III, when the King of Great Britain sent troops across the ocean to fight on his behalf in the American War of Independence.

[339] Edmund F. Slafter, *Landing of the Hessians, 1776: a paper read at the meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society, February 11, 1904*, (Boston, 1904), 7.

Revolutionary War and the particularly brutal conditions the German soldiers suffered, but they also indicate the Hessians' extreme dissatisfaction with the war in which they were forced to fight and their disinclination to return back to the social and political conditions in Hessen-Kassel. Those Germans who chose to stay behind in a country that viewed them as villainous devils faced more hardship, as they did not speak English and were feared and reviled by the (newly) former colonists. Although the Salem witch trials occurred during the final years of the seventeenth century, New England was still shaken by a fear of witchcraft throughout the eighteenth century, and according to Slafter, the colonists, who had little exposure to German people, thought the Hessians were godless, shiftless, uncivilized marauders who practiced cannibalism and particularly delighted in consuming the flesh of small babies.[340] These sturdy men from Hessen loomed as large as ogres and fairy tale villains in the minds of Anglo-Americans.

Unbeknownst to the Americans, the Hessian soldiers did not volunteer themselves for military service to the British in return for a handsome fee. Rather, as noted previously, the Hessians were forcibly conscripted to fight. As Rodney Atwood writes in his history of the Hessians, prominent eighteenth century German legal experts "defined mercenaries, as distinct from auxiliaries, as foreigners who voluntarily enrolled themselves as soldiers for a certain time, certain provisions, and a certain sum of money. Thus the Hessians of whom we are dealing were, strictly speaking auxiliaries and not mercenaries."[341] Auxiliaries, essentially, were troops from one country that another

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[340] Ibid, 5-6.

[341] Atwood, *The Hessians*, 23.

country paid to use, which was legal according to international European law at the time. However, the subsidies the British paid to the principality of Hessen-Kassel for the use of their soldiers did not go back directly to the soldiers and their families. Rather, Landgrave Friedrich II capitalized on the transaction, and the blood money he made off the lives of his subjects trickled down very slowly and only on his terms, from his castle on the hill (Friedrich's son would later turn the early seventeenth century castle into the Neoclassical Schloß Wilhelmshöhe), and then down through the high street of Kassel. The money trickling down pooled up at the Fridericianum and the Foundling Hospital, the Orangerie and the Karlsaue, and in the pockets of those close to the Landgrave; however, the rivulets of profit dried up when the city center started to bleed into the countryside, and the poor Hessian subsistence workers remained at the mercy of the Landgraves who ruled them from on high.

In 1874, the twelfth-century Hessian Breitenau monastery in the village of Guxhagen, roughly ten miles south of Kassel, was transformed into a correctional facility and poor house. It was not the first time, nor would it be the last, that Breitenau was used to incarcerate people at the hands of the state. According to Péter György, after the Reformation the Benedictine cloister became a baronial estate and one of the church towers there was converted into a prison cell.[342] In 1871, French prisoners of war were kept at Breitenau, and three years later, the church was partially converted into a workhouse, while part of the main building was still used as a Protestant church. Until 1949, the workhouse at Breitenau acted as "a depot for 'antisocial' vagrants, the

[342] Péter György, "The Two Kassels: Same Time Another Space," in in *dOCUMENTA (13) : catalog = Katalog/ (1)*, 46-57 (Kassel: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 145.

homeless, and prostitutes." The Gestapo converted Breitenau into a concentration camp in 1933. It served primarily as a work education camp, where the Nazis detained roughly 9,000 prisoners, most of whom were foreign forced laborers, later deported to larger concentration camps in the East.[343] György notes that the concentration camp at Breitenau remains primarily rooted as a part of local Hessian history, one that faculty and students at the Hochschule für bildende Künste (the High School for Fine Arts) in Kassel researched and kept alive beginning in 1982. Breitenau has yet to be incorporated into the broader narrative of Nazi Germany as were, say, the concentration camps at Auschwitz, Dachau, and Buchenwald.

After the war, Breitenau assumed still further purposes: it became a girls' reformatory, and then finally, a now-extant psychiatric institution. For dOCUMENTA (13) in 2012, Emily Jacir and Susan Buck-Morss contributed one of one hundred notebooks published for the event. Buck-Morss wrote text about the nature of historiography, which the two combined with Jacir's annotated photographs of Breitenau and Kassel. One particularly haunting page depicts female workers at Breitenau, their identities made anonymous by dark stripes drawn over their eyes, who are seated around folding tables and surrounded by reams of paper; below them is a photograph of porcelain-lined institutional shower stalls (fig. 3.24). Together, the photographs evoke feminine secretarial labor, the tedious and repetitive work imposed upon institutional inmates (are they stuffing envelopes?), and the ominous false showers found in Nazi gas chambers (to be clear, Breitenau was a work camp, not an extermination camp, and

[343] Ibid," 145.

cyanide gas did not come out of the showers there). To the right of the banal yet haunting photographs, Jacir wrote in tidy handwriting:

> breitenau
> -escapes word searches
> -layering of repressive institutions
> -prison since Bismarck
> -prison – work camp – reformatory – church – prison – hospital
> -isolation room
> -they split the church so that ½ of the building was used for mass while half was a prison
> -reformatory for girls in 50's and 60's
> Ulrike Meinhof did her last research on these girls reformatories
> -Film → Bambule
> -Ireland situation opened up the discussion in Germany for reparation for girls of these reformatories
> -doors lock from the outside[344]

The ghosts of the imprisoned and repressed in Hessen, those whose forced labor ostensibly benefited the coffers of the state, have haunted the Kassel's landscape for centuries. Working side by side, the church and state exploited the labor of those whom they deemed ideologically misaligned, exhibited "antisocial" tendencies, or whom they chose to persecute on the basis of their religion or ethnicity. It is within this fraught economic, historic, and spatial context of Hessen-Kassel from which Douglas drew the source material for *Suspiria*, and it is where his installation played out, engaged with its two- and three hundred-year-old unquiet ghosts. Douglas transmitted his own revenants, characters who are motivated by money and profit and who commit acts of violence for their own benefit between the two dominant physical institutions of authority and power within the city.

[344] Emily Jacir and Susan Buck-Morss. "No. 004," in *dOCUMENTA (13): 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts* (Kassel: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 80.

Douglas also used the fairy tale element of *Suspiria* to create a story (which perhaps is itself a fairy tale, based upon fantasy and wishful thinking) that undermines the traditional role of fairy tales, as the Grimms established them. In keeping with the Grimms' objectives to socialize a young German population (as established previously in this chapter), Stan Douglas, in his description of *Suspiria* for the Documenta11 Catalog, noted that "the brothers' folklore and philology were ultimately educational, intended to instruct a bourgeois subject who – through a combination of guile and good fortune – could defeat a giant, outwit a gnome, marry a princess, or build a modern nation."[345] Douglas purports to refute this project through his employment of fairy tales. Rather than use fairy tales for overtly didactic ends, Douglas relinquished the "onerous central control of the narrative," as George Lewis describes it, by mixing narrative segments though a computer, letting go of authorial control, and creating an endlessly changing story with no moralizing end or resolution.[346]

George E. Lewis examines *Suspiria* in light of post-War live-algorithmic computer-generated music and DJ culture. In a segment of his chapter "Stan Douglas's *Suspiria*" titled "Algorithmic Moralities," he argues that "the form of storytelling in *Suspiria*… seems to militate against a wider moralizing. The stories seem to be drained of their moral fluids."[347] He later suggests that it is the computer, which "recognizes no central consciousness, no ideology, no moral principle or agency, and no truth claims regarding history" that "provides the site for the de-moralizing impulse in Douglas's

[345] Douglas, "Suspiria," 557.

[346] Lewis, "Stan Douglas's *Suspiria*: Genealogies of Recombinant Narrativity," 44.

[347] Ibid, 48.

recombinant narratives."[348] The recombinancy of *Suspiria* is, for Lewis, both "radically anti-commodification" and rooted in black culture, in which repetition is more about rhythm and "making room for [accident and rupture] inside the system itself" than Hegelian progress narratives.[349] As such, Lewis claims that "*Suspiria's* exploded narrative plays havoc with any master narrative and mocks the nineteenth-century nationalism from which only *Suspiria*'s ghostly, greenish traces remain, emanating from the stone walls of the Herkules Oktagon as post-nationalist ectoplasm."[350] While Lewis provides an insightful contextualization of *Suspiria*, especially in terms of music history and the way in which the artwork refutes the master narratives as advocated by the Grimms and later by fascists, I believe his analysis falls short in its examination of Douglas's live algorithm and its rules, which, at the direction of the artist, do indeed comprise a moral system and participate within a capitalist system (even if Douglas critiques capitalism). While recombinancy itself may, in Douglas's mind, "[extend] the possibilities of temporal form far beyond the ninety-minute, three-act dramatic structure Hollywood loves," this does not take stock of the way in which Douglas himself is an internationally-renowned artist who participates within the global art world, an economy inextricably intertwined with late capitalism.

While Stan Douglas may have noble and earnest intentions for disrupting entrenched moral systems (e.g., of narrative and economy), *Suspiria* does not magically remove him from his participation within them. Just as fairy tales may be interpreted

[348] Ibid, 51.

[349] Lewis citing James Snead. Ibid, 52.

[350] Ibid, 53.

according to the particular socio-historical agendas of the person interpreting it (as we saw in the case of a multiplicity of readings of "Little Red Riding Hood"), there is often dissonance between a story that is told, its moral, and then the historical reality of a situation. One might ask if *Suspiria* operates like Scheherazade, the central character from *One Thousand and One Nights*, who in order to evade her execution enchants the sultan by telling him an endless and endlessly captivating story. That is, both *Suspiria* and *One Thousand and One Nights* might be read as operating according to a logic of deferment (Scheherazade defers the death dealt to each of the sultan's new wives by spinning her yarns, *Suspiria* defers the commodification of the formulaic narrative as manufactured in Hollywood).

Additionally, one might also ask if, in its recombinancy, *Suspiria* simply follows another formula that has become part of Douglas's brand as an artist — "doing Stan Douglas by the numbers," as critic Kobena Mercer described the work.[351] To what extent does *Suspiria* defy the mechanics of capitalism and to what extent does it fit squarely within that system, allowing Douglas to "get something for nothing"? *Suspiria* is, according to Douglas, a work that highlights the mechanism of commodification, is like primitive accumulation, and is "meant to function like pure capitalism itself."[352] That is, the artist "magically" created an infinitely variable story from a humble set of constitutive parts (two hours of video and two hours of audio). In this way, *Suspiria*, for Douglas, acted like capitalism, in that as in Friedrich's case, he was able to get something

[351] Ibid, 59.

[352] Douglas, AA Artist Talk.

(a story that can last longer than human history) from minimal constitutive parts.[353] Simultaneously, Douglas exposed the mechanics and politics of vision by making the invisible visible and turning the eye of the surveillance camera in upon the tower that is designed to see without being seen. However, in a cyborgean twist, the camera is distanced from the artist's subjectivity by the computer program operating it.

It is noteworthy that 1848, the year of the Revolution in Germany, was the same year that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published the first edition of *The Communist Manifesto* in German. *The Communist Manifesto* and later Marx's *Capital* both incorporate at times a kind of fairy tale language — language that begins in the manifesto by stating that "a specter is haunting Europe," and enjoins Communists to counter the "nursery tale of the Specter of Communism" with a party manifesto, [354] and later includes descriptions of the origins of capitalism as a fairy tale, vampiric in its operations. Not coincidentally, these are the haunting, supernatural passages from Marx that Douglas drew from for the epigraphs in *Suspiria*. Even as his work is haunted by Marx, Marx's text is haunted, deliberately, by the folklore, mythology, and fairy tales that the Grimms injected into academic discourse. Douglas brings many specters into dialogue: those of late capitalism, the Landgraves and their extraction of human capital, the Grimms' moralizing sentiments, and those who labored at Guxhagen against their will. Dressler describes these as "the specters *of* Marx [that] are at work, conjuring the end of those sorcerers, hoarders, and alchemists of modern bourgeois society, whose victors transform

[353] Ibid.

[354] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, (Washington Square Press: New York, 1964), 55.

money into even more money, while the losers can do nothing but sell their own skin."[355] That is, the specters of Marx and those of Communism in Europe are pitted against each other, and the latter loom and threaten to indicate alternatives to the vampiric *status quo*, from within the very institutions of power they seek to dismantle.

Doors lock from the outside.

Enter Ghost.
Exit Ghost. (I.i.39, 52)

Der Sandmann Will Steal Your Eyes

Stan Douglas did not begin to explore the themes of German fairy tales, recombinant narrativity, and obsolescence with *Suspiria*. Prior to this artwork, he created *Der Sandmann* (1995), one of several of his works that use these elements, which is based loosely upon E.T.A. Hoffmann's 1816 modern literary fairy tale of the same name. Hoffmann's short story of the Sandman was instrumental in Freud's formulation of his concept of the uncanny, and Douglas engages directly with both writers.[356] Douglas's *Der Sandmann* is an installation with two synchronous film loop projections, a proto-recombinant film, which is roughly 10-minutes long. Throughout the work, two similar, side-by-side videos simultaneously show 360-degree sweeps across the same set; the films are then projected on the same screen, although only half of each image is shown and the vertical seam between the two projections is dissolved, so that the film showing the new scene seems to erase and overcome the old, and vice versa (fig. 3.25).[357] Both

[355] Dressler, "Specters of Douglas," 13.

[356] Scott Watson, "Against the Habitual," in *Stan Douglas*, ed. Scott Watson, Diana Thater, and Carol J. Clover (London: Phaidon, 1998), 35.

[357] Lewis, "Stan Douglas's *Suspiria*," 45.

videos take place in a Potsdam *Schrebergarten Kolonie* (a grouping of urban German garden plots), the set for which Douglas constructed in the dilapidated Ufa Studios in Babelsberg. (Babelsberg overflowed not only with speech but with film, that medium constituted by ghosts and repetitions; Ufa produced such classic films as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* [1920], *Metropolis* [1926], and *Triumph of the Will* [1935].[358]) One half of *Der Sandmann* is set during the early 1970s when the garden was still in use, the other in the same space after the fall of the Berlin Wall when it had become a construction site.[359] That is, the films are set in pre- and post- *Wende* Germany, in a city situated directly on the border between East and West (Potsdam, located just to the south-west of Berlin, was right next to the wall surrounding West Berlin).[360] The camera's sweeping view over the small garden plot and the interior of a garden shed (which also contains elements of an exposed, antiquated film set) transform subtly between the two eras, as shadows shift and dense rows of cabbage fade into tire-marked dirt.

The temporal wipe of *Der Sandmann* echoes Freud's description of the uncanny and his metaphor of the *Wunderblock* as a recording device for memory, not just in that video installation plays upon doubles, but because the space flips ontologically and eerily as it is accompanied by a voiceover of the characters reading their haunting text (only the

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[358] Ufa was a major film production company that created movies beginning in 1917. The Nazi party assumed control of it until the end World War II, at which point the Red Army occupied the studio; finally, a consortium of banks assumed control of the company in 1956.

[359] *Schrebergärten*, also called *Kleingärten*, or small community gardens, are small parcels of land where people who live in dense urban areas of Germany can grow vegetables and practice gardening. They may be found in all major German towns (including Kassel), often along train tracks or on the outskirts of town. In the nineteenth century, Dr. Moritz Schreber invented the Schrebergarten, in the hopes that it would provide young people with more opportunities for fresh air and exercise.

[360] Stan Douglas, *Der Sandmann*, accessed January 11, 2019, http://www.ubu.com/film/douglas_sandmann.html.

character Nathanael is visible reading his letter, but the voices of Lothar and Clara also read their letters in response to him). The film loops twice over the course of the film, and over this duration, the sync between the audio of his narrated letter and Nathanael's lips starts to slip, echoing his precarious mental state.[361] Freud writes in his essay on the uncanny, after providing an exhaustive definition of the word, that "among the various shades of meaning that are recorded for the word *heimlich* there is one in which it merges with its formal antonym, *unheimlich*, so that what is called *heimlich* becomes *unheimlich*."[362] The landscape of *Der Sandmann*, homey in its domesticity yet simultaneously ominous, flits between historical counterpoints, almost imperceptibly in some places, and is doubled in strange ways, as are the characters within the short film. As with the *Wunderblock*, when the upper surface, the one that has been written upon, is lifted, the image etched upon it is both erased and subtly present in the underlying wax tablet. As Scott Watson notes about Douglas's work, "*Der Sandmann* is a machine for the production of the uncanny. Repetition itself will generate it; but what is fateful is the displacement of the past by the present and the altogether more troubling displacement of the present by the past."[363]

Upon multiple viewings (and by necessity, when one watches something more than once, one's perception of it changes[364]), one begins to focus upon the fuzzy limen

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[361] Watson, "Shaking the Habitual," 34.

[362] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," 132.

[363] Watson, "Shaking the Habitual," 36.

[364] In conversation with Diana Thater, Douglas observed that "even when you're seeing the same film loop again and again your perception of it changes, because you have changed even though it has remained the same. It's like listening to recorded polyphonic music: on a second listening, you can hear things that you missed the first time around."

between the two videos to locate changes between the two videos, which at the beginning of the loop are nearly imperceptible. Although the background changes, Nathanael is virtually the same in both "past" and "present" versions (the temporal seam that passes over him as the camera pans can barely be detected [fig. 3.26]). The protagonist is subtly, almost imperceptibly split between past and present, an uncanny element that is furthered by the fact that he reads a letter from the past (it must have already been sent and delivered, for we hear Lothar and Clara respond to it). Later, as the camera pans over the *Schrebergarten*, the temporal differences as manifested in space are more pronounced. If left and right sides of the projection are divided between past and present in order to display a kind of time-lapse film (the past is on the left with the intact garden, the future is on the right, in which the garden has been plowed under), at some indeterminable point the temporalities switch and the tilled garden appears on the right side of the screen rather than the left (figs. 3.27 and 3.28), and the projection appears to mingle past and present strangely.

In actuality, this is accomplished through a simple trick whereby Douglas showed the right half of the film first and the left half second. He describes it as "a very tiny permutational system that makes it appear as if you've seen a complete presentation of the space when you've only seen half of what there is to see. The second time around it has changed, even though it's the same sand, the same face, the same architecture, the same story."[365] Like the interplay between the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich*, the artist

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"Interview: Diana Thater in conversation with Stan Douglas," in *Stan Douglas*, ed. Scott Watson, Diana Thater, and Carol J. Clover (London: Phaidon, 1998), 19.

[365] Ibid.

describes creating a film in which "the two sides are in a way one side, like a Möbius strip."[366] Nathanael, wrapped up in his unplaceable fear of the returned Herr Coppelius/the Sandman, is trapped between past and present, lodged between memory and repression, in the liminal space where the cellophane film is pulled from the underlying tablet of the *Wunderblock*. Also mixed up are the multiple temporalities that Douglas intentionally brings into conversation with each other. That is, Hoffmann's original short story (1816), the utopianism of Moritz Schreber (1860s), Freud's theories of paranoia and the uncanny (1911 and 1919, respectively), the heyday of the Ufa studios (1920s), the Potsdam *Schrebergärten* (1970s), and the collapse of Communism and expansion of capitalism after the reunification of Germany (1990s until the present).[367] These are the threads spliced together into a ribbon like a Möbius strip, a reel of film, or perhaps like tracks on a cassette tape (if I may reference a medium now as obsolete as Technicolor film and NTSC television).

In the original 1816 Sandman story by Hoffmann, Nathanael is frequently told as a child at bedtime to hurry to sleep because the Sandman is coming. He is informed by his childhood nurse that the Sandman is a monster, rather than the popular gentle nighttime visitor who lulls children to sleep by sprinkling soporific sand in their eyes. Nathanael is thus terrified by an image of the Sandman whom she describes as

> a wicked man who comes to children when they don't want to go to bed and throws handfuls of sand into their eyes; that makes their eyes fill with blood and jump out of their heads, and he throws the eyes into his bag and takes them into the crescent moon to feed his own children, who are sitting in the nest there; the

[366] Ibid.

[367] Dressler, "Specters of Douglas," 10.

> Sandman's children have crooked beaks, like owls, with which to peck the eyes of naughty human children.[368]

The young Nathanael comes to believe that the Sandman is not just a fairy tale character but a very real visitor who comes periodically to his home after he and his siblings have gone to bed — an uncouth advocate named Coppelius who visits his father at night to conduct strange alchemical experiments. Once, while spying upon the two men at night, Nathanael sees his father and Coppelius at work around a fire hidden in his father's study, surrounded by strange instruments and masks of human faces that instead of eyes have cavernous black eye sockets; metallic lumps glowing in the coals appear to be the eyes intentioned for the masks. Unable to contain his terror, Nathanael screams and is discovered. Coppelius grabs the boy and moves to drop red-hot grains of coals into Nathanael's "fine pair of children's eyes" as punishment, but at the father's intervention the advocate concedes only to harm the boy's extremities.[369] As though channeling the spirit of Hans Bellmer and turning the boy into a pop-jointed doll, Hoffmann writes that "with a piercing laugh, Coppelius cried: 'All right, the boy may keep his eyes…; but let's examine the mechanism of his hands and feet.' And with these words he seized me [Nathanael] so hard that my joints made a cracking noise, dislocated my hands and feet, and put them back in various sockets."[370] A year later, when Coppelius and his father are at their nocturnal work, there is a monstrous explosion in the study and Nathanael's

[368] This excerpt from Hoffmann's "The Sandmann" is quoted verbatim both by Douglas in *Der Sandmann* and by Freud in "The Uncanny."
E.T.A. Hoffmann, "The Sandman," in *The Golden Pot and Other Tales*, trans. Ritchie Robertson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 87.

[369] Ibid, 90.

[370] Ibid, 90-91.

father is killed in the blast. Nathanael comes to associate the unexpected trauma of his father's death with Coppelius/the Sandman.

Nathanael's anxiety is rekindled while a student at University when an Italian merchant calling himself Giuseppe Coppola knocks at his door.[371] Nathanael's bogey man appears to have reappeared under the guise of an itinerant salesman who sells optical devices such as barometers, spectacles, and telescopes. In an attempt to make Coppola leave his room, Nathanael buys a pocket telescope, and with its aid, is able to see clearly through his window into Professor Spalanzani's apartment, wherein he spies the comely yet strangely inert Olimpia. The young man quickly falls in love with Olimpia as he gazes at her through his telescope; however, unbeknownst to him she is a sophisticated automaton created by the professor with the help of Coppola (he crafted her eyes). The more Nathanael uses Coppola's spy glass, the more it acts as a device that transfers his vitality into Olimpia, lighting a fire behind her eyes that only Nathanael can perceive, giving her a human warmth only he can sense. [372] Hoffman's story reaches a crescendo when Nathanael perceives Spalanzani and Coppola arguing over Olimpia. To his horror, Nathanael watches the two men wrestle over the body of the doll, her eyes absent from her lovely face like the masks by the alchemical fire of his boyhood, and nearly rip her

[371] Freud notes that the name Coppelius/Coppola is related to the word "crucible," which connects with the chemical experiments that caused Nathanael's father's death; additionally, "coppo" translates to eye-socket in Italian.
Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," 159.

[372] Although I cannot elaborate on this connection at length, one would be right to associate this story with another nineteenth century master, Édouard Manet, who in many of his paintings, but perhaps most famously in *Olympia* (1865), toyed with the gaze and the female body. Contemporaneous critics of the painting, of which there were many, expressed disgust at the naked woman whose washed-out skin tone appeared to them cadaverous; as a courtesan, she made her livelihood through mechanical affection, and as a figure shrouded with the potential of venereal disease, the threat she posed to her admirers was that by passing along an illness she might rob men of their vitality and virility.

joint from joint. Ultimately, Coppola retreats from the chamber with his prized automaton, her wooden limbs lifeless and rattling, and an injured Spalanzani picks up Olimpia's (curiously) bleeding eyeballs from the floor (scattered like pearls from a broken string), and throws them at Nathanael, prompting the young man's immediate descent into madness. Ultimately, Nathanael is unable to recover from the nervous breakdown he suffers from the discovery that he had fallen in love with an automated doll, her flesh as soft and luminous as wax, her eyes as bright as glass.

Douglas's reinterpretation of *der Sandmann* includes many of the core narrative elements of Hoffman's short story. Both stories are structured as epistolary tales and revolve around the unexpected return of a foreboding figure. Nathanael writes letters to his close friends, Lothar and Clara, about the disconcerting fear he feels by the recent sight of a man he recognizes from his childhood. However, he cannot figure out why the man tilling a *Schrebergarten* (an urban garden popularized by Moritz Schreber in the latter half of the nineteenth century, after Hoffmann wrote his story) fills him with such dread; he only knows that his friends can help him piece back together his repressed memories from their childhood in Potsdam. In Douglas's telling, unlike Hoffman's, Nathanael cannot recall the root of his fear or who Herr Coppelius/der Sandmann is (modern-day Clara has to tell Nathanael that his anxiety is rooted in the trauma of his father's death), and the video explores themes of memory (and memories of memories), history made strange, doubles, and obsolescence, while set in a context of late twentieth century Germany.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Dr. Moritz Schreber, a physician from Leipzig, developed the concept of the *Schrebergarten*: small plots of land that were part of a

larger community garden space, which he imagined that industrial workers could cultivate during their leisure time so they might raise supplementary foodstuffs for their larders during times of war and famine. Schreber believed that his gardens might promote greater general health among Germany's working poor and thus counter some of the environmental ills associated with the Industrial Revolution: those who worked the gardens would have access to fresh, crisp air that could clean chemical toxins from their lungs, and could also practice calisthenics outside – notions partially in keeping with the Germanic *Lebensreform* movement of the period, which advocated public health through fresh air, exercise, and health food.[373] As Douglas discovered, however, there was a darker history to *Schrebergärten*. Dr. Schreber was not only interested in regimens to promote public health, but also published popular childrearing books in which he advocated harsh discipline and emotional distance between parents and children. In his home life, he was a particularly strict disciplinarian and forced his son Daniel Paul to wear rigid devices aimed at imposing ideal physical posture. The psychoanalyst William Niederland went so far as to describe the doctor as "a psychopath whose interests in educational reform were only a mask for his sadism."[374] Under the strict lifestyle imposed upon him by his father, Daniel Paul ultimately suffered mental breakdowns as an adult, perhaps not dissimilar to Nathanael's fictional one, in which he was diagnosed as

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[373] It should be noted, however, that leaders of the *Lebensreform* movement were generally socially and politically progressive, and frequently advocated bodily freedom through anti-corseting and sexual liberation platforms. Dr. Schreber, by contrast, was very conservative both politically and in terms of the body; for example, he prescribed orthopedic body braces to improve children's posture and was vehemently opposed to masturbation (an activity, it might be noted, that according to lore, caused blindness).

[374] Thomas G. Dalzell, *Freud's* Schreber *Between Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 2011), 5.

demonstrating general symptoms of paranoia and hypochondria, hallucination of sounds and voices, and he believed the people around him were phantoms, or "fleetingly improvised men," as he called them, and the world around him a mere theatrical set furnished elaborately with props.[375]

Ultimately, Sigmund Freud based his theory of paranoia upon the case of Daniel Paul Schreber, who wrote extensively of his own illness in *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* while a patient in the Sonnenstein asylum 1903.[376] In his memoir, the younger Schreber, who was a presiding judge in Saxony's highest court when he was not crippled by mental illness, described his visions, unusual spiritual experiences and esoteric cosmological beliefs. He wrote, "since the dawn of the world there can hardly have been a case like mine, in which a human being entered into continual contact, that is to say no longer subject to interruption, not only with *individual* departed souls but with the totality of all souls and with God's omnipotence itself."[377] Daniel Paul Schreber believed that he was in constant, infinite communication with all souls in existence: he perceived that those still alive and populating the world around him (even his wife) were phantoms just as were the spirits of those past and future. This communication with the totality of all souls crossed temporal thresholds, indeed, threatened the ontological division between self and other, past and future. It is as though, forty years before Borges published his short story, Schreber believed himself to be living inside of the Garden of Forking Paths, bearing witness to the ghosts from infinite time periods and possible parallel realities.

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[375] Ibid, 9.

[376] Watson, "Against the Habitual," 32.

[377] Daniel Paul Schreber, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* [1903], trans. and ed. Ida Macalpine and Richard A. Hunter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 88-89.

One might imagine Schreber in a garden named after his abusive father, watching workers from the past, present and future simultaneously till the small plots, as in *Der Sandmann*. Scott Watson writes, "in a sense Daniel Paul was himself a product of the *Schrebergärten* and Freud's account of paranoia one of the garden's earliest harvests."[378] Similarly, Schreber's experience of continual contact, no longer subject to interruption, describes in part Douglas's eternal story generation in *Suspiria*, in which the flow of story is similarly uninterrupted and continually intermingles various temporalities.

As Douglas remade *der Sandmann* and investigated the *Schrebergärten*, he traced an uncanny history of public gardens back to Freud, and from Freud to Hoffman, picking flowers along the way from the bouquets offered by the Schrebers, the Grimms' tales and perhaps even Ophelia's madness. Vision slips in and out of time as *Der Sandmann* reflects Douglas's future work in *Suspiria*, and as in a hall of mirrors, uncanny doubles double back upon themselves, narratives are haunted by both the past and the future, and vision and vitality, optics and the continually surveilling eye, come to prominence, even if in the form of an automaton or machine that possesses this controlling gaze. Coppelius/Coppola/the Sandman's uncanny theft of vision, as in the eyeless masks in his alchemical fire, the bird-children to whom he feeds children's eyeballs, and his telescopes and glasses (kinds of prosthetic eye-extenders), as well as Olimpia's curious means of sucking up vision and her eventual blindness all recall a scene from *Suspiria* in which Else sells her eye to a friend for a meal (fig. 3.18). Half-blind, she wanders for a period with monocular vision (but what good is her eye without her body? Can the friend use Else's eye for vision once it is in her possession?), and Else in her monocular state

[378] Watson, "Against the Habitual," 32.

evokes cyclopean giants, demigods from mythology, and brings us back to Herkules's surveilling eye. This eye sees and generates ghosts, plays upon mechanical reproduction, and employs perpetual procreation – it is ever wakeful and ever generative.

Outro (Sleeping Beauty)

> Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.[379] -Genesis 2.7

> I'm an eye. A mechanical eye. I, the machine, show you a world the way only I can see it. I free myself for today and forever from human immobility. I'm in constant movement…. I fall and rise with the falling and rising of bodies. Freed from the boundaries of time and space, I coordinate any and all points of the universe, wherever I want them to be. My way leads towards the creation of a fresh perception of the world. Thus I explain in a new way the world unknown to you.[380]
> -Dziga Vertov, "Kino-Eye Manifesto"

In the Bible, life starts with breath. It is breath that provided the animating spark of life in Genesis when God, the divine artisan, sculpted the body of Adam and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.[381] So too is it God's breath that stirs and gives shape to the primordial soup in the opening verses of Genesis: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters."[382] Marina Warner writes that "air is the element where imagining of spirit mixes with stuff of this

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[379] Gn 2:7 (New Revised Standard Version).

[380] Dziga Vertov, "Kino-Eye Manifesto" (1923), quoted in John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 17.

[381] This passage is curiously absent from the rhetoric pro-life advocates use when they argue that life begins at conception, not the moment a newborn babe inhales his first gulp of air and then lets out a wail.

[382] Gn 1:1-2 (NRSV).

world most richly and intimately. *Anima/animus*, Latin for 'soul' and 'spirit,' depends on the metaphor of breath, principal token of living being."[383] Breath is the basis of animation and spirit, the spark for the conception of the soul; so too is it the invisible churning vehicle upon which words are carried, with all their performative and incantatory power.

In 1765, the Swiss-French physician and wax sculptor Philippe Curtius fashioned a figure of a sleeping woman reclining upon a chaise lounge, a slumbering woman imbued with the power of breath (fig. 3.29). She is bedecked in a delicately toned, embroidered and jewel-encrusted golden silk and lace gown, the bodice and sleeves of which are scattered with tiny pink silk roses. However, her face is nearly hidden in the crook of her right arm, which is raised, wrapped around her head (in a posture called abandoned), and partially obscures her flaxen-haired visage. The young woman, who appears to be in her early twenties, is incredibly lovely, and according to Curtius, was modeled after Madame du Berry, the mistress of Louis XV.[384] This figure is commonly called the *Sleeping Beauty*, and her semi-hidden countenance invites one to walk around her and stand above her slumbering form to catch a better look at her face. From this altered, intimate vantage point, the *Sleeping Beauty*'s throat and upper chest, as well as her face, present themselves to the viewer, and it is from this perspective that one perceives the waxen woman's chest gently rise and fall. This is no trick of the eye; if you were gently to place your hand on her bosom, you would feel it palpitate. This slumbering woman, her skin luminous and dewy, appears to be *real*, perched upon the

[383] Warner, *Phantasmagoria*, 61.

[384] Ibid, 47.

cusp of awakening; she is an uncanny creature who might awaken at any moment, yawn and stretch, and steal the heart of a prince (or King Louis himself).

Curtius, the uncle (or perhaps illegitimate father) and mentor of the more famous Madame Tussaud, née Anne-Marie Grosholtz, was a skilled ceroplast, and when he made *Sleeping Beauty*, he inserted a timepiece into her abdomen, which is what caused her breast gently to lift and fall in an imitation of breath; this timepiece ticked out protracted, invariable, minutes, days, and centuries for a creature whose function has been to exist in a state of otherwise suspended animation.[385] Although his automaton did not achieve the degree of technological ingenuity and sophistication as those made by the likes of Jacques Vaucanson, who among other things created a mechanical woman who played the flute and a defecating duck, Curtius uncannily recreated a woman who seemed to possess the flush of life, who was animated subtly with breath, and who might become fully animated if kissed.[386] Moreover, *Sleeping Beauty* transcends linear time; my use of both past and present tenses in the preceding sentences was intentional. While Curtius crafted *Sleeping Beauty* in 1765, her life has extended until the present day, or it might be more accurate to say, she has been reproduced since then while also staying the same. The original *Sleeping Beauty* waxwork was destroyed in a fire, however a replica model, her identical twin, is still on display at Madame Tussaud's in London, cast from the same

[385] Since Curtius's original sculpture, several recreations have been modeled, which occupy the proud position of the oldest waxwork sculpture at Madame Tussaud's in London.

[386] In this respect she encourages interaction almost to the degree that fairground spectacles of inert women in glass boxes prompted. Through the twentieth century, sleeping Snow Whites were often featured as *tableaux vivants* lying in transparent coffins at carnivals. Part of the allure was for a fairgoer to determine whether she was an automated waxwork or a real girl. In the 2012 film *Blancanieves*, paying participants lined up to kiss the still princess lying in a glass coffin, on the hopes of becoming the prince who could wake up the young beauty.
Joanna Ebenstein, *The Anatomical Venus* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2016), 156.

mold as the original. (Wax casting allows for nearly infinite copies of an object to be made from one mold.) Additionally, just as the mythical ship *Argo* was repaired *en route*, shedding old and incorporating new elements into its body over its journey even as it remained in essence the same ship, the *Sleeping Beauty* has been subtly repaired and amended while retaining her coherent body (a new watch mechanism here, another satin slipper there), not unlike fairy tales themselves, which modify over decades and centuries, but retain core identifiable features.

Curtius's *Sleeping Beauty* is the very embodiment of the uncanny and she is as unsettling as she is beautiful (we might remember that Freud includes doubles, objects credited with independent activity, waxworks, and dolls among those things that are uncanny). Madame du Berry was one of many royal victims of the guillotine during the Terror, and one of several of whom Curtius and Tussaud made death masks, impressing wax upon their newly severed heads (a gruesome task they were often impelled to accomplish by various political factions). The face of *Sleeping Beauty*, however, was made from an earlier sitting while du Berry still enjoyed the flush of youth and life (she was dragged protesting to the scaffold when she was in her fifties). Before her final wax impression, her face had already become immortalized as a young beauty under the trance of a deep sleep.[387] As Warner describes it, "the disquiet stirred by waxworks or automata [of which *Sleeping Beauty* is both] arises from their ever protracted undecided state, between life and not-life. They appear to be alive, yet are not."[388] If one were to touch the *Sleeping Beauty*, as when Nathanael embraced and kissed Olimpia in "the

[387] Warner, *Phantasmagoria*, 48.

[388] Ibid, 53.

Sandman," her skin might initially feel cold, but upon sustained contact, it would warm up from the body heat of the person making contact with her; if one caressed her exposed neck, it would be easy to mistake the subtle pulse in one's own fingertips with blood coursing through her veins. *Sleeping Beauty's* mechanically induced breath strangely, almost impossibly, exhales in synchronicity and harmony with *Suspiria* and *Der Sandmann*, in which Douglas employs recombinant narrativity, collaborates with machines, and experiments with cyborgean tropes.

Curtius's *Sleeping Beauty* is yet another double; she not only bears an uncanny resemblance to the Madame du Berry, molded as it was from her real face, but she is also an echo of the story of Pygmalion, in which the eponymous artist falls in love with the ivory statue he carves. In 1890, Jean-Léon Gérôme depicted this story in his canvas *Pygmalion and Galatea*, capturing the precise moment of transition when the comely nude changed from inert sculpture to animated woman. As her maker reaches on tiptoe to kiss her, Galatea's body is suffused with vitality and warmth, which travels from mouth to mouth and then down her body, warm fleshy tones overcoming cool ashen whites as life creeps suggestively down her mid-thigh (fig. 3.30). However, there is a curious reversal of agency according to the myth. While Gérôme's painting may lead one to believe that it is Pygmalion's kiss (and breath) that sparks life in Galatea, according to the story, and as is depicted in the painting, when the artist kisses his ivory sculpture he finds her lips to be *already warm*, thanks to the blessing of Aphrodite. Object becomes subject not *because* of the kiss, but rather this transition and animation is *revealed* through the kiss. As such, Galatea makes Pygmalion and his love possible just as much as he has made her through his dexterous art: the sculpture interpolates the human. (This is perhaps

similar to the leap of faith that is necessary for one to engage with ghosts, to employ a hauntology, by which the ghost interpolates the live person.) Curiously, that which was once an object acts upon the subject just at the point at which she is in a liminal state, a both/and state, a cyborgean, or ghostly state.

Rather like Dr. Frankenstein, Philippe Curtius took inert material and imbued it, not so much with the spark of life, but the pulsing timepiece of temporality in order to comingle the past, present, and future. The geared mechanism he placed within *Sleeping Beauty*'s ribcage (which was replaced by an electrified mechanism at the turn of the century) functioned like a cross between a pacemaker and iron lung, a rudimentary prosthetic device that animated the waxwork with breath and tick-tocked her through time. Jane Blocker has written beautifully about how history itself may be thought of as prosthesis – that is, something crafted to stand in place for something else that has been lost; it is this prosthesis that may be used to facilitate small acts of repair (to use the language of performance art group Goat Island) and treat the pathologies of history. Blocker analyzes artists who employ, and herself uses, a method she describes as "hollowing out," that is, "the taking of some artifact of the past (not only the material object, but gesture, song, word, story) and hollowing out its content so as to fill it with something else, something from another period entirely."[389] She uses an example of a biomedical heart developed at the University of Minnesota, in which a prosthetic organ was created by literally hollowing out an extant heart and seeding it with new cells like so:

[389] Blocker, *Becoming Past*, 19.

> Take a cadaveric heart, wash out all of its cells, and reveal what is called its extracellular matrix, or ECM. Then seed new cells in the matrix and see if a heart will grow. Once the organ develops stimulate it with small electrical impulses, supply it with blood, and watch to see if it will beat on its own…. It is striking how utterly sculptural this little heart is, and how the method by which it was created seems to involve an artistic process of emptying or carving out a mold and then filling that mold with material, in this case not molten bronze but cardiac cells.[390]

Blocker notes that this sculptural prosthetic heart is not artificial in the sense that it was created mechanically, exterior to the body, but rather it was generated organically by and with biological material. "In short," she writes, "the copy is made from the original, and the two occupy the same space at the same time."[391] What would it mean to think about repairing a dead heart, she asks, as instructions for repairing history? Perhaps I might apply a similar question to Curtius's *Sleeping Beauty*, an automaton whose face was cast from life, who has a prosthetic cardiovascular device, whose anachronic repairs have kept her floating through and in history. How can this slumbering lady, who seems ready to spring to life, be hollowed out to repair history? What would it mean to ask seriously: of what does she dream? Furthermore, what would it mean if I viewed fairy tales as a bit like *Sleeping Beauty*, in that they are (narrative) bodies that may be hollowed out, and when filled in, in ideal circumstances may be used as prostheses for historical repair?

In the story of "Sleeping Beauty," also called "Briar Rose" (*Dornröschen*), the young princess, under the enchantment of a spurned Wise Woman (in some versions, a fairy or a sprite), is doomed to interminable sleep. She is fated to be punished for her curiosity, and like Suzy Banyon in *Suspiria*, forcibly succumbs to an enchanted or

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[390] Ibid, 46.

[391] Ibid, 47.

drugged sleep. During this time, she and the kingdom of which she is a part sleep in suspended animation. Commonly, the story is told in such a way that her sleep is awakened by the kiss of a prince. However, the spell cast over her is set to last one hundred years, with or without princely kisses. (In *Suspiria*, Suzy needs no prince to realize and release her from her intoxication and learn how to overcome the forces that strive to turn her into a ghost.) At the end of the somnolent century, the briar wall encircling the kingdom is the first thing to be released from its spell and it relaxes so that the young prince might penetrate it. (In the Grimms' second version of the story, the thorny hedge is anthropomorphized and murderous. Prior to the successful prince, the Grimms write that "From time to time a prince would try to force his way through the hedge to get into the castle. But no one ever succeeded, because the briars clasped each other as if they were holding hands, and the young men who tried got caught in them and couldn't pry themselves loose. They died an agonizing death.")[392] When the lucky prince finds the princess in the tower, like in the story of Pygmalion, the young man's lips meet those of the inert young woman, and it only *seems* as though his action is the cause of her arousal, despite her *a priori* animation (it is the released spell that allows her to wake up, not the prince's kiss).

Briar Rose, named both for the bloom and the thorn, in both the fairy tale and Curtius's waxwork, sleeps in an "ever protracted undecided state, between life and not-life," inhabiting the space of the uncanny, that of a still-forgotten dream. And what kind of dream is it of which she is part? Hamlet would muse, "to die, to sleep – To sleep,

[392] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, "Briar Rose," in *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*. Ed by Maria Tatar (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), 242.

perchance to dream" (III.i.63-64). In his soliloquy, the Danish prince muses over whether it is better to live, "to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," or to end one's struggle with life and in doing so cross over into the afterlife, which he imagines as a kind of dream, a new land from which no travelers return (III.i.56-57). Philip K. Dick, in the title of his novel that served as the basis for the film *Bladerunner*, asked if androids dream of electric sheep, their dreams as robotic as their ontological state. If automata dream in their sleep, is empathy a condition they can imagine? Following Haraway, the cyborg could serve as a model for transcending essentialist Western traditions? George E. Lewis, finally, might suggest that we read *Sleeping Beauty* as another kind of recombinant narrative, one that has been hollowed out and filled in with new elements. We can recall that he wrote that *Suspiria* "can be read not only as a ghost story or a dream (although recombinant narratives recall the nonlinearity of dreams) but also as a glimpse into a possible world, a parallel universe."[393] Like *Suspiria*, *Sleeping Beauty* may be read as a dream, ghost story, and a glimpse into a world of different possibilities. Her dream might consist of nonlinear states in which time and space are folded and compressed, wound together circularly like a floral wreath, projected like ghostly transmissions, and in her dreams, it is possible that creators inhabit hybrid spaces, populated by fleetingly improvised characters. That is, they can occupy the both/and (haunt)ontological realms of automatons, cyborgs, and revenants.

Hollowed out, Curtius's waxwork is not just a sentimental and intimate portrait of nobility during the last days of the *Ancien Régime*. Rather, *Sleeping Beauty* also becomes the *doppelgänger* of Olimpia from Hoffmann's "the Sandman" (not to be confused with

[393] Lewis, "Stan Douglas's *Suspiria*," 46.

the other famous *Olympia* by Manet, the reclining nude whose proximity to real life also cut too close to the bone). She also bears a resemblance to the Fridericianum, the architectural body that was built out of peasants' bodies, which was later disarticulated and hollowed out by war, finally to be injected with contemporary art. Finally, I might hollow out *Sleeping Beauty*, a mechanical doll, with her prosthetic heart/lung, and fill her with the spirit of *Suspiria* and *Der Sandmann* to think about the role of technology, progress, and the body in post-War Germany.

During the early twentieth century, the *doppelgänger*, according to Friedrich Kittler, moved from the novel to film and psychoanalysis. He writes, "Freud translates the uncanny of the Romantic period into science, Méliès, into mass entertainment. It is precisely this fantasizing, anatomized by psychoanalysis, that film implements with powerful effect….On-screen, however, doppelgängers or their iterations celebrate the theory of the unconscious as the technology of cinematic cutting, and vice versa."[394] Uncanny doubles, twins of twins, float through film; we look through the mechanical eye of the camera as it produces reality for us, as Vertov describes it, free from human immobility, the boundaries of time and space, and as it creates fresh perceptions of the world. Romantic literature, for Kittler, "hands its enchanted mirror over to the machines," and thus shatters "the narcissism of one's own conception of the body."[395] If movies from the past (say, *The Student of Prague* [1913], or Vertov's *A Man With a Movie Camera* [1929]) show us the ghosts of those people who lived in decades past, when the medium

[394] Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 153.

[395] Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 92-3.

of film was in its toddler years, the machines in our pockets now that photograph, take movies, create avatars for us, and distribute our images globally with the touch of a button only compound this narcissism and normalize that which is terrifically strange, as mechanical and ghostly versions of ourselves populate spaces we perhaps have never even been physically.

Douglas weaves a ribbon of various temporalities, slipping between the past and future, with cybernetic technology – from the mechanical eyes of his rotating and panning cameras to the digital ghosts and doubles populating *Suspiria* and *Der Sandmann* – and as such becomes a kind of cyborgean artist, that is, a hybrid machine-organism. Donna Haraway describes the figure of the cyborg as an illegitimate child, a bastard born of militarism, patriarchal capitalism, and state socialism. However, this illegitimacy may well turn out to be a boon rather than a setback according to her, because "illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential."[396] (Just as Curtius was perhaps Madame Tussaud's illegitimate father, so too is *Sleeping Beauty* his illegitimate cyborgean daughter.) As hybrid creatures with no origin story, cyborgs are able to slip out of the traditions of progress and teleological narratives, of happily-ever-after fairy tale endings; as bastards, they have no birthright to pursue, and so are not ensnared in oedipal cycles; their mythology is contingent neither upon symbiotic, gender-based utopias nor upon apocalypse. The cyborg is both real materially and it is an imaginative construct.

Douglas becomes a cyborgean storyteller and in so doing materializes cyborg writing as Haraway describes it her "Cyborg Manifesto." She notes, "cyborg writing must

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[396] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 589.

not be about the Fall, the imagination of a once-upon-a-time wholeness before language, before writing, before Man… The tools are often stories, retold stories, versions that reverse and displace the hierarchical dualisms of naturalized identities. In retelling origin stories, cyborg authors subvert the central myths of origin of Western culture."[397] Similarly, Douglas undermines origin myths and critiques the notion of progress through hollowing out already-told stories and injecting them with anachronistic structures. The hollow waxen body of *Sleeping Beauty* is warm with the impression of the real, and her mechanical heart/lung are filled up with the fullness of the now, a continually evolving now, even as, in the evocative words of Christine Ross, "the future is made to be inhaled into the present."[398] *Sleeping Beauty* invites us to caress her, to kiss her lips, and in doing so, we might not animate *her*, but, like Galatea and Briar Rose, she may arouse in *us* a new sensitivity, a new empathy, to that which could have been or may yet be. She, like *Suspiria*, *Der Sandmann*, the ghost of Hamlet's father, and Daniel Paul Schreber, beckons us to interact with ghosts and automata, to speak with specters, and look for the fleetingly improvised characters who populate the world, their presence gesturing toward different possible realities. Iris Dressler, we may remember, wrote of the "potentiality of radical anachronism, of a time that is radically out of joint, of an *other* time or an *other* per se."[399] It is here in the space of an *other* — of that which is not *yet*, or not *anymore*, or *may be*, that we may cultivate an awareness of the myriad forking paths in the garden, and in this labyrinthine space, endeavor to cultivate a radical empathy, a sensitivity to

[397] Ibid, 599.

[398] Ross, *The Past is the Present*, 14.

[399] Dressler, "Specters of Douglas," 9.

seek out the animism of all things. Even if there may be dangers around the corner (in one reality, a person who knocks at our door may be a friend, whereas in another reality, he may be an enemy), it is in this animistic world in which we may cultivate the awareness to hear trees write poems, read books constructed from stone, and listen for histories in train tracks that have been pulled up from the ground.

Time is out of joint in *Suspiria* (both of them), just as bodies – narrative and corporeal – are out of joint, endlessly popping in and out sockets like children's toys. Antiquated, obsolete materials, from NTSC television and Technicolor film to *Wunderblocks* and baroque follies, refute the incessant forward drive of the *avant-garde* in an economy fueled by the new, and instead determinedly suspend Douglas's work in-between times, outside of teleological storytelling. The respiration of *Suspiria* has brought us, breathless, from the hallways of the Oktagon at the summit of Wilhelmshöhe and carried us on clouds of ether, which mix and swirl, continuously generating new forms, remixing stories as we are scattered in myriad directions.

Chapter 4

There Was Once and There Will Be Again: The Fairy Tale Time of Mariam Ghani

Alle Märchen sind nur Träume von einer heimatlichen Welt, die überall und nirgends ist. (All fairy tales are but dreams from a homeland, which is everywhere and nowhere.)

-Novalis[400]

A Brief History of Collapses

Fig. 4.1

"For every documenta was and is a great book, which can be read by leafing (walking) through it!"[401]
-Arnold Bode, documenta 6 catalogue

If the figure of the old woman telling stories was emblematic of fairy tales throughout the late seventeenth through early twentieth centuries (we may think back to the *Märchenmutter* figures explored in Chapter 1 — Queen Bercha, Mother Goose, Dorothea Viehmann, Gammer Gretel, and others), by the mid twentieth- through twenty-first centuries, that which is emblematic of fairy tales now is the book, frequently a large leather-bound tome, a volume that sometimes opens on its own volition to invite children

[400] As quoted in Christian Saehrendt, *Kassel. documenta-Geschichten, Märchen und Mythen*, (Cologne: Dumont, 2012), 12-13.

[401] As quoted in Lutz Jahre, "Curators and Catalogues," in *Archive in Motion: 50 Jahre/Years documenta,* ed. Michael Glasmeier and Karin Stengel (Göttingen: Steidl, 2005), 46.

young and old to drop into the story. The open book is an invitation to enchantment, a glimpse into a realm of fantasy and imagination, a portal through which time and space alter, rules and disbelief are suspended, and listeners or readers (perhaps it would be appropriate to say “visitors”) come to identify with the characters, situations, desires, and actions within the story.

Since its inception, documenta too has been associated with books – from the carefully crafted catalogues that accompany each show, to the encyclopedic quality of the arts represented, to the way in which the exhibition itself alludes to books and documentation, to the archive that has grown to accompany the event and give the fleeting Museum of 100 Days a permanent home after the fact. It is not a coincidence that the Fridericianum has acted as both a museum and a library, nor is it surprising that Mariam Ghani chose to use the book as a metaphor in *A Brief History of Collapses* (2011-12), in which she applies a fairy tale lens to the history of the Fridericianum and, in Afghanistan, the Dar ul-Aman Palace. Ghani presented her two-channel video and sound installation at dOCUMENTA (13) like an open book, the two side-by-side videos open at an oblique angle to each other, mirroring each other like pages, and told a story simultaneously of two places and spaces, which she folded on top of each other.

This story, in which Ghani collapsed the history of Kabul, Afghanistan onto the history of Kassel, Germany visually, conceptually, and temporally, is to be the subject of my final chapter. The story I tell about this story includes episodes of warfare and peace time, princesses and poppies, archives and fever dreams, trains and blood on the tracks, iconoclasm and attempts to rebuild that which has been shattered. The story I tell takes destroyed buildings as emblems for the project of history itself, full of bullet holes and

collapses ceilings, ghosts traversing hallways, and the potential of them being, one day, something other than what they are now.

I focus on Ghani's artwork, but also examine more broadly objects and texts from dOCUMENTA (13), an iteration of documenta in which pieces of impossible writing influenced the artwork displayed at the event, and the artwork shown there in turn affected the stories that artists, critics, and theorists wrote about the Museum of 100 days. Throughout the story that I tell, I return to Chus Martínez's concept of "the maybe" (the attempt to imagine "what is the reverse of the known" and thus modify ontological boundaries) and what I call "fairy tale time," as Mariam Ghani describes it in *Collapses* (a temporal model in which, as she writes, "time is not a purely linear construct, but rather something that bends around the events of the tale, or the storyteller's will"[402]). I use these two concepts to argue that documenta and fairy tales, when paired together, open up spaces in which rebuilding, reconciliation, reconceptualization, and reworking *may be* begun (as a product of fairy tale time, the *re-* is a constitutive element, as typically there is not just one pass at writing hi/stories, constructing buildings, or using these vehicles toward ideological purposes). I am interested in repetition, repair, rebuilding, and repurposing. As such, this is by necessity an imaginative endeavor, one that blends both memory work and history work, and past, present, and future in order to imagine possible new futures. Andreas Huyssen notes that according to modernist historiographic models, "progress and historical teleologies were embraced across much of the political spectrum, but this inevitably meant shedding the past."[403] Mariam Ghani,

[402] Mariam Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses*, 2012.

[403] Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 2.

as an artist-historian, works against this tendency by collapsing multiple spatio-temporalities in upon each other in order to imagine the reverse of the known. Applying her fairy tale history and memory work to war-torn spaces such as Kassel and Kabul is a serious business: Huyssen reminds us that "at stake" in the contested relationship between history and memory "is not only a disturbance of our notions of the past, but a fundamental crisis in our imagination of alternative futures."[404] It matters not only how we write and remember the past, but also how we use that information to imagine and create possible futures.

In a large, darkened room, the two tracks of Mariam Ghani's twenty-two-minute video were projected side by side. Each video consisted of long tracking shots that traversed the labyrinthine interiors of a building. The video on the left explored the space of the Museum Fridericianum (projected within its own walls, the visitor to d [13] sat in the Fridericianum while moving visually through its interior). The walls of the rooms and hallways in the video on the left were smooth and white as sunlight streamed through tall arched windows that illuminated pristine rooms and corridors; overhead lights illuminated the space with the crisp, white-blue color of bleached linen. In contrast, the video on the right-side traveled through a darker, formerly magnificent space. Graffiti in Arabic and Cyrillic script covered crumbling walls, bricks peeped through plaster, and rubble was piled on the floors as dust motes glinted in the sunlight that came through windows that had long since lost their glass panes and through a partially destroyed roof.

[404] Ibid.

In each video, as the camera explored the architectural space, a woman appeared as she walked steadily through corridors, mounted staircases, and disappeared around corners. In the Fridericianum, the woman traversing the corridors slowly was dressed in a long black skirt, sharp gray jacket, and fashionable hat; in the video on the right, shot in the crumbling palace, the other woman wore a long, flowing pale pink and white gown with a matching headscarf. (The Western woman's clothing subtly evoked either the archetypally dark-clad art connoisseur or a mourner, while the Eastern woman's garb resembled both the rosy pink engaged columns and white walls of the building through which she strolled and the bleached hues of South- and Central Asian funerary vestments.) The striding women never acknowledged the camera or varied the pace of their movement, and the camera always filmed them from behind in a medium to a medium-long shot, so the audience never got a clear view of the women's visages. The way in which they roamed the hallways was decidedly un-theatrical, yet their presence still feet ghostly, uncanny.

Ghani's voice narrated the parallel and divergent stories and histories surrounding each of these structures – the Museum Fridericianum and the Dar ul-Aman Palace in Kabul, Afghanistan.[405] (It may be noted that "Dar ul-Aman" can be spelled a few different ways in English; I have chosen to remain consistent with the spelling that Ghani herself uses. Additionally, "Dar ul-Aman" may refer to either the palace or the entire city at the heart of which it was meant to sit; I will use this name to refer to the palace, unless

[405] Ghani provides the voiceover in English for *A Brief History of Collapses*. At dOCUMENTA (13), there were headsets available in both English and German; Camilla Geier was the German Narrator.

indicated otherwise.) The voice-over narration of *A Brief History of Collapses* begins in Kassel with the Brothers Grimm and fairy tales:

> The brothers Grimm might have begun this story with "There was once" and perhaps even added "and there will be again." Arabic folktales begin with the phrase "*kaan ya makaan*" — there was or there was not — implying that the story that follows may or may not have happened as told, or at all, or as yet. In either case there rests a suggestion that time is not a purely linear construct, but rather something that bends around the events of the tale, or the storyteller's will. Which is to say that the past and the future both inhabit the present, and history can be imagined not simply as a relentless forward march, but also as a hall of mirrors, a spiral maze, a path switch-backing up a mountain, a door that swings back and forth on its hinges, or a dog endlessly chasing its own tail….
>
> So: the story, or stories, you are about to hear may or may not be true. They may have happened long ago and far away, or quite close to where you stand today; within the reach of present memories, or before the precisions of recorded histories.[406]

In this video installation, Ghani is interested in storytelling, in the tales and histories told in the orbit of Kassel and Kabul, how these narratives were passed on, by whom, and why; how the history she tells is like a myth or a fairy tale; and the relationship between historiography, place, and space. Set to a score of atonal piano chords and ambient bell chimes that seem to haunt the spaces projected onto the screens, a disembodied, off-screen voice narrates *A Brief History of Collapses* and weaves together threads of disparate stories.

One of these tales Ghani interweaves throughout her work is that of the early twenty-first century Afghan King Amanullah, who enacted European-style reforms throughout his country. In addition to social reforms, he built a new capital for a "new

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[406] The voice-over in *A Brief History of Collapses* is incredibly rich, provocative, and central to an understanding of this work, and it is also a large source of inspiration for this chapter. Unfortunately, it would be rather cumbersome to replicate this text fully in my description of Ghani's video installation. In an effort to both credit and unpack Mariam Ghani's insightful storytelling and create my own constellation ideas, I will interject the voice-over of her video throughout this chapter. In this chapter, I will splice Ghani's voice into my own writing, which I will indicate by italicizing excerpts from her work. Mariam Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses*, dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, 2012.

Kabul," Dar ul-Aman, which was crowned with the Dar ul-Aman Palace. Ultimately, however, the changes that Amanullah put in place were too much and too fast; within a decade of his ascension to the throne, he was forced into exile. This collapsed government, according to *A Brief History of Collapses*, was an event that was to be repeated three times later in the twentieth century. The Dar ul-Aman Palace remained as a silent witness not only to the rise and fall of Amanullah's reign, but also to the subsequent regimes that charted contradictory paths for the country and used the palace for various odd jobs. Another narrative thread running through *A Brief History of Collapses* is that of the life of the Fridericianum, which, as we saw in previous chapters, was originally meant to be used as a private archive of the state, a public museum, and a state library. The most prized book of this library was the Fulda Hildebrandlied, an epic poem and the oldest known manuscript written in Old German. Today, the narrator informs the viewer, the pages of the manuscript appear sanguine, bloodied, perhaps reflecting not only the bloody and violent history of this object (an object stolen, coveted, ripped apart, and repossessed), but the violent story it contains – a tale bearing strange similarities to that of Rustam and Sohrab from the Persian epic the *Shahnameh*. (These ancient stories are both of a father and son who unwittingly go to battle against each other; it is only when the son is killed at his father's hands that the patriarch recognizes his child and is consumed with bitter regret.) Echoing this violence, not only was the Fridericianum occupied by Jérôme Bonaparte during the Napoleonic wars, but it was the target of Allied bombing campaigns in 1941 and 1943; during these periods, many of the contents of the library and museum were lost – first smuggled out to prevent French looting, then in the next century countless treasures were lost to fire and water damage.

Importantly for Ghani's project, as well as for my own, during the French occupation the Brothers Grimm worked at the Fridericianum and published the first edition of the Hildebrandlied, in addition to *Children's- and Household Tales*.

In *A Brief History of Collapses*, Ghani does not simply wish to tell the histories of two architecturally similar buildings that have both suffered destruction throughout their histories. Rather, she wishes to mine the ways in which their local storytelling practices – Arabic folktales and the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm – might help us approach these violent histories in a way that is attentive to the repetitions of historical traumas and takes account of the storyteller's subjective positionality. In this way, she disrupts the neutral, objective voice of authority that the traditional historian often assumes and naturalizes. The historian and the storyteller, for Ghani, perform similar jobs, and one would do well both to be critical of empirical truths as presented in modern histories, as well as look for the historical truths that are embedded in folk and fairy tales. *It is useless to pretend,* the narrator tells her audience, *while telling these stories, that words have no weight or consequences, or that myth never becomes history, or history myth. Equally is it useless to pretend that stories are told without intent. Every storyteller is locked in a struggle with posterity, mediated through the audience. Every storyteller is Shahrazade, fighting to preserve either herself or the existence of something she values.*[407] Just as storytellers and historians both have implicit or explicit political intentions guiding their tales and how they tell them, histories and myths both produce particular ideologies. However, the objectives of the storytellers and stories may only be actualized through the mediation of the audience: it is up to the audience to determine how to use the story, what elements to

[407] Ibid.

prioritize or ignore, and ultimately determine whether they give the storyteller the credibility and attention they desire in order to maintain the life of the story.

Ghani's work performs a similar function as fairy tales. It tells a story that is part history and part conjecture to meditate on the past and present of two communities and the buildings that occupy a central importance to them. Doing so, Ghani opens up a space to make prophesies and to imagine possible futures that are more peaceful. Fairy tale scholar Marina Warner writes in her book *From the Beast to the Blonde*, "fairy tales typically use the story of something in the remote past to look towards the future, their conclusions, their 'happy endings' do not always bring about total closure, but make promises, prophesies."[408] Fairy tales, for Warner, are oral and literary forms that might encourage a listener or reader to think creatively about what *may* happen in the future, what promises *might* be made good on. Similarly, Ghani looks to points in the remote past (Shahrazade, Rustam and Sohrab, the Hildebrandlied, the tales of the Brothers Grimm) to connect these mythical figures to persons and events in the more recent past. She sees the upheaval and wars of the recent past as the result, perhaps, of impish and evil jinn, those spirits that are created from smokeless fires who quietly instigate mayhem and naughtiness, whispering "what ifs" in people's ears. Mariam Ghani turns the spaces and histories of the Fridericianum and the Dar ul-Aman into fairy tales that never offer up closure or pat happy endings but do gesture toward possible futures.

The Fridericianum, she notes, lay crumbling for the decade after World War II, yet was transformed into a museum again for the first documenta, albeit fulfilling a different role than it had assumed previously. By extension, she implies, the current shell

[408] Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994), xx.

of the Dar ul-Aman Palace still might be rehabilitated to fulfill a role as important as it once had, and the recent decades of war in Afghanistan may ultimately usher in a new age of peace and security. This is the prophesy she asks her audience to imagine and to begin to make good on. Similarly, in spite of the pristine façade of the Fridericianum and its cool white interior, perhaps if one looks hard enough, she might see in the damp foundational stones in the basement or in the attic space evidence of the building's long, unvarnished history. This promise of remembering the past is also one that is carried into the present. The narrator states at the end of the video, as the women walking through the corridors vanish into hidden hallways,

> *Perhaps the question that we must finally consider is whether it is equally possible to see the building that was and is no longer in a building that has been remade, and the building that was and is no longer in a building that remains a ruin. In destruction and reconstruction, equally, something is lost. One building loses a thread to the past; the other loses the path to the future. Somehow, though, what is lost is still hovering, just out of view, above or around or inside the building as it now exists: all the other buildings that could have been, but weren't; all the other buildings that were, but are no longer. Perhaps the code to enter that other building is scribbled on the wall; perhaps you only need to walk a little further down the hall.*[409]

Unlike a fairy tale, Ghani's project is not interested in finding closure, a terminus, or reaching a "happily ever after." Rather, she is interested in collapsing time – in superimposing the ghost of the past over the building of the present over the vision of the future. As in Stan Douglas's *Suspiria*, "the future is made to be inhaled into the present."[410] Following my attempts throughout this dissertation to, in Jane Blocker's words, "emulate the artist-historian… [and] do history

[409] Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses*.

[410] Ross, *The Past is the Present; It's the Future Too*, 14.

differently,"[411] I wish to take Mariam Ghani up on her experiments in constructing an approach to storytelling in which the ghosts of the past and future may be seen walking the corridors of the present. I do so in the hope that the lost might begin to be found, even if the lost thing has disappeared like the whisper of a poem that the wind has carried away.

It is perhaps not purely coincidental that *A Brief History of Collapses*, which was commissioned for dOCUMENTA (13) and debuted in the Museum Fridericianum in 2012, coincided with Kassel's bicentennial celebration of the Grimm Brothers' first publication of *Children's and Household Tales*. For an artist interested in storytelling and fairy tales, this seems to be the ideal place and time to have exhibited such a work. Place and time in *A Brief History of Collapses* begin to telescope in, to collapse, as the video of a space within a space overlaps with the previous and current inhabitants of the same place, that is, the visitors to documenta and the Grimms. The door of history, swinging back and forth on its hinges, creaks between Ghani's video installation and the hallways of the Fridericianum, which are haunted by the fairy tale work of the Brothers Grimm. It swings between this space and that of the Dar ul-Aman, between history and fairy tales.

A Brief History of Collapses occupies the "maybe" time of fairy tales ("There was once and there will be again," "there was or there was not," "and if she has not yet died…," the whispered "what ifs" of jinni), and the "maybe" as described by Chus Martínez. In her essay "How a Tadpole Becomes a Frog," Martínez considers the role of ambiguity and imagination in the formation of knowledge. She writes:

[411] Blocker, *Becoming Past*, 20.

> The 'maybe' is a non-concept; it is a modifier. It denotes the attempt to introduce a difference into the relations that define knowledge, the limits of language and the event of thinking in art…. The 'maybe' is the emblem of attention, a positive form of privation – the privation of certainty, of the statement that forms a conclusion – that introduces not only fiction but a dimension of theatricality, since it puts all elements into play. By asking, 'What is the reverse of the known?' the form of inquiry that takes place in art amounts to an intuitive grasp of a philosophical and political problematic that defines not only what culture is but what it may be in the future.[412]

Although Martínez is writing about the ways in which documenta might interrogate the limits of knowledge, it seems that this passage from her essay is particularly well suited to thinking about the potential uses of fairy tales as well. That is, fairy tales seem adept at opening up the playful space of the "maybe," and are a way of cloaking history in fiction, as we have seen in previous chapters. Moreover, lingering in the "maybe" space, withholding interpretive certainty in favor of entertaining competing or conflicting narratives or ideas, might aid a thinker in developing a more nuanced, challenging, or multivalenced understanding of a particular concept. The "maybe" as sometimes produced in art provides an alternative to positivist historical accounts, opening up space for absent, silenced, or erased accounts and voices, while simultaneously using certain agreed upon reference points (objective grounding historical facts or rules of play). Like a fairy tale, the "maybe" not only contributes to the production of culture but encourages the audience to speculate about what may be prophesied for the future. Ghani's video installation for dOCUMENTA (13) uses the concept of "maybe," of, *there was or there was not* and *there was once and there will be again* to establish a space of possible pasts,

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[412] Chus Martínez, "How a Tadpole Becomes a Frog," in *dOCUMENTA (13) The Book of Books* (catalogue 1/3), 46-57 (Kassel: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 46.

imagined futures, and impossible writing to meditate not only upon what may be known, but also "What is the reverse of the known?" and "What may yet be imagined?" As the twin videos track down twisting corridors and peer into mysterious rooms, the narrator tells the audience, "*the story that follows may or may not have happened as told, or at all, or as yet*," and "*the story, or stories, you are about to hear may or may not be true. They may have happened long ago and far away, or quite close to where you stand today; within the reach of present memories, or before the precisions of recorded histories*."[413] This is a project that open-endedly blends history with storytelling and imagination, in order to interrogate knowledge - a principle, which Martínez writes, "in an excessive and subversive way, produces time and space for constituting a new 'culture.'"[414] I am, however, getting a bit ahead of myself here. As I will demonstrate later on, *A Brief History of Collapses* produces new possible cultures and stories for Kassel and Kabul – places, as we shall see, that have troubled and violent histories.

They may have happened long ago and far away, or quite close to where you stand today.[415]

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[413] Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses*.

[414] Martínez, "How a Tadpole Becomes a Frog," 46.

[415] Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses.*

Fig. 4.2

Collapses

Time is not a purely linear construct, but rather something that bends around the events of the tale, or the storyteller's will. Which is to say that the past and future both inhabit the present.[416]

At first blush, *A Brief History of Collapses* presents parallel histories of the Fridericianum and the Dar ul-Aman, which are both grand neoclassical buildings, constructed two centuries apart on two different continents. It narrates the ways in which these buildings have both suffered grave architectural hardships and collapsed into physical ruin, the ways they have been restored (to greater or lesser degrees), and have been repurposed subsequently. Indeed, both buildings have been variously bombed, burned, and occupied by hostile forces, and each may be read as a palimpsest, archiving its history on and within its walls. Ian Wallace describes the poor condition of the Fridericianum in 1955 prior to the first documenta: "badly damaged by air raids in 1942 and 1943, the Fridericianum was still in ruins in 1955, standing as a ghostly reminder of a culture overtaken by the barbarism of the twentieth century."[417] Documenta 1 was an

[416] Ibid.

[417] Ian Wallace, "The First documenta, 1955," in *dOCUMENTA (13) The Book of Books* (catalogue 1/3), 65-73 (Kassel: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 68.

opportunity to begin restoring the Fridericianum, although the duration of this process spanned many decades. If one were to change the dates Wallace cites, his description of the Fridericianum might similarly describe the Dar ul-Aman in 2011 when Ghani began to create *Collapses* – it was another ghostly reminder of the brutality, the barbarism as formulated by Walter Benjamin, of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. By 2011, the Dar ul-Aman was reduced to a barely standing shell, having, among other things, been bombed, set on fire, used as a storage house for raisins, and as the residence of occupying Russian troops.

It may, however, be worthwhile to step back and ask what exactly in *A Brief History of Collapses* has collapsed, and what its history is. Certainly, the Fridericianum and the Dar ul-Aman have each suffered physical collapses, but Ghani has also worked to collapse these buildings onto each other, and in upon themselves. Like notes folded together and pressed into a pocket, Ghani folds the Fridericianum and the Dar ul-Aman together and in upon themselves historiographically, manipulating the relationships between distance, time, space, and vision. The writing on one scrap of paper begins to smudge onto the other, superimposing and transferring the traces marked upon it, and vice versa. One building is an echo of another and also of its former and possibly future iterations; one woman ambulating corridors is an echo of another, and they both haunt the rooms of buildings just as an echo might reverberate strangely through an old palace, sound carrying and bending in unpredictable ways. By collapsing these two structures and histories onto each other, the Fridericianum serves as a hopeful template, a model of a possible future of regeneration and rehabilitation. If, as Ghani states, each of these buildings exist *in a state of suspension between what it was, what it is, and what it could*

be, the Fridericianum and the Dar ul-Aman operate not unlike actual storytellers, who are *locked into a struggle with posterity*.[418] In a move that I wish to recreate in my own practice of art history, *A Brief History of Collapses* explores the fluid boundaries between stories, myths, and history, and mines history's repetitions and rhymes.

The writing of Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* may be useful in thinking through the ways in which both the Fridericianum and the Dar ul-Aman house memory, dreams, myth, and history. In thinking through the ways in which they relate to history and imagination, one may conceive of them less as linear narratives than, as Bachelard describes it, "the line of an abstract time that is deprived of all thickness."[419] That is, he writes of the ways in which space may become a home that facilitates and quickens memory and daydreams – a kind of abstract time within the linear plodding of chronological time. "In this remote region," he writes, "memory and imagination remain associated, each one working for their mutual deepening. In the order of values, they both constitute a community of memory and image."[420] The site at which Bachelard locates memory, imagination, and images is not in palaces or museums, but rather in houses, particularly the homes and spaces of one's youth, and he describes the ways in which space contains one's compressed memories and daydreams. Bachelard sees this home space as a psychologically rich and intimate terrain imbued with "the treasures of former days."[421] I wonder though, if particular spaces themselves might contain a similar

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[418] Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses*.

[419] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (New York: Orion Press, 1964), 9.

[420] Ibid, 5.

[421] Ibid, 5.

kind of dynamic memory in the absence of a tenant. What kinds of daydreams might the Fridericianum and the Dar ul-Aman have, and what nightmares haunt them?

As the camera in *A Brief History of Collapses* reveals the graffiti on the walls of the Dar ul-Aman, as it follows a woman traversing the corridors of the Fridericianum, Ghani is attentive to the histories and memories that these walls have contained, even if they are not memories of events that she has experienced directly. As the camera shows walls covered in spray painted writing in English, Cyrillic, and Arabic, the narrator/Ghani says, *Graffiti has a peculiarly bloody history in Afghanistan, dating back to the story of Rabi'a Balkhi, who was punished for an illicit love affair by being thrown into the Balkh palace* hammam *with her wrists slit. Before she died, she wrote a poem on the wall in her own blood, which finishes with these lines: 'My eyes can see horror and call it beauty / My tongue can touch poison, but taste sugar sweet.'*[422] The poetry left behind in blood on the walls of the Balkh palace by the legendary tenth-century heroine is echoed again in the violent, urgent messages scrawled on the crumbling walls of the Dar ul-Aman by war-worn soldiers. Ghani invites us to listen for the ghosts that might moan in dusty basements or whisper from bombed out staircases, be attentive to historical echoes, and read the messages scrawled on the wall. *What is lost is still hovering, just out of view, above or around or inside the building as it now exists: all the other buildings that could have been, but weren't; all the other buildings that were, but are no longer.*[423] Mariam Ghani is concerned with cultivating a greater intimacy with these spaces, looking for what is almost visible, feeling her way around in the dark, listening to the whispered

[422] Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses*.

[423] Ibid.

stories that might have been told within these buildings on winds that blow through the corridors, suspended, lifted in the air.

A Brief History of Collapses also explores collapse in the sense of structural or psychic breakdowns: it provides a history of the failures of institutions and enterprises. The Museum Fridericianum, a structure composed of cyclical physical collapses, lies on the footprint of Kassel's old city wall, which was demolished to make way for its construction. Designed by the Huguenot architect Simon Louis du Rhy and completed in 1779, the Fridericianum was originally created as a museum for Landgraf Friederich the Second. This museum contained a trove of treasures and curiosities from around the world.

> *A visitor walking through the Fridericianum in the years just after its opening would traverse a chain of galleries running along each wing. As you walked through each gallery to the next, the galleries grew smaller and the collections ever more detailed and minute. One wing might take you from sculptures to miniatures to cameos to coins, another from crowns and goblets to jewelry and gems; another from large animals preserved with brandy to stuffed tropical birds, dried sea creatures and shells, and finally butterflies under glass; another from a room full of astrolabes to another full of clocks to a collection of alchemical works and manuscripts; another from models, to maps, to a room where copper engravings could be made.*[424]

Indeed, in its heyday the Museum Fridericianum was the royal cabinet of curiosities *par excellence*, and was like a matryoshka doll, nested in upon itself, getting smaller and smaller and smaller. However, by the time the Fridericianum was chosen as the exhibition site for documenta in 1955, it had been badly damaged by bombs and fire during World War II. Bombs had reduced the central rotunda to rubble, the roof was

[424] Ibid.

largely gone, and many windows were no longer glazed.[425] Additionally, the vast library that was housed there — a collection including many rare books and medieval manuscripts — was damaged irreparably or destroyed first from the Allies' fire bombs in 1943, then from the water used to put out the fires, and again from subsequent fire bombs in 1944. The Fridericianum bore witness to the collapse of the old city walls, the invasion of the French during the Napoleonic Wars, and the brutalities inflicted by the Allied forces during the Third Reich. The Dar ul-Aman, on the other hand, bore witness to the collapse of King Amanullah's dreams for a new Afghanistan and subsequent overthrows and bids for power in that country. That story, however, will be saved for later.

The Brothers Grimm

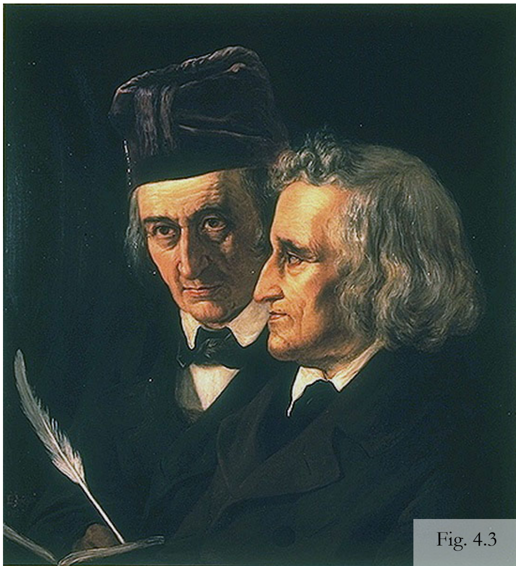

Fig. 4.3

The city of Kassel must have its own portion of irony-loving jinn. While the Dar ul-Aman was envisioned as a Parliament and never became one, the Museum Fridericianum was never meant to be a Parliament but became precisely that during the Napoleonic wars, when Jerome Bonaparte became King of Westphalia and converted the building into this palais des états. *In return, amnesty from French looting was granted to the Fridericianum collections, provided they did not leave the building; the French had cleared out the galleries, but stored their contents in between the shelves of the library on the second floor. Some of the less trusting nobles of Kassel tried to smuggle some choice pieces out of the city and were caught; those pieces were confiscated and permanently lost.*[426]

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[425] Kimpel and Stengel, *documenta 1955,* 10.

[426] Mariam Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses.*

By the first decade of the nineteenth century, the Napoleonic Wars had interrupted normal life in the northwest of modern-day Germany, and the French began their occupation of Kassel in 1807. King Jérôme, the youngest brother of Napoleon Bonaparte, ruled Westphalia from 1807-1813, and Kassel became the capital of this realm. The elder of the Grimm brothers, Jacob, who had served briefly with the Hessian War Commission, was hired as a librarian for the king at the royal library, which was now housed with the new parliament in the Fridericianum. Here, Jacob joined his brother Wilhelm, who had gained employment at the library in 1806.[427] At this post they worked as lexicographers endeavoring to compile a comprehensive German dictionary, studied philology, and published books and papers on medieval German literature and poetry. Additionally, they complied the numerous folk and fairy tales that were first published in 1812 as *Children's and Household Tales, Volume 1*. While I have described the Grimms' fairy tale work during this time and their objectives already in Chapters 1 and 3, it may be useful to pause again at this juncture to think through the ways in which the Grimms viewed their work as an important contribution to the creation of a cohesive *völkisch* culture, which they meant in no small part as an act of defiance and protest against the occupying Napoleonic forces, and which was used to ideological ends in the next century.

According to Jack Zipes, during the early nineteenth century when nation-states were being founded, the attitude of literate people throughout Europe changed toward folk stories. Rather than dismissing these tales as base narrative forms that were

[427] Jack Zipes, *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), xxiv.

associated with the lower classes, women, and children, literati used folk and fairy tales to construct romantic, idealized conceptions of the past.[428] Zipes claims that the Grimms and their colleagues believed that "the essence of the golden age could only be found through the fairy tale. To a certain extent there was something utopian and romantic in the quest of the pioneer European folklorists who began seeking to understand and redefine their present through collecting the 'common' tales of the past that became cultural treasures."[429] The Grimms, who had begun collecting songs and folk tales as teenagers in Marburg, poured renewed effort into this project while living in Kassel, looking to friends, acquaintances, and colleagues for stories. Language was of supreme importance for the Grimms, and they believed that pure cultural origins might be traced back to a common language, and this common language was what kept communities culturally cohesive.[430]

While the Grimms' project of defining and bolstering an essential Germanic culture through the collection of fairy tales may initially seem innocent and idealistic, as I demonstrated previously, their project was always, of course, an ideological one. They were well aware of the fact that it does not just matter what story is told, but *how* that story is told. It is worth remembering how the Grimms inserted Christian and puritanical moralizations into their stories — moral didacticisms that were often quite at odds with the strange, twisted, and adult-themed stories that they originally collected. In their last edition, not only did the Grimms scrub the stories clean, but they weeded out strangest

[428]Jack Zipes, *The Golden Age of Folk & Fairy Tales*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2013), xvi.

[429]Ibid, xvii.

[430]Ibid, xviii.

and most irresolvable tales. The remaining stories lost many of their non-sequiturs and the terse, matter-of-fact narrative voice of the first edition gave way to a more lyrical writing style that made morals such as filial piety and chastity more explicit.

The episode of the "war of fairy tales" reminds us that the Grimms were certainly not the last people to recognize the power fairy tales have to imbue cultural values in the minds of young children, and the ways in which grownups use them toward consequential ends. Serious politicians and social organizers of both extremes of the political spectrum wrote seemingly simple stories that were both magical and didactic in order to reflect their political ideologies and influence a generation's interpretation of stories, their fantasy structures, and nationalist mythologies.

> *While the belief in the power of words implied by the 'war of fairytales' may seem naïve, we must examine it in the context of history; not necessarily the moment in which the tales were produced, but the decades immediately afterwards, during which books were banned, burned, and divested from the dead and disappeared, or collected for 'enemy studies' at the party's academy in Berlin by the former deputy director of the Fridericianum. By the time the war ended, the Allies who occupied the west half of Germany were taking fairy tales and their role in national mythmaking so seriously that they banned the stories of the Brothers Grimm.*[431]

The Fridericianum was not just the building in which the Grimms collected German fairy tales. It is the site at which an important cultural and ideological project began and continues into the present. This project has not only attempted to contain and define "authentic" German culture, but also to produce it by proffering the frameworks through which children and adults understand the world. The war of fairy tales that cultural producers waged to win the hearts, minds, and allegiance of children eventually led not

[431] Mariam Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses*.

only to teamwork and socialist-inspired collaboration, but to iconoclasm and murder. (As Jack Zipes notes, many of the progressive writers of Weimar Period fairy tales were ultimately murdered by the Nazis, forced into exile, or disappeared.[432]) The books that were burnt, banned, and divested from their original owners echo the broader iconoclasm and conflagrations that both the Fridericianum and the Dar ul-Aman suffered throughout the history of the twentieth century: these are sites of contested, rewritten, embittered histories.

So: there was once, or perhaps there wasn't, a palace. The palace was a parliament, or a museum; a library or a refuge; a ministry, or a battleground.[433]

Fig. 4.4

Poppies

It was the summer of 2007 in Kassel. In the vast expanse of Friedrichsplatz lay a field of poppies. This was the Croatian artist Sanja Ivekovic's contribution to documenta 12. I cannot remember *Poppy Field* because I did not see it; I was not there. I did not walk among the poppies as I made my way into the Fridericianum. I did not hold my hand at the blooms' height as I walked past, so that the papery red and purple petals might graze my palm. I did not gaze down into the black button-like centers of the flowers or bend

[432] Jack Zipes. *Fairy Tales and Fables from Weimar Days*, 3.

[433] Mariam Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses*.

over to sniff them and see if their scent really gave me the headache that it is rumored to do. I have only seen photographs; that is the limit of what I can remember, the platform from which my imagination might launch. I do not know if Joseph Beuys's basalt stele remember the poppies, but I imagine that the poppies remember the monoliths that had made their beds there first, a decade before.

The documenta 12 catalogue tells me in the future tense, "At some point during documenta 12 the area in front of the Museum Fridericianum will be transformed into a 'red square': a sea of poppies, red corn poppies and purple opium poppies will emerge – and pass away."[434] Poppies: the flower both of remembrance and forgetfulness, love and war, of sleep (and dreams?), and of death (what dreams may come?). Poppies are a contradictory flower, a both/and flower, a Janus-faced flower. Will Gompertz reminds us,

> Poppies, we know, grow in disturbed ground. Go to the fields of northern France, where the gruesome battles of the First World War were fought, and, if it is high summer, you will see an effervescent red glow like a morning mist hovering over the ground. It comes from the millions of poppies that now live on that land, the soil of which was plowed by bombs and enriched with the flesh and blood of the dead.[435]

Poppies both precipitate an amnesiac stupor when ingested as heroin, laudanum, or morphine, yet they are also worn in England on Remembrance Day, also known as Poppy Day, as a token of remembrance for the fallen dead of war. They encourage people to be grateful for living in peaceful times, yet they thrive in ground that has been ripped apart by violence and fertilized by corpses.

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[434] Catrin Seefranz, "2007: Sanja Ivekovic," in *Documenta Kassel 12,16/06 - 23/09, 2007*, 260 - 261 (Cologne: Taschen, 2007) 260.

[435] Will Gompertz, *What Are You Looking At?* (New York: Plume, 2012), 165.

The Friedrichsplatz is disturbed ground; as a place on which bombs rained down in 1941 and 1943, it is a site both torn apart and enriched by violence and regeneration. The Museum Fridericianum, which during World War II was used only as a library, was a deliberate target of the Allied bombers. Between sixty and eighty bombs hit the main building of the Fridericianum, destroying eighty percent of its holdings, many of which were rare books and medieval manuscripts. The Zwehrenturm, an anachronous architectural remnant from Kassel's old city that Louis du Rhy incorporated into the Fridericianum as an observatory when he built it in 1779, was not hit by bombs. No books were housed in the Zwehrenturm.[436] *Librarians salvaged what they could by laying the remaining books and pages across the undamaged stretches of floor and drying them with electric fans. Much of what was saved so carefully then, however, would be lost in 1943, when the Allied bombers returned to destroy the Henschel works that had been manufacturing Panzers for the front lines, and decimated most of the inner city.*[437]

The Friedrichsplatz, which in the summer of 2007 was transformed into a "red square," bears particular similarities with the grounds around the Dar ul-Aman. After King Amanullah's short-lived and ambitious modernization project for Afghanistan (1919-1929), the King abdicated the throne and the country descended into civil war. A long period of political and social strife in Afghanistan ensued. In 1946, the U.S. engineering company Morrison-Knudsen came to Helmand province to construct the Helmand Dam, part of King Zahir Shah's own modernization program in Afghanistan. In

[436] Emily Jacir and Susan Buck-Morss in *dOCUMENTA (13) Catalogue: The Book of Books 1/3*, 80-89 (Kassel: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 82.

[437] Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses*.

this post-World War II period not only did aid come into the country from the United States, but also from the neighboring U.S.S.R, a scenario that Afghan leaders manipulated to their advantage during the Cold War. Mariam Ghani writes with her father Ashraf Ghani (a former anthropologist at Kabul University and Columbia University who proceeded to become President of Afghanistan in 2014, two years after his daughter presented her work at d[13]),

> The foundation of classical Afghan politics, *bi-tarafi* could be translated as "non-aligned," or as "playing both sides against the middle" in order to gain the greatest advantage or maintain the most independence…. The climax of *bi-tarafi* may have been reached when Afghanistan maneuvered the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. into de facto cooperation to build a highway system…. (The Soviets later used the system they built to send tanks south to Kabul in 1979; the tunnels, bridges, and roads were all built to the precise specifications of the Soviet military machine.)[438]

We might say that when the Russian troops invaded Afghanistan in 1979, their path of destruction left a trail of poppies in its wake, planting one "red square" after another, even as they attempted to transplant Moscow's Red Square in front of the Kremlin to the spaces around governmental centers in Kabul. As a result of the thousands of Russian troops that stormed into Afghanistan to overthrow the government led by Hafizullah Amin in Kabul, in the space of a decade roughly a million to a million and a half Afghan civilians were killed, and millions more fled the country in exile.

My characterization of the Russian poppy trail might be a little unfair and overly figurative, however. The poppies had quite literally started blooming with increasing vigor ever since the completion of the Helmand Dam in the 1950s. During this post-war decade, millions of USAID dollars flooded into Afghanistan to control the Helmand

[438] Mariam Ghani and Ashraf Ghani, "Afghanistan: A Lexicon," in *dOCUMENTA (13) Catalogue: The Book of Books 1/3*, 214-241 (Kassel: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 215.

River, and the U.S.-Afghan Helmand-Arghandab Valley Authority brought irrigation systems from the floodplain into the desert. By the end of the 1950s, this massive public works project was completed, and the containment of the Helmand River both raised the water table level and brought salt to the surface of the land. As part of this joint U.S.-Afghan effort, the government provided farming subsidies to entice farmers to settle in Helmand Province, and in some instances, relocated nomads there forcibly. As it happened, one of the crops that particularly thrived in this new saline soil was the poppy.[439] During the wartime years of the 1970s and 1980s, local farmers replanted the fields of Helmand Province with opium poppies, a crop that has proved difficult to eradicate despite the best efforts of the United States. Still today, this region produces roughly forty percent of the world's opium, a lucrative flower that the Taliban exploits both to control rural Afghans and to increase the group's financial means.[440] The fields of poppies that subsidize Islamic extremism give birth to more ground that is ploughed by bombs and drone strikes, ground that the bodies of the fallen fertilize, ground that is ripe for more and more plots of poppies, red squares, which like the bodies that decompose into saline soil, bloom but fleetingly.

The Dar ul-Aman sits on ground that various factions disturbed repeatedly from the late 1960s through the1990s. As Ghani and Ghani note, the palace burned three different times during this period. In 1979, Soviet *spetsnaz* special forces operatives threw grenades into the Dar ul-Aman as they were en route to assassinate President Hafizullah Amin. In 1990, troops who meant to launch a coup fired rockets from the

[439] Adam Curtis, *Bitter Lake*, film, BBC, 2015.

[440] Ghani and Ghani, 218.

palace. Today the walls of the crumbling palace are covered in graffiti and the scars of bullet holes. A written exchange between two soldiers stationed in the Dar ul-Aman may still be read upon the walls of the palace. The first soldier wrote, "As long as there is a battle, we will be steadfast," to which the second responded, "you will battle as long as there is money to keep you going."[441]

The Grimms are but the most well-known fairy tale collectors within Germany; their peer group of fellow collectors included Achim von Arnim, Clemens Bretano, and Albert Ludwig Grimm (no relation). Academics in Russia also pursued the project of collecting fairy tales, just as vigorously as their German counterparts, and Alexander Afanas'ev compiled the most comprehensive collection of wonder tales.[442] In the mid-nineteenth century, he collected a tale called "Vasilisa the Beautiful." In this story, Vasilisa is a lovely girl whose mother, upon her deathbed, gives her a doll that will come to the young girl's aid when it is offered food and water. Vasilisa's father remarries a jealous, unkind woman with two daughters of her own. The stepmother, whose role is rather like that of the stepmother in the French and German versions of "Cinderella," imposes grueling and nearly impossible tasks upon Vasilisa, which her doll helps her complete; ultimately, the adolescent is instructed to bring light back to the home, which she must fetch from the fearsome and powerful Baba Yaga's hut. The young woman reaches the hut, which stands upon chicken legs and is surrounded by a fence made of

[441] Ibid, 228.

[442] Vladimir Propp, a Russian folklore scholar of the twentieth century, analyzed fairy tales rigorously to define the genre and devise a system of classification of fairy tales based upon thematic and structural elements. He based his definitions largely upon Afanas'ev's collection, although Propp's definitions and classifications can be applied not only to Russian fairy tales, but more generally to Eurasian narratives and, with a little tweaking, to African and North American stories.

human bones. At night, the eye sockets of the skulls that run around the perimeter of the fence glow brightly. When Vasilisa asks Baba Yaga for light, the old crone instructs her to complete a series of chores for her. If these impossible tasks are completed, Vasilisa will receive light, if not, she will be put to death. She is to clean Baba Yaga's house and yard, cook her a meal, do her laundry, separate rotten corn kernels from fresh kernels, and pick poppy seeds from grains of soil. Exhausted, the heroine only completes this feat with the help of her magical little wooden doll. True to her word, Baba Yaga presents Vasilisa with a luminous skull-lantern full of coals to bring back to her home. Vasilisa brings the fire back to her stepmother and stepsisters, who have been unable to maintain any light in their home since Vasilisa departed on her journey. Upon receiving the skull full of coals, the unkind stepmother and stepsisters receive magical retribution for their unkindness and jealousy and are burnt and reduced to ashes. With Baba Yaga's skull of fire, Vasilisa's home once again has light and her hearth stays alight, yet ultimately the youth decides to bury the skull the old crone gave her so that no other people might be harmed by its powerful flame.

Perhaps, one might think of the project of repairing the fraught situation in Afghanistan as that of separating poppy seeds from grains of soil. How might one sift out the seeds of destruction so that only fertile soil remains? This is but one arduous task among many impossibly arduous tasks, and it must be performed under threatening conditions, surrounded by dismembered bodies. These impossible tasks, however, must be done if light is finally to pass over the threshold once again. What is the real-life equivalent of Vasilisa's magical wooden doll? It must take some new form – something

other than bombs, threats, violence, and force, perhaps even something other than foreign aid, subsidies, and political wrangling. It is possible that the new magical thing might be the power of imagination, of the "maybe," of new stories that can be told which imagine new possible futures, and questions that ask, "What is the reverse of the known?"

There was once and there will be again.

In his 2015 film *Bitter Lake*, the experimental documentarian Adam Curtis traces the United States' involvement in the Middle East since the end of World War II. He is interested in the ways in which American dependence on Saudi oil inadvertently fostered the conditions for radical, violent forms of Islam to grow and spread from Saudi Arabia to such countries as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. More specifically, his goal is to show how the stories leaders tell us about the chaotic world we live in obscure substantive forms of knowledge rather than elucidate the public about international relations and politics. He argues that this simplistic brand of storytelling, as employed by Ronald Reagan, as well as other international leaders, has itself become an agent of violence. Curtis opens the film with a shot of the moon hovering behind a craggy mountain as he articulates his central argument,

> Increasingly, we live in a world where nothing makes any sense. Events come and go like waves of a fever, leaving us confused and uncertain. Those in power tell stories to help us make sense of the complexity of reality, but these stories are increasingly unconvincing and hollow. This is a film about why those stories have stopped making sense, and how that led us in the West to become a dangerous and destructive force in the world.[443]

[443] Adam Curtis, *Bitter Lake*, (BBC, 2015).

Like a fairy tale or a fable, the stories that world leaders tell now are over-simplified, over-determined narratives of good struggling with and eventually overcoming evil. Like fairy tales, these stories are (sound) bite-sized, palatable, purified of ambiguity and extraneous details, and moralizing. Curtis states, "President Reagan simplified everything for America…. He took all the problems, even the most complex, and turned them into reassuring moral fables. And abroad, the world he depicted was one where although good might struggle against evil for a while, in the end good and innocence would triumph."[444] If the fairy tales that the Brothers Grimm told were revised toward particular ideological ends, so too are the stories told by American presidents and British prime ministers meant to provide a tidy, predictable framework that sets up conflict only to resolve in the ultimate triumph of the virtuous West. This framework positions all antagonists of an American coalition as the "Axis of Evil," in the terminology of former President George W. Bush, in a scenario in which "you're either with us or you're against us." Those who listen to these stories are meant to shape their worldviews accordingly, in simplistic and Manichean terms. Unlike fairy tales, however, the narratives presented by presidents and prime ministers do not offer themselves up to ambiguity and irresolution, nor do they encourage the active imagination that is necessary to reside within the space of the "maybe." The fables told by these political leaders give us meaning we can memorize. Curtis argues that we must both start telling stories that reveal the complexity of world events and tell stories in which we in the West can acknowledge that our wrongdoings and mistakes are part of this story.

[444] Ibid.

Curtis weaves together a complicated history in which he allows loose ends and unexplained bits of documentary footage to hang in suspension and, for the purposes of my project, gestures toward the limitations of fairy tales. Fairy tales are at their least productive when they simplify and sugar coat complicated stories, when they reduce the world into simple binaries (good and evil, black and white, us and them), and inure their listeners and readers to violence. Similarly, fairy tales are at their least productive when they promise the resolution of a "happily ever after" that nullifies, excuses, or rationalizes past and future violence and traumas. I would argue that fairy tales are at their *most* productive when people choose to use them as vehicles for imagination, as tools to think metaphorically about the world in all its confusion and myriad contradictions, and when they are used to linger in a place of suspended irresolution. In her essay entitled "On the Destruction of Art – or Conflict and Art, or Trauma and the Art of Healing," Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev wrote that art "is a space where one can exercise the capacity to understand complex and apparently unresolvable conflicts. Art is an exercise in ambivalence as opposed to violence, and also has the potential of inventing ways of life that can be less costly, more ingenious,… and less self-destructive."[445] At their best, fairy tales function like art, and art functions like fairy tales, in that they allow us to hold together contradictory ideas and definitions, such as are embodied in poppies.

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[445] Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, "On the Destruction of Art – or Conflict and Art, or Trauma and the Art of Healing," in *dOCUMENTA (13) Catalogue: The Book of Books 1/3.* (Kassel: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 284.

214 dOCUMENTA (13) | Catalog

Nº029

Mariam & Ashraf Ghani

*Afghanistan: A Lexicon**

(*selective; associative; may include myth, speculation, and rumor as well as facts)

Amanullah

Amanullah ruled Afghanistan from 1919 to 1929, first as amir and then, after he changed his own title, as king. During his brief reign, Amanullah launched an ambitious program of modernization from above, which was cut off prematurely by a revolt from below. After inheriting autocratic power built through immense repression by his grandfather Abdur Rahman, who had reigned from 1880 to 1901, and his father, Habibullah, who had ruled from 1901 to 1919, he attempted to turn that power toward transforming the organization of both state and society. His many reforms included promulgating rule of law through Afghanistan's first constitution and the wide-ranging regulations of the *nizamnamah*; investing in education through literacy programs, study abroad, and the building of primary, secondary, and technical schools; promoting unveiling and the end of purdah (the separation of women from society); encouraging intellectual exchange by fostering an active press, literary societies, and archaeological missions; transforming the traditional institution of the *Loya Jirga*, or Grand Council, into a mechanism for public consultation; winning Afghanistan's independence from Britain, and forging new relationships with Europe and the Soviet Union; and large-scale urban planning, represented in theory by the regulations for Laghman, Paghman, and Dar ul-Aman and in practice by the partial completion of the "new city" of Dar ul-Aman, just to the west of Kabul.

While he accomplished a remarkable amount during his ten years in power, Amanullah did not succeed in permanently changing Afghanistan, since his ultimate failure to forge a broad political consensus for his reforms left him vulnerable to rural rebellion.

After returning from a prolonged European tour, he attempted [illegible] speed up modernization by arguing for more radical reforms [illegible] marathon speech at a 1928 *Loya Jirga*, after which his previous [illegible] of support among the elite was fractured, fragmented, and [illegible] weakened beyond repair. In 1929, a relatively minor revolt [illegible] sibly fomented by British agents and factions of the divided [illegible] forced Amanullah out of the capital and ultimately into exile, [illegible] put into power a new dynasty that reversed many of his most [illegible] novative initiatives. Amanullah spent the rest of his life in [illegible] where he brooded over what had gone wrong. Both his [illegible] and his failures have set the pattern for successive generations [illegible] Afghan modernizers, who have returned again and again [illegible] unfinished project, only to succumb to their own blind spots [illegible] collapse in their own ways.

Arg

In the revolt of 1929, much of the fighting took place around the [illegible] the palace built by Amanullah's grandfather Abdur Rahman [illegible] the fall of the Bala Hissar. When Habibullah Kalakani and his [illegible] took Kabul from Amanullah and when Habibullah was overth[illegible] scant months later, by Nadir Khan and his Musahiban brothers, [illegible] scenes of conflict centered around the Arg. Amanullah's new [illegible] Dar ul-Aman and its new royal palace were (perhaps because [illegible] were situated outside the city center) left out of the conflict [illegible] When Nadir became the new king, Amanullah's plans to move [illegible] the new city and the never-quite-completed Tajbeg, or Queen's [illegible] ace, were scrapped, and the royal family retreated behind the [illegible] and gates of the Arg. Today, the president occupies the Arg, [illegible] gates are further reinforced by a system of concrete blocks and [illegible] ricades, checkpoints, and scanners. The Arg is in one of contem[illegible] rary Kabul's no-photo zones, the military and diplomatic [illegible] where no camera can go, so we must look at it instead as it [illegible] the 1960s, when Zahir Shah was king.

Fig. 4.5

Lexicons

dOCUMENTA (13), in addition to comprising several exhibition spaces around the city of Kassel, also put forth a series of short pamphlets penned by various artists and thinkers called *100 Notes – 100 Thoughts*. The one hundred notebooks to accompany the one hundred days of documenta were published progressively and in small editions during the two years leading up to the summer of 2012, such that the artists of dOCUMENTA (13) might read and respond to growing body of texts. Artistic Director Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev imagined that these essays might create the possibility for a new kind of writing and text production. (Text production, one might say, that performs the movement from work to text, in the Barthesian sense. That is, the progressively printed Notes influenced the thinking and writing within subsequent notes, and thus became associative, interactive, and multivocal, like a woven fabric.) In the preface to the dOCUMENTA (13) catalogue, Christov-Bakargiev writes of the *100 Notes* project, "Note-taking encompasses witnessing, drawing, writing, and diagrammatic thinking; it is speculative, manifests a preliminary moment, a passage, and acts as a memory aid…. [I]t is based on the wish to publish the *unpublishable*."[446] All of these "unpublishable"

[446] Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, "Preface," in *dOCUMENTA (13) Catalogue: The Book of Books 1/3*, 14-15 (Kassel: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 14.

notebooks were then published in a number of ways. They were published in the years leading up to dOCUMENTA (13) for the artists to use as thinking tools and were available for visitors to the art exhibition to purchase for a few Euro apiece. They were also published in their entirety in the dOCUMENTA (13) catalogue called *The Book of Books*. The notebooks contained within this bible of dOCUMENTA (13) range from scribbled lists and fast sketches to philosophical tracts, from folk stories in which artists converse with coyotes to glossaries.

The contribution of Mariam Ghani, which she wrote in collaboration with her father Ashraf Ghani, is titled *Afghanistan: A Lexicon*. In a move that mirrored the Grimm Brothers' lexicographic work in Kassel in which Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm undertook the ambitious project of creating a complete German dictionary, Mariam and Ashraf Ghani created a lexicon about Afghanistan, focusing on Kabul, which is comprised of a more modest sum of 71 entries.[447] The Ghanis' lexicon is, they note, "selective; associative; may include myth, speculation, and rumor as well as facts."[448] It tells a history of Afghanistan and, in part, its relationship to Germany. This history that it tells, however, is not linear. It jumps and skips, plays hopscotch, and winds back on itself as its entries are organized alphabetically rather than chronologically. The lexicon enacts a kind of fairy tale time, as it is not organized along straight lines but rather charts interrupted, enchanted time. Like Barthes' interactive "text" that requires the creative work of the

[447] I too have chosen to emulate this form of writing for this chapter and have imitated the graphic layout that the Ghanis used for their project. However, my entries are not alphabetized, which is a deliberate attempt to frustrate the ability of a reader efficiently or predictably to look up the meaning of a particular word or idea.

[448] Mariam Ghani and Ashraf Ghani, "Afghanistan: A Lexicon," in *dOCUMENTA (13) Catalogue: The Book of Books 1/3*, 214-241 (Kassel: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 214.

reader to enliven the written word and give it meaning, *Afghanistan: A Lexicon* encourages its readers to create associative constellations between its various entries. The reader might flip back and forth between different entries, cross-reference names and dates and events, as well as weave in her own history, knowledge, and critical thinking into this story. For example, the entry in the lexicon titled "Germans," describes the way in which the Dar ul-Aman complex was not only informed by German urban planning but was also designed by Walter Harten and his "*Darulaman-Herren,*" German architects and engineers. This entry is followed by "Hizb-e-Islami (Hekmatyar)." Hizb-e-Islami, or Young Muslims, is a political group in Afghanistan that originated at Kabul University during the period of international student activism in the 1960s.[449] Formed in opposition to communism, factions of Hizb-e-Islami became mujahidin fighters. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, one of its most prominent leaders, is currently considered to be a terrorist by the United States government, although, as the Ghanis note, when the U.S.S.R. invaded Afghanistan in 1979, he received financial backing from the CIA.

The lexicon that the Ghanis created was a self-conscious attempt to undermine the presumed neutrality, objectivity, and scientific quality of documents such as dictionaries and encyclopedias. Due to its brief length, it makes no claim to be an exhaustive catalogue. It also does not adhere to positivist truth claims: from the outset the Ghanis state that their lexicon may contain myth, rumor, and speculation. If the Grimms tried to create a lexicon of the German language that was to be an exhaustive, comprehensive collection, the Ghanis take up a related project, but show how even the driest and most supposedly neutral of documents is highly ideological, cultural, and is always already

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[449] Ibid, 222.

engaged in conjecture. A lexicon, and particularly *the Ghanis'* lexicon, presents a series of puzzle pieces that a reader might choose to put together in any number of ways to create stories and histories.

Fig. 4.6

Dar ul-Aman

The history of Afghanistan in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is one of tumult, bloodshed, coups, invasion, various attempts at nation building, contested notions of what constitutes progress and regress, hope for some, and abject hopelessness of others. Like many of the stories in this dissertation, it is skips like a scratched record, traverses down a series of hairpin turns, and is not without its fair share of irony. It is a history that encourages notions of advancement and reform to be problematized, and questions the relationships forged between Afghanistan and the West and the construction of empires (even if these relationships have existed at least since the campaigns of Alexander the Great.) Even the story of one building soon becomes tangled up in the myriad complexities of history. *In Afghanistan, folktales begin with the formulation "afsaneh, seesaneh," which means that the story you are about to hear might be one of seven, or thirty, you could hear about the same events, if you wandered like a lost anthropologist around the countryside, asking the same question in different houses. You could also interpret this beginning to mean*

that every story, examined closely, is made up of other stories, which depend on other stories, which lead into other stories, and so on, branching and twisting into infinity.[450]

The Dar ul-Aman, which translates to the "House of Aman(ullah)" or the "Abode of Peace," is located roughly ten miles to the southwest of Kabul and was built under King Amanullah, whose name meant "Peace of God." "Dar ul-Aman" refers both to the ideal new city that he intended to serve as the capital of Afghanistan and the palace built upon a hill that took pride of place in the center of the new city. (One might think of the Dar ul-Aman as the Versailles of Afghanistan.) The Dar ul-Aman Palace was to be a Parliament and governmental office, although it ultimately never hosted a session of Parliament; instead, since its completion it has served variously as a medical school, storehouse for raisins, mujahidin base camp, and a refugee camp.[451] Sadly, the Dar ul-Aman has failed to be a peaceful abode for the past ninety years. At the time that a rural rebellion effectively overthrew Amanullah and sent his family into exile, the structures of the Dar ul-Aman Palace and the Tajbeg (Queen's Palace) had been completed, but only one of the four quadrants of the surrounding city was finished. During the Dar ul-Aman Palace's lifetime, it has borne silent witness to coups, poisonings, burials, and bombs, it hosted invading forces, was bombed and burned, and now stands as a crumbling ruin of a once majestic palace.

Amanullah was a king intent upon making social and political changes to the Afghanistan he had inherited, but ultimately the reforms he enacted were undertaken too quickly. The kind of Western-style reforms that Amanullah prized and worked to enact in

[450] Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses*.

[451] Ghani and Ghani, 220.

Afghanistan were reflections of his travels to Europe and are visible in the neoclassical European style of the Dar ul-Aman Palace and in the grid plan of the residential neighborhoods that were designed to surround it. This new city, employing European orthogonal city planning, was to replace the meandering, sprawling, ancient capital of Kabul with a rational, orderly urban environment. Broad, straight avenues were to serve as thoroughfares, and a narrow-gauge railroad was built to connect the "new city" to Kabul. In their *Lexicon*, Mariam and Ashraf Ghani write, "Dar ul-Aman projects its authority into the open space surrounding it through the contractual order of urban planning rather than the physical fact of fortification. Randomness is removed from the new city, which is made up of straight lines and geometric forms, because the map of this new space precedes its physical construction."[452] Gone are the winding, narrow roads of Kabul; the design of Dar ul-Aman was meant to proclaim the rule of rationality, free exchange, and order in its very physicality; in its unfinished state, it continues to murmur the failure of King Amanullah's dream and bear witness to the violence and upheaval of Afghanistan's recent past.

Afghanistan, as ruled under Amanullah's father Habibullah and grandfather Abdur Rahman in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, had been extremely repressive and was governed by autocratic rule. The country had been dependent upon Great Britain since the British invasion in 1879, and the new king's reign was remarkable for its sweeping reforms and modernizations modeled after those in Western cultures, in contrast to the country's traditional Muslim cultural and governmental practices. Among some of Amanullah's achievements were that he won Afghanistan's independence from

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[452] Ibid, 216.

Great Britain, gave the country its first constitution in 1923, invested heavily in education, fostered unveiling and the end of purdah (that is, the separation of women's living quarters and general veiling practices), he created friendships with European countries, and embarked upon large-scale urban planning projects.[453] However, many ordinary Afghans and conservative Muslims viewed Amanullah and his family's new customs — like the Queen appearing in public without covering her head and rumors of Amanullah eating pork in Europe — as sacrilegious.[454] Indeed, when Habibullah Kalakani overthrew Amanullah, he proclaimed the former king to be an infidel.[455]

It was not coincidental that the Dar ul-Aman replicated European-style urban planning. Amanullah hired the German Walter Harten to design the entire urban space of the Dar ul-Aman, along with his team of twenty-two architects and city planners, upon the recommendation of the mayor of Berlin after the two countries forged diplomatic ties.[456] According to legend, the plan of the Dar ul-Aman's main square was even based upon the central *Platz* in Karlsruhe, Germany.[457] The group of German architects and engineers sent to Afghanistan was dubbed the *Darulaman-Herren* (or the Dar ul-Aman Men), and they established several high schools and educational facilities to train a group of seven hundred Afghans as skilled craftsmen in the construction of the new city. The

[453] Ibid, 214.

[454] Ibid, 223.

[455] Ibid.

[456] Ibid, 219.

[457] Ibid, 222.

Palace, built by this newly skilled cohort of Afghans, became the first building in Afghanistan to have both central heating and reliable indoor plumbing.[458]

For those who know it best, the building exists in a state of suspension between what it was, what it is and what it could be. Perhaps this is true of every building. Perhaps every building is a stone in the stream of history, around which it is possible to see the waters froth.[459] In 1968, a fire ravaged the Dar ul-Aman Palace, one of three conflagrations the building has suffered. The administration of Mohammed Zahir Shah, the last king of Afghanistan, renovated it, taking the opportunity to add a library, modern bathrooms, and restructure the palace to provide more office space. Like the Museum Fridericianum, the Dar ul-Aman Palace has served as a library and an administrative building; they have both been enveloped in flames and the target of bombs; neither would best be described peaceful abodes, but rather they are abodes of stories, as they house broken dreams and tales of intrigue. Like Dorothea Viehmann bringing her fairy tales to the Brothers Grimm as they kept their posts as Kassel librarians, stories flock to these buildings, and the walls hold them and shelter them, and allow their spaces to bear testimony. These buildings are palimpsests, their histories written upon them in graffiti and chiseled into stone only to be whitewashed, excoriated, burnt away, and blown up. Some of the stories these buildings contain might still be written on the walls, we might still read them in bullet pocks that mar the fluted columns that were once carved so carefully, in blood on the walls, as in the story of Rabi'a Balkhi, which I retell once more here. *Graffiti has a peculiarly bloody history in Afghanistan, dating back to the story of*

[458] Ibid, 219.

[459] Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses*.

Rabi'a Balkhi, who was punished for an illicit love affair by being thrown into the Balkh palace hammam *with her wrists slit. Before she died, she wrote a poem on the wall in her own blood, which finishes with these lines: 'My eyes can see horror and call it beauty / My tongue can touch poison, but taste sugar sweet.'*[460]

Die 7 km lange Eisenbahn zwischen Kabul und Darul-Aman war stark überfüllt.
Fig. 4.7

Trains

While the primary exhibition space of dOCUMENTA (13) was the Museum Fridericianum, there were numerous other sites throughout Kassel that were part of the exhibition, from the natural history museum, the Ottoneum, to small shops tucked into the city's side streets. The old train station, which was built in 1851-52, is still called the Hauptbahnhof (Central Train Station) although it currently serves only a handful of regional commuter trains. It has been replaced functionally by the Bahnhof Wilhelmshöhe, which is roughly two miles to its west and has served as Kassel's primary train station since the early 1990s. Although the Hauptbahnhof has currently fallen into limited use and much of it stands empty or shop owners have repurposed the spaces, from the mid-nineteenth century until the late twentieth century it was not only Kassel's primary train station but served a major railway hub in Germany for both passengers and freight.

[460] Ibid.

In 1810, two years before the Brothers Grimm published the first edition of their *Children's and Household Tales*, Georg Christian Carl Henschel founded a small manufacturing factory in Kassel. His son Carl Anton expanded upon G. C. C. Henschel's business and in 1837 built a second factory; seven years later, the company produced its first locomotive. Henschel & Sohn is one of the oldest industrial firms in Germany, and prior to World War II it boasted as Europe's largest producer of locomotives. It is from the world-famous Henschel & Sohn works that King Amanullah imported the three steam locomotives to traverse the new narrow-gauge railroad tracks that linked the old city of Kabul to the new city of Dar ul-Aman in 1926. This train line, short though it was, was the only railway in Afghanistan — one more instance of King Amanullah's attempts at modernization.[461] A sepia-toned photograph (above) shows Afghans wearing traditional white turbans, vests and tunics sitting on the new train as it is set to depart from Dar ul-Aman (the palace is visible in the background) to Kabul. The caption reads, "*Die 7 km lange Eisenbahn zwischen Kabul und Darul-Aman war stark überfüllt*," or "The train along the 7 kilometer-long line between Kabul and Dar ul-Aman was completely packed."[462] Young trees bordering the train line sway in a gentle breeze, and one senses an atmosphere of confidence and pride as the train operators pose for the camera, leaning in the doorways of the locomotive, their gazes steady. Anachronistically, this photograph was published in the German magazine *UHU* in February 1930, a year after revolts had placed a new ruler on the throne in Afghanistan — one who would reverse many of

[461] Ghani and Ghani, 237.

[462] "Die 7 km lange Eisenbahn zwischen Kabul und Darul Aman war stark überfüllt," photographer unknown. *UHU*, February, 1930. http://magazine.illustrierte-presse.de (accessed May 31, 2015).

Amanullah's policies and bring the trains to a grinding halt.[463] By the time this photograph was published in *UHU*, King Amanullah had been run out of Kabul on a rail, one might say, and the tracks between Kabul and Dar ul-Aman were in the process of being torn up. Mariam and Ashraf Ghani note, "By the 1950s there was no longer any trace of the train that ran from the match factory just opposite the Dar ul-Aman Palace to the Harten Bridge…. Why the tracks were removed is a mystery, but removed they were, and they must have been pulled up rail by rail and tie by tie – a deliberate act of unmaking."[464] Today, the three imported Henschel locomotives still exist, although they lie rusting in the shadows of the Palace, the moldering remnants of a lost dream. *The regimes that replaced him reversed most of his reforms and retrenched the monarchy in the old city. Photographs of Amanullah were banned from circulation and the speaking of his name was forbidden for fifty years. The train track from Kabul to Dar ul-Aman was pulled up; the Henschel engine rusted slowly in a shed. The Dar ul-Aman palace was used to store raisins, and as a medical school.*[465]

In 1939, when the deposed Amanullah was living in exile in Rome, Henschel & Sohn expanded its production line, this time to include tanks and medium-sized guns.[466] According to the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, during the war years the number of employees at this vast company rose from 12,000 to 20,000.[467] Additionally, the

[463] Ghani and Ghani, 237.

[464] Ibid.

[465] Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses*.

[466] *The United States Strategic Bombing Survey: Henschel & Sohn, Kassel, Germany*, Munitions Division (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), 1.

[467] Ibid, 2.

company relied heavily on forced labor: in 1944, Henschel & Sohn reported employing 620 Germans in Plant No. 1's gun shops, in contrast to the 830 prisoners of war who also worked there.[468] Because of the prominence of Henschel & Sohn and their extensive production of instruments of war, the British Royal Air Force and the United States Air Force used Kassel as a major air raids target. At least thirteen times, the Allies flew air raids over Kassel, targeting the three Henschel & Sohn factories in town, as well as the urban infrastructure with which they were associated, with bombs and incendiaries. The U.S. Bombing Survey, in their analysis on Henschel & Sohn, reported, "There are ample railroad facilities, and the firm's finished locomotives were taken direct from the plant into the German railway system."[469] The Survey notes further that "During the period August 1942 to March 1945 the works were hit by more than 500 heavy bombs of which about 200 resulted in the destruction of buildings. About 100 bombs destroyed railroad lines, switches and bridges. About 200 bombs hit open spaces."[470] While the heavy bombs are enumerated, the Survey notes that the incendiary bombs that rained down upon Kassel were so plentiful that no record of their numbers was kept. Additionally, what exactly is meant by "open spaces" is not specified – are these fields and parks such as the Karlsaue and Friedrichsplatz, or (more probably) residential areas of Kassel and public landmarks? The Survey's report limits its scope to recording where and when the bombs fell on the Henschel works and uses this "strategic targeting" to justify the bombing campaigns. It makes no note of the bombs and incendiaries that were to destroy

[468] Ibid, Exhibit D.

[469] Ibid, 2.

[470] Ibid, 4.

eighty percent of the town of Kassel, including deliberate targets such as the Museum Fridericianum, the main building of which was hit by roughly 60-80 bombs, and which is located neither near the factories nor near the train lines in town. By the war's end, eighty percent of the books in the Fridericianum were destroyed, many of which were rare cultural treasures.[471]

Reading the United States Strategic Bombing Survey's report on the U.S.'s World War II bombing campaign directed at the Henschel & Sohn factories in Kassel, it would be easy to imagine that the U.S. and British air raids in this city were solely directed toward decommissioning the factories' production of guns, tanks, locomotives, and airplanes, and preventing their distribution. Sadly, this was not the case, or at least, not the entire story. As another U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey report, called "The Effects of Strategic Bombing on German Morale," makes abundantly clear, many air raids in Kassel, and in Germany more broadly, had civilian targets: bombings were executed with the explicit intent to both reduce German residential neighborhoods to rubble and to degrade the citizens' morale and psychological well-being (and it seems to be impossible to accomplish either of those goals without targeting the lives of civilians and their cultural institutions). Indeed, the report on "the Effects of Strategic Bombing on German Morale" opens by stating, "Strategic bombing was the major means by which the Allies were able to strike a direct blow at the morale of German citizens."[472] What is not discussed explicitly in the Bombing Survey is the Allies' iconoclastic objectives in their bombing campaigns that targeted urban centers. The Allied bombs that destroyed

[471] Jacir and Buck-Morss, 82.

[472] *The Effects of Strategic Bombing on German Morale, Volume I*, The United States Strategic Bombing Survey (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), 1.

architectural monuments, libraries, and irreplaceable cultural relics most certainly not only weakened German morale, but effectively worked to eradicate permanently a rich cultural legacy. Like Amanullah's name which was not to be uttered for fifty years, like the train tracks that were ripped up rail by rail and tie by tie, the Allied bombs tried to snuff out the memory and history of a culture that at a certain fork in the road, moved down the wrong trajectory.

A former office building behind Kassel's Hauptbahnhof, the *Nachrichtenmeisterei*, is located on Kassel's Joseph-Beuysstraße (Joseph Beuys Street, a happy coincidence of a street name for my project). Formerly the communicative center from which the train station's telegraphs were sent and received, the organizers of dOCUMENTA (13) transformed this funny little building into a strange exhibition space. It was small, cramped, darkened. Narrow hallways led into empty rooms, doors were locked and covered with heavy black cloth. Found objects and photocollages made from old travel magazines inhabited the spaces. My memory is now vague; I forgot to take pictures here. I remember, though, a book by Haris Epaminonda and Daniel Gustav Cramer set upon a pedestal, whose battered cover and broken spine beckoned viewers to flip through its pages, which I did. Inside this book there were no words nor images printed on its pages, only a black page followed a white page, followed a black page, followed by a white page. Black. White. Black. White. Black. White. Like the click-clack click-clack of a train on the tracks as it ships off tanks under the dark blanket of night. White. Black. White. Black. White. Black. Like the tap-tip-taps of a telegraph, sending out messages in code, receiving messages about impending air raids. White. Black.

White. Black. White. Black. Like the Manichean thinking of embattled parties – thinking in binary, thinking in us and them, right and wrong. Thinking without making room for the maybe.

Fig. 4.8

Reel-Unreel

The film *Reel-Unreel* by Francis Alÿs was another work that dOCUMENTA (13) commissioned and exhibited, an event that invited artists and visitors to devote sustained thought to the West's relationship with Afghanistan, militant forms of Islam, and the uprisings of the Arab Spring. The film opens with idle children playing on a dusty road in Kabul, rolling rubber bicycle tires with metal prods down the street. Soon, the tires are replaced with metal film reels and throngs of children unfurl the film from these reels as the disks tumble down hills and over stairs throughout the city. The boys run past goat herds, a man carrying brightly colored balloons, and trash piles as they roll their cherry red and powder blue film reels over sandy side streets and cobble stones. The trailing strip of celluloid slithers over chicken wire and loops back on itself, of seemingly infinite, unlimited supply. Like enchanted fairy tale time, the film unfurls off the spool upon which it was wound only to chase its own tail and turn back on itself, the story of its journey scratched into the material of the film rather than flickering through a light projector and onto a screen. For

the duration of this sixteen-and-a-half-minute film, the boys run throughout the streets of Kabul unreeling the reels, while cars honk and military helicopters hover overhead. Finally, the boys, panting as they run to the top of a hill, allow the red film reel to fly off the edge of a hill overlooking the city. The action cuts to black, upon which this text may be read in both Arabic and English:

> On the 5th of September 2001, the Taliban confiscated thousands of reels of film from the Afghan Film Archive and burned them on the outskirts of Kabul. People say the fire lasted 15 days. But the Taliban didn't know they were mostly given film print copies, which can be replaced, and not the original negatives, which cannot.[473]

In the 1990s and 2000s, the Taliban implemented a campaign of cultural destruction not unlike that of the Nazis during the 1930s and '40s. They destroyed artworks and cultural objects they deemed to be sacrilegious, heretical, or overly Western, required women to cover their entire bodies and faces, and forced many professionals in the secular arts to abandon their professional careers. A defiant rebuttal of the iconoclasm that the Taliban sought to enact, *Reel – Unreel* meditates upon the resilience of the Afghan people and the way in which culture may be preserved, reproduced, and reduplicated in the medium of film. The Taliban, despite their efforts to destroy those elements in Afghanistan's culture that they saw as contaminated by the West, were unable to do so because of the reproducibility of film.

The preservation of the film negatives was only possible because of two courageous Afghans who worked for the Afghan Film Archive and risked their lives to preserve their cultural heritage. The Taliban decreed in 1996 that film was heretical and must be destroyed; after this, the two remaining film technicians at the Archive secretly

[473] Francis Alÿs, *Reel – Unreel*, Directed by Francis Alÿs in collaboration with Julien Devaux and Ajmal Maiwandi (2011; Kabul).

preserved numerous Afghan films whose negatives were not in the possession of other archives (the technicians' other 172 colleagues at the Archive had quit their posts after the Taliban's stringent decree). They secreted away documentaries, action movies, and even one comedy from 1969 that attested to the popularity of the miniskirt in Afghanistan during the swinging sixties.[474] For the technicians, it was of utmost importance to preserve these Afghan films, which stand as testaments to the cultural possibilities that may exist in their country. They also stand as testaments to the precarious position of cultural objects, particularly those objects that later generations may perceive as over-extensions of cultural norms. The films warn against the iconoclastic impulses of those in power in the future and in the past, the way in which the tendency to destroy culture is a constituent element of history: one generation's cultural treasures, unfurled for the public, may be gobbled back up, and historical cycles of destruction and rebuilding are like a dog chasing its tail, a door swinging on its hinges. As the journalist Erlend Clouston wrote of the preserved Afghan films, in anticipation of Reel Afghanistan, the first British Afghan film festival, "This is what ordinary Afghanistan once was. That's a whisky glass in the hero's hand, not an AK-47."[475] He might have also written, "That's a book in the palace, not a bomb." *There was once and there will be again*.

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[474] Erlend Clouston, Film, *The Guardian*, February 19, 2008, http://www.theguardian.com/film/2008/feb/20/features.afghanistan.

[475] Ibid.

Archive Fever/Archiv Feuer

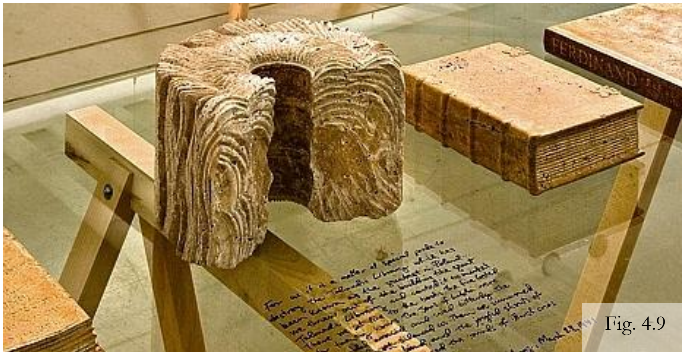


Fig. 4.9

> *Buildings are difficult to erase completely from collective memory, all the more so once they are emptied out; an abandoned building becomes its own archive, its history inevitably written upon its own skin…. If Dar ul-Aman as a ruin can be considered that most public of archives, the palimpsest, the archive maintained in the Fridericianum during its earliest years may be understood as belonging to the opposite order of the purely private records kept by the city-state. This private archive shared the building with the public museum and the state library, which balanced uneasily between holding private possessions and offering them, within limits, for public use.*[476]

Both the Dar ul-Aman Palace and the Museum Fridericianum may be read as archives that have both housed and destroyed records, and as archives in their own right. Histories are both written upon the skin of their walls, plastered and painted over; these walls have served both as guardians that contain official records and as porous boundaries through which bombs might rip and fires may engulf. Both the Dar ul-Aman Palace and the Museum Fridericianum may be suffering from Archive Fever, and perhaps also Archive Feuer ("*feuer*" is German for fire). In his book *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida meditates on the structure and the function of the archive, and describes the relationship between the archive, the archiving impulse, and Freud's concept of the death drive. The death drive, aggression drive, or destruction drive, as Freud alternately calls his concept, is mute, as Derrida points out, and hence leaves no archive of its own.[477] "It

[476] Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses*.

[477] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 10.

destroys in advance its own archive," Derrida writes, "as if that were in truth the very motivation of its most proper movement. It works *to destroy the archive: on the condition of effacing* but also *with a view to effacing* its own 'proper' traces – which consequently cannot properly be called 'proper.'"[478] However, this destruction drive is necessary for the creation of the archive; just past the threshold of the archive lies this destructive force, which "not only incites forgetfulness, amnesia, the annihilation of memory, as *mneme* or *anamnesis*, but also commands the radical effacement, in truth the eradication, of that which can never be reduced to *mneme* or to *anamnesis*."[479] (Susan Buck-Morss rearticulated this succinctly, writing, "That which survives in the archives does so by chance. Disappearance is the rule."[480]) If an interior must be defined by that which is exterior to it, the archive maintains a tight relationship to the death drive. What happens when the walls of the archive are punctured and porous? Does the destruction drive take up residence in the archive, or might the memory and the order of the archive start to impose its logic upon that which were thought to be lost and forgotten? Derrida suggests that archive fever obsessively works to expand the scope of the archive, pushing against the void of the other side. He notes that *mal d'archive*, or "archive fever," in its original French, suggests both suffering from an illness and a burning passion. He writes,

> It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there's too much of it, right where something in it anarchives itself. It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to

[478] Ibid.

[479] Ibid, 11.

[480] Susan Buck-Morss, "The Gift of the Past," in *dOCUMENTA (13) Catalogue: The Book of Books 1/3*, 83-89. (Kassel: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 86.

> return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement. [481]

Archive fever is homesick (longing, dreaming, as Novalis wrote, and which I quoted at the beginning of this chapter, for a homeland that is nowhere and everywhere), it is nostalgic, it wishes to return to a home that has already been left behind. The archive is a home that stores memories so that we might forget them, confident that they will remain in safe keeping, should we wish to return to them. For those working in museums and libraries in Germany during World War II, the attempt to preserve the contents of an archive when a building such as the Fridericianum was under attack frequently required the improvisation of new homes. Often both the collections of German libraries and holdings, as well as their dissolutions, were the result of various different cases of archive fever, undertaken by many, and for many different reasons (it seems the affliction of archive fever was rampant at the time). *Of course, by 1941 the library had already evacuated two separate sets of works – the books with Jewish or other "objectionable" content or origins, which had been sequestered, and the most precious manuscripts, which had been moved to the provincial bank vault in Bad Wildening. Even as the library's collection was being rebuilt with a new supply of stolen books — this time plundered by the Nazis from "enemy" cultures all over Europe — its own treasures, including the Fulda Hildebrandlied, were stolen from the Bad Wildening vault.*[482]

The reports written under the auspices of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey also participate in the economy of archive building and archive destruction that

[481] Ibid, 91.

[482] Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses.*

characterizes archive fever. The foreword of each report describes the Survey's formation and objectives, established at the directive of President Roosevelt in 1944. The Survey, it writes,

> made a close examination and inspection of several hundred German plants, cities and areas, amassed volumes of statistical and documentary material, including top German government documents; and conducted interviews and interrogations of thousands of Germans, including virtually all of the surviving political and military leaders. Germany was scoured for its war records which were found sometimes, but rarely, in places where they ought to have been; sometimes in safe-deposit vaults, often in private houses, in barns, in caves; on one occasion, in a hen house and, on two occasions, in coffins. Targets in Russian-held territory were not available to the Survey.[483]

Not only were government documents and records stored in such *ad hoc* archives, but so too were artworks and cultural treasures, pilfered from public and private collection. The Survey created its own archive of some two hundred reports recording the events and actions in World War II. This was considered necessary, due to the deliberate German sabotage of many of its own governmental archives and records. German governmental records were "found sometimes, but rarely, in places where they ought to have been." The archive, Derrida reminds us, "comes from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded."[484] Frequently, the addresses at which the German records might be found were decidedly infelicitous ones, when they were found and housed at all: coffins, hen houses, and caves were their domiciles. Again, Derrida observes that,

> *Arkhe*, we recall, names at ones the *commencement* and the *commandment*. The name apparently coordinates two principles in one: the principle according to nature or history, *there*, where things *commence*

[483] "The Effects of Strategic Bombing on German Morale," iii.

[484] Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 2.

> – physical, historical, or ontological principle – but also the principle according to the law, *there*, where men and gods *command, there* where authority, social order are exercised, *in this place* from which *order* is given – nomological principle.[485]

The archives of the Nazi government, both in terms of their commencement and commandment, were subverted and destroyed such that they might create an unknowable, unwriteable history, and such that law might break down to the extent that things may no longer be named, may no longer be understandable. The archives housed in coffins and caves that the Germans hid reflected the suicidal destruction of the last months of the Nazi regime. This was a time when not only records and official governmental documents were destroyed, but a time when Hitler welcomed the destruction of Germany because it had demonstrated its Aryan superiority over the Allied forces insufficiently. Hitler wished this destruction upon Germany before he took his own life, before Eva Braun took hers, before Joseph and Magda Goebbels murdered their own six children as the babes slept cradled in morphine's embrace, prior to their parents' own suicides.

Like the oral fairy tales archived within the bodies and minds of informants before they recounted them to the Brothers Grimm, who subsequently archived them in literary forms, the history Mariam Ghani tells in *A Brief History of Collapses* is an oral tale that has been frozen in time, preserved in an audio recording. In the English version, it is Ghani's own voice that the visitor hears for the duration of the twenty-two-minute video. Her voice tracks a history imagined as *a hall of mirrors, … a path switch-backing up a mountain, … or a dog endlessly chasing its own tail*. Like the women in the video wandering through architectural "spiral mazes," Ghani's own voice similarly chases its

[485] Ibid, 1.

own tail/tale. Indeed, *A Brief History of Collapses* may be thought of as a mirrored room of indexicality. Laura Mulvey reminds us that "the index… is a sign produced by the 'thing' it represents."[486] It may be a fingerprint or a shadow or captured light resulting in a photograph. Just as *Collapses*' moving images are indexes of the Fridericianum and the Dar ul-Aman, within the film their palimpsestic walls bear the indexical marks of their history, scratched like film dragged through the dusty streets of Kabul, and the recorded voice-over indexically signals the artist. Mulvey writes further that "the 'thing' inscribes its sign. As a result, the index has a privileged relation to time and to the moment and duration of its inscription."[487] Fitting for an artwork that thinks critically about both history and time, *A Brief History of Collapses* is both durational and holds multiple temporalities at the same time, thus offering up a new, layered way to play with history and to listen to the stories that violated, traumatized objects have to tell.

Fig. 4.10

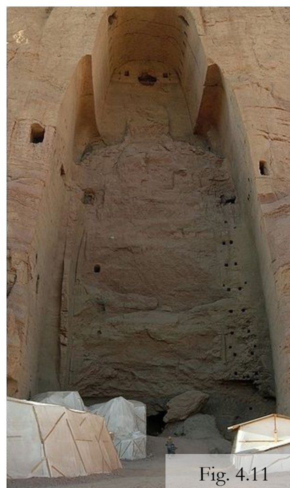


Fig. 4.11

Bamiyan

The city of Bamiyan lies roughly 150 miles northwest of Kabul. The harsh, mountainous region, which today is under-developed, was once a pivotal center between the East and the West on the Silk Road. In the sixth

[486] Laura Mulvey, "The Index and the Uncanny," in *Time and the Image*, ed. Carolyn Bailey Gill, 139-148 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 141.

[487] Ibid.

century, monks carved two colossal statues of the Buddha into cliff faces on the outskirts of Bamiyan (massive representations of that enlightened one who began his life as a prince but chose to take an unusual fairy tale path away from wealth, privilege, princesses, and creature comforts). The largest of these statues of the Buddha stood at 175 feet tall. Bamiyan was also the location of a Buddhist monastery, and was a renowned site for culture, philosophy, and art from the second until the seventh century. In 2008, the oldest known human paintings were discovered in Bamiyan province.

As part of their effort to destroy all pre-Islamic artifacts in Afghanistan, the Taliban destroyed these UNESCO World Heritage sites in March of 2001 when they bombed the Bamiyan Buddhas. In 2012, for dOCUMENTA (13), Michael Rakowitz created the sculptural installation *What Dust Will Rise?* that addressed cultural destruction and iconoclasm. Working with stone carvers from Afghanistan and Italy and tapping into the local stone carving tradition of Bamiyan, Rakowitz, an artist who describes himself as "wanting to learn how to build ruins," produced stone books from travertine stone quarried in the hills of Bamiyan (fig. 4.9).[488] These sculpted books were replicas of the actual books held by the library of the Landgraves of Hesse-Kassel in the Fridericianum, which were destroyed during the September 9, 1941 RAF bombings. In addition to the stone books, which are evocative of tombstones, Rakowitz's installation at d (13) also included fragments of the destroyed Bamiyan Buddhas and original objects from the bombing at the Fridericianum. In the spring of 2012, he initiated a seminar in the old monastery caves in Bamiyan, with the intent to cultivate the traditional stone working skills among local students, a skill that the Taliban had tried to quash. In the

[488] Michael Rakowitz, "*What Dust Will Rise?* A Cosmology," *dOCUMENTA (13) Catalog: The Guidebook 3/3*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012.

spirit of Joseph Beuys's contribution to Documenta 5 in 1972, the *Bureau for the Organization of Direct Democracy*, Rakowitz envisioned his work for d (13) as a social sculpture. That is, he meant for his work to transform social situations, not just in Kassel, but more importantly, among students and artisans in Afghanistan. The title of Rakowitz's work, *What Dust Will Rise?*, comes from an Afghan proverb about the power of cooperation, "What dust will rise from one horseman?"[489] That is, the proverb means that it is only by working collaboratively that a social sea change might occur. Dust certainly rose when the Bamiyan Buddhas were blasted apart by the Taliban, just as the wind carried the ashes of burned Fridericianum books aloft, yet dust also rose when Rakowitz and his colleagues carved replicas of destroyed medieval German manuscripts.

As Mariam and Ashraf Ghani remind us, "once a fire is started, it can spread in unpredictable ways, snaking forward and backward through time and, almost always, burning more than you bargained for."[490] Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev also mused about the traumas that the art object itself might suffer, describing objects in animistic terms. Thinking about how objects themselves might manifest the Freudian neurotic's repetitions of past traumas or alternately the detached silence of one suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, Christov-Bakargiev asks,

> What do the rubble and the stones at the foot of the empty cavities in the cliff where the Bamiyan Buddhas once stood, prior to their bombing in 2001, see and feel? How do they speak, and how is their speech related to ours? How does their violated materiality come to matter, and how does the example of their loss and damage help us to react to a sense of the

[489] Didactic wall panel, Museum Fridericianum, "Michael Rakowitz What Dust Will Rise?" (Kassel, 2012).

[490] Ghani and Ghani, 221.

> precariousness of life, the loss and damage to a flow of persons projected onto, and projected from, those artworks?[491]

How do the broken shards of sacred stone pierce us physically, emotionally, and intellectually, and might a reinscription of trauma help us to heal, or at least help us to renew our commitment to valuing the precariousness and preciousness of life in all its forms? How might a post-human approach to trauma invite us to increase the value we bestow upon objects conventionally considered inanimate, so that objects are granted subjectivity? Is this inversion related to the animism of fairy tales, and might it teach us greater empathy? The Grimms noted in the preface to their first volume of fairy tales, "As in myths that tell of a golden age, all of nature is alive; the sun, the moon, and the stars are all approachable, give presents, and can even be woven into gowns… plants and stones all speak and know just how to express their sympathy; even blood can call out and say things. This poetry exercises certain rights that later storytelling can only strive to express through metaphors."[492] Not only is this animism endearing and enchanting, as the Grimms claim, but it may heighten our senses to listen for those voices that are typically silenced, it may attune us to negative presentation – those objects, monuments, tales, that are no longer and whose presence may only be felt through their absence.

Christov-Bakargiev reminds us that "trauma," both in Latin and in Greek, "indicates a perforation, a wound made by a sharp object."[493] If the Barthesian *punctum* is a tiny puncture – an image or smell or taste that supersedes the barrage of everyday

[491] Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, "On the Destruction of Art – or Conflict and Art, or Trauma and the Art of Healing," 283.

[492] Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, 255.

[493] Ibid.

stimuli and pricks us to the heart, making us both ache and yearn for something previously forgotten, and if the *punctum* heightens our connection with our past, a trauma is a rip that has gone too far – it is a deep, scarring, violent wound that frequently leads to repression, amnesia, and silence. How much can or should one heal after sustaining an injury and how much should one allow wounds to remain open and alive in memory? As I asked in the case of Joseph Beuys, described in Chapter 2, when history is written, whose wounds are foregrounded and mourned, and whose wounds still remain festering, out of sight? How might we allow "violated materiality" to matter in such a way that that we can learn a new kind of reading from the stones, which is based on a new kind of writing in which trauma is both the subject and the stylus? How does the traumatized artwork speak and write, and does it do so in a neurotic way or in a way like Walter Benjamin's storyteller who, after experiencing modern warfare, is poorer in communicable experience? Can we encourage traumatized artworks to break their silence?

Christov-Bakargiev suggests that we approach traumatized objects and beings with a spirit of gratitude. In doing so, she writes, one might create a space in which "one can experiment with experience on the edge of the anthropocentric, where the rubble lies, and can build an imaginative society where the human is not at the center of our cosmology, but only one element within an accord of all the makers of the world, animate and inanimate, including traumatized people and objects."[494] If we put our ear to the ground and open ourselves up to the stories that are contained in the rubble and burnt tomes, we might start to hear the whispers from the space of the maybe, stories that

[494] Ibid, 284.

murmur "*there was once and there will be again*," we might hear the pounding of horses' hooves before we see dust rise.

We must, however, acknowledge that not all fires burn the same, as two tragic recent examples indicate. On September 2, 2018, fires tore through Brazil's National Museum in Rio de Janeiro (housed in the former imperial palace in a four-story neoclassical structure that bears resemblances to the Fridericianum). Eight months after the event in the Latin American country, which was sparked by a faulty air conditioning system, only $280,000 had been raised internationally to help with reconstruction efforts.[495] In Paris after Notre Dame blazed in 2019, across the globe the mega-rich dug deep into their pockets to subsidize rebuilding efforts. Roughly a billion dollars were pledged toward its reconstruction within forty-eight hours of the fire. The destruction of cultural monuments, whether accidental, caused by iconoclasts, or warfare, may cause similar feelings of pain and loss, but the way in which the culture is salvaged (the way in which soggy pages are spread out and dried by fans, the way in which shards are reassembled) differs frequently depending upon an object's proximity to Western metropoles.

Members of the International Council on Monuments and Sites Fragments have begun to identify and catalogue pieces of the Bamiyan Buddhas slowly, a project that began in 2002. Specialists, as they archive the splinters and boulders from the shattered Buddhas, have been able to determine the rocks' original placement within the monumental sculptures and create a massive three-dimensional puzzle of sorts.[496] I think

[495] "Donations for Gutted Brazil Museum a Fraction of Notre-Dame's," *France 24*, April 17, 2019. https://www.france24.com/en/20190417-donations-gutted-brazil-museum-fraction-notre-dames.

[496] Ibid, 290.

about these rocks and wonder both about their past and their future. Are these remains destined to rest patiently on the shelves in an archive, after being prodded, tested, analyzed, numbered, and catalogued? Will someone actually try to put Humpty Dumpty back together again, reformulate the powdery dust into stone, and if so, to what end? Or, might an artist lovingly refashion a lump of broken rock into a broken book or into a small Buddha figure (magical, like Vasilisa's doll) with a team of budding artisans learning old trades, allowing the stone that is chipped away to return to the dusty ground? Might the broken rock like to be caressed and polished, like the stone plugs from Beuys's *The End of the Twentieth Century*, and tucked into bed "with felt and clay, so that they wouldn't hurt as much and stay warm"?[497] What kind of future would the rock shard want, what kind of history would it want?

Fig. 4.12

Princesses

The oldest objects at dOCUMENTA (13) were the so-called Bactrian Princesses. These delicate figurines were roughly four to six inches high, and constructed of carefully carved chlorite, steatite, white limestone, and lapis lazuli. Fragile, composite creatures, their various figural pieces have been held together only by gravity since the late third or early second millennia B.C.E.[498] Wavy ripples of lines incised into the

[497] Antliff, *Joseph Beuys*, 136.

[498] *dOCUMENTA (13) Catalog: The Guidebook 3/3* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 25.

greenish-blue and mottled pink rock texture the soft geometry of the figures' dresses, while the princesses' arms and faces are milky and smooth. Sophisticated swirls of dark sculpted hair rest atop their elegant calcite foreheads. These Central Asian stone princesses, native to northern Afghanistan, are simultaneously as refined and tough as any good fairy tale princess. Fragile, they could fit in the palm of your hand, and threaten to fall to pieces with the slightest jostle. Durable, they have weathered millennia beautifully preserved; the carved lines that pattern their clothing with waves, chevrons, and basket weaves have been burnished by unknowable fingertips that caressed them lovingly, yet they are still sure and clear, both of a particular time and timeless. *A stone in the stream of history, around which it is possible to see the waters froth*.[499]

Located in the rotunda of the Museum Fridericianum, which was nicknamed "the Brain," the diminutive stone figurines sat calmly in a glass vitrine. Readable from within the Brain on a glass wall that separated this space from the rest of the museum was *THE MIDDLE OF THE MIDDLE OF THE MIDDLE OF* (2012), the title and text of Lawrence Weiner's orienting contribution. This innermost sanctum, this rotund and pregnant apse, this womb chamber, this *garba griha*, this driving motor of dOCUMENTA (13), this brain of the exhibition contained many curiosities. A photograph of the wartime photographer Lee Miller in Hitler's bathtub on April 30, 1945, posing with a washcloth in his Berlin apartment as, unbeknownst to her while bathing, Hitler and Eva Braun prepared to commit suicide that day. Eva Braun's perfume flacon and powder compact, which Miller took with her as a memento. Man Ray's metronome with Miller's eye glued to its pendulum, called *Object to be Destroyed/Object of*

[499] Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses.*

Destruction/Indestructible Object (1932). A sculpture by Sam Durant of a bag of marble powder, made from a block of Carrara marble, *Calcium Carbonate (ideas spring from deeds and not the other way around)* (2011). A drawing by Gustav Metzger, lovely even though it was damaged such that its original form is unrecognizable, its smudges reflecting the way in which it was folded and stored in a suitcase left in damp conditions for roughly sixty years.

The Bactrian Princesses sat placidly among the numerous other flashy objects in the Brain, but served as an anchor for the entire exhibition. These little ladies, constructed of various different minerals, were the product of hybridization. Not only are they materially heterogeneous, they were created by a hybrid culture – one that gained its strength and prosperity from international commerce and exchange between east and west. These petite statuettes are perhaps the heroines of the fairy tale that encircled dOCUMENTA (13), the fairy tale through which Mariam Ghani's ladies traverse the corridors of the Museum Fridericianum and the Dar ul-Aman.

As I come to the close of this chapter, and the close of this dissertation, I must loop around to my original question, that is, what is the fairy tale time of Mariam Ghani? Do fairy tales have a particular relationship to temporality, and does *A Brief History of Collapses* work to tease out that relationship? Fairy tale time is always enchanted time, preposterous and impossible. Fairy tale time skips and stops, it loops back on itself and repeats, and its repetitions are inscribed with the palimpsests of previous iterations. Perhaps the fairy tale time of Mariam Ghani is a bit like film, the film that is unreeled across the streets of Kabul, the film that may either be seen as a static frame or be spun

into motion. Just as many fairy tales originate from an actual historical tragedy, one might also read the indexical scars of previous acts of violence – scratches, burns, splices – upon the celluloid, upon the stones, upon the books, and upon the buildings.

I end this dissertation with destroyed buildings because they stand as emblems for the project of history itself, the ways in which the past is marked by bullets and collapsing ceilings, and how stories get rebuilt and repurposed for new narrative, ideological, and hegemonic goals. If Ghani is an artist who seeks out the unquiet ghosts who traverse collapsed buildings to tell their stories, and Rakowitz wants to learn how to build ruins, I have attempted to write not only a history of ruins, but understand how history itself is a ruin — a ruin that is still in the process of evolving into that which may be yet. While one catastrophe keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage at the feet of Benjamin's Angel of History, however, in the corners of the ruin, filled with rubble and piles of debris, there is perhaps a spider who is hard at work, and there is still the space of the maybe, of that which is the opposite of the known.

Fig. 0.1. Tue Greenfort, *The Wordly House*, dOCUMENTA(13), Kassel, 2012. Photo: Nils Klinger.

Fig. 0.2. Tue Greenfort, *The Wordly House*, dOCUMENTA(13), Kassel, 2012. Photo: Nils Klinger.

Fig. 0.3. Tue Greenfort, *The Wordly House*, dOCUMENTA(13), Kassel, 2012. Photo: Nils Klinger.

Fig. 0.4. Logo for Documenta IX, 1992.

Fig. 0.5. Frank C. Papé, "La Reine Pédauque." Anatole France, *At the Sign of the Reine Pédauque* (Plymouth: William Brendon & Son, 1928).

Fig. 0.6. Frontispiece to Perrault's collection of *Contes de ma mère l'oye*, 1697.

Fig. 0.7. Ludwig Richter, *Märchenmütterchen*, in Carl and Theodor Colshorn's anthology of fairy tales and legends, 1854.

Fig. 0.8. Ludwig Emil Grimm, "Dorothea Viehmann" from Wilhelm and Jakob Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, 2nd edition. 1819.

Fig. 0.9. Kiki Smith, *Rapture*, 2001.

Fig. 0.10. Paul Klee, *Angelus Novus*, 1920.

Fig. 1.1. Louise Bourgeois with *Spider IV*, 1996.

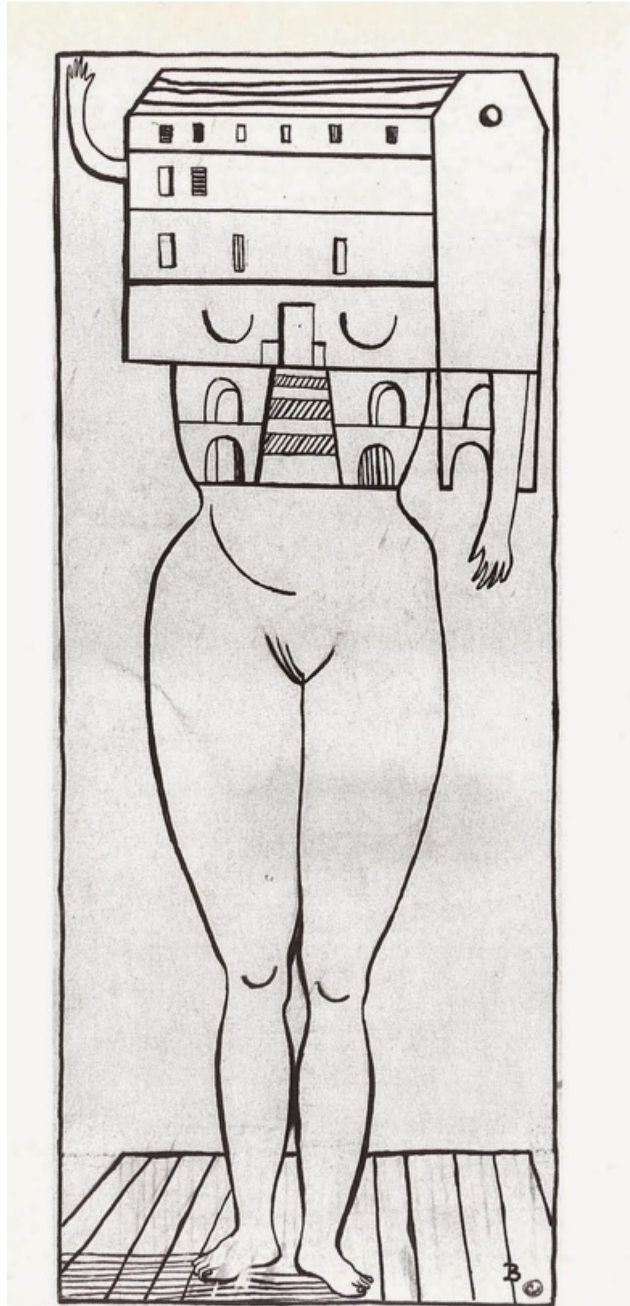


Fig. 1.2 Louise Bourgeois, *Femme Maison*, 1947.

Fig. 1.3. Louise Bourgeois, *Maman*, 1999.

Fig. 1.4. Louise Bourgeois, *Maman* (detail of egg sac), 1999.

Fig. 1.5. Louise Bourgeois, *Precious Liquids* (exterior), 1992.

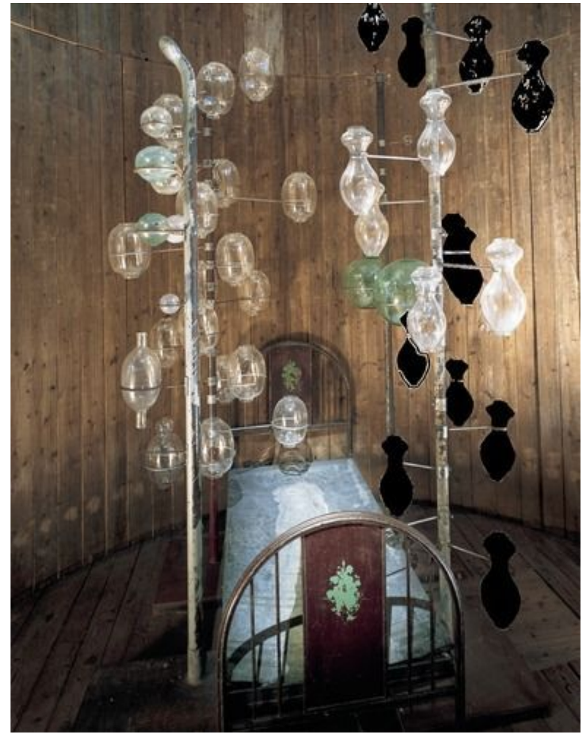


Fig. 1.6. Louise Bourgeois, *Precious Liquids* (interior views), 1992.

Fig. 1.7. Louise Bourgeois, *Spider*, 1997.

Fig. 1.8. Diego Velázquez, *The Spinners, or The Fable of Arachne*, ca. 1657.

Fig. 1.9. Otto Freundlich, *Der Neue Mensch*, cover of *Entartete Kunst* exhibition guide, 1937.

Fig. 1.10. Float with a model of the *Haus der Deutschen Kunst*, *Tag der Deutschen Kunst*, 1937, Munich, Germany.

Fig. 1.11. Haus der Deutschen Kunst, *Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung*, 1937.

Fig. 1.12. People queued for the *Entartete Kunst* show, Munich, Germany, 1937

Fig. 1.13. Exhibition postcard for *Entartete Kunst* featuring *Jesus Christ* by Prof. Gies, 1937.

Fig. 1.14. Wilhelm Lehmbruck, *Kneeling Woman* (1911), at *Entartete Kunst* (1937).

Fig. 1.15. Wilhelm Lehmbruck, *Kneeling Woman* (1911), at the New York Armory Show (1913).

Fig. 1.16. Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Hoffmann, Wolfgang Willrich, Walter Hansen, and Adolf Ziegler visit *Entartete Kunst*, July 16, 1937. They examine the Dada wall, which features paintings by Kandinsky, Klee, and Schwitters.

Ein sehr aufschlußreicher

rassischer Querschnitt

Man beachte besonders auch die unten stehenden drei Malerbildnisse. Es sind von links nach rechts: Der Maler Morgner, gesehen von sich selbst. Der Maler Radziwill, gesehen von Otto Dix. Der Maler Schlemmer, gesehen von E. L. Kirchner.

Figs. 1.17 and 1.18. Pages from the *Entartete Kunst* catalogue, 1937.

Bundesgartenschau / National Garden Festival 1955

Image 1.19. *Bundesgartenschau*, Kassel, 1955.

Fig. 1.20. Signage in front of the Museum Fridericianum at documenta, Kassel, Germany, 1955.

Fig. 1.21. Museum Fridericianum with German cars and national flags during the first documenta. Photograph by: Carl Eberth, 1955.

Fig. 1.22. Documenta 1, Hall of Sculpture, featuring Henry Moore's *King and Queen* (1953), 1955.

© 2007 documenta Archiv

Fig. 1.23. Installation View of Ground Floor during the first documenta. Photograph by: Günther Becker.

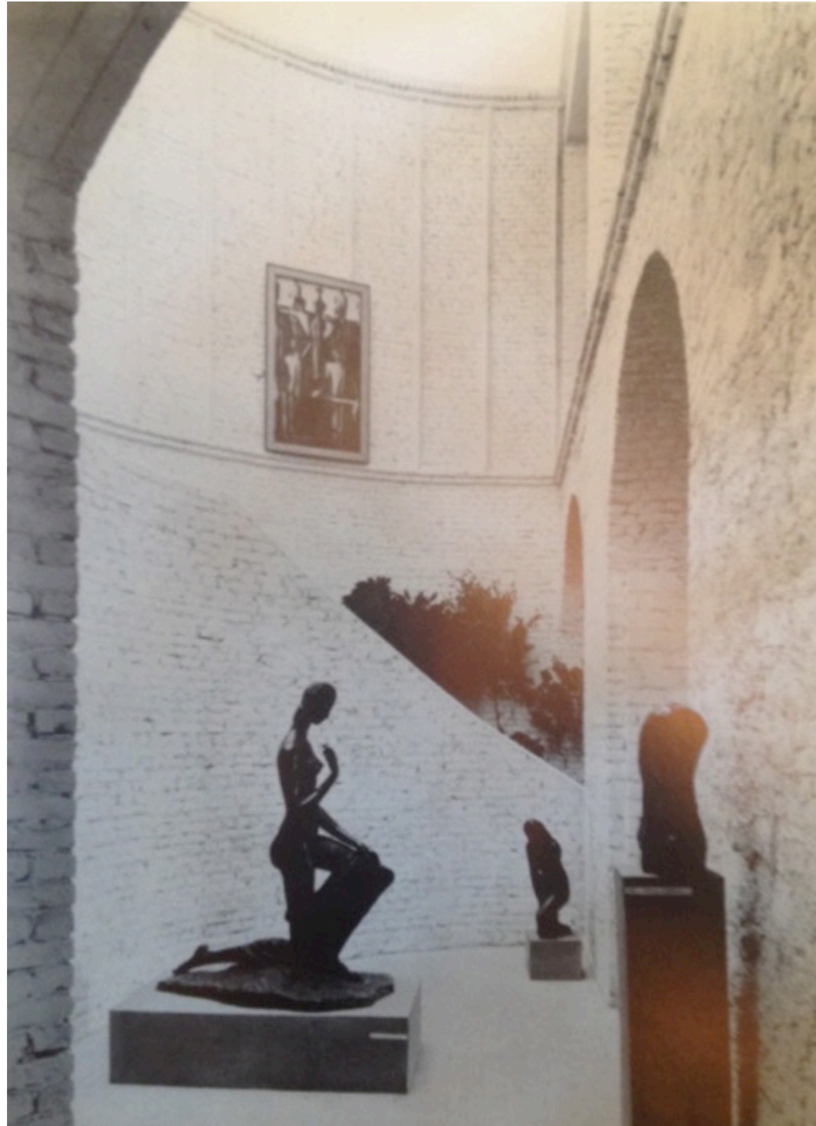


Fig. 1.24. Wilhelm Lehmbruck, *Kneeling Woman* (1911), in the rotunda of the Fridericianum, documenta 1, 1955.

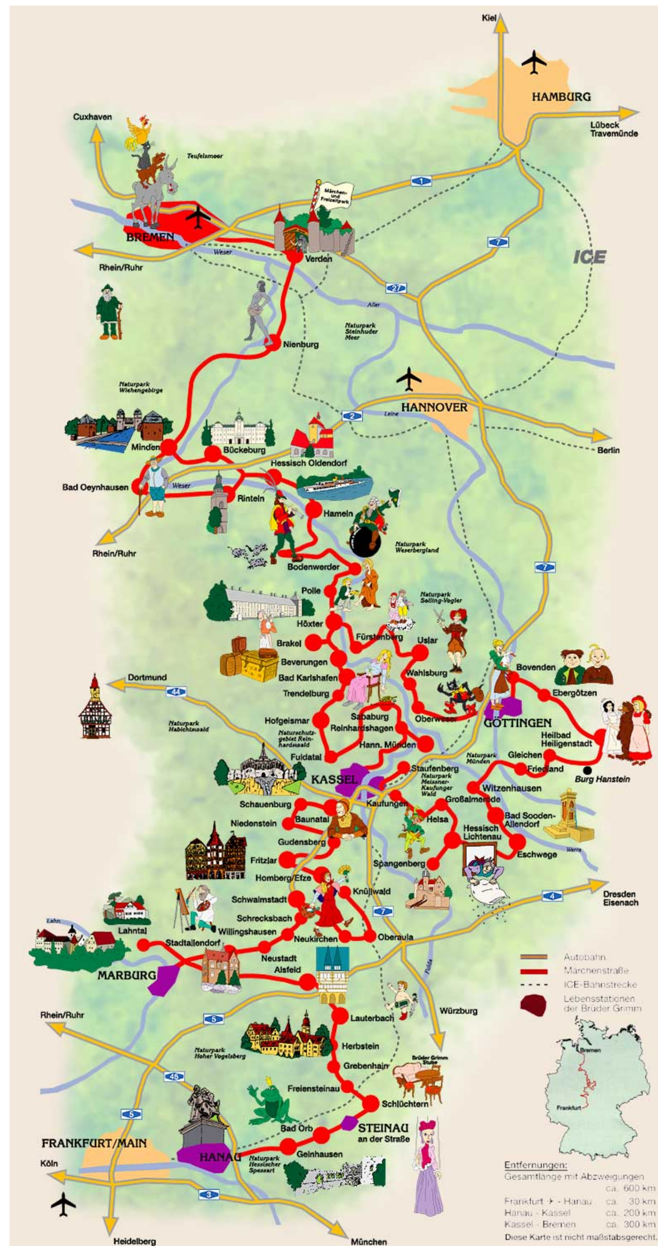


Fig. 1.25. The Fairy Tale Road.

Fig. 1.26. Arthur Rackham, “The Jew in the Brambles,” 1900.

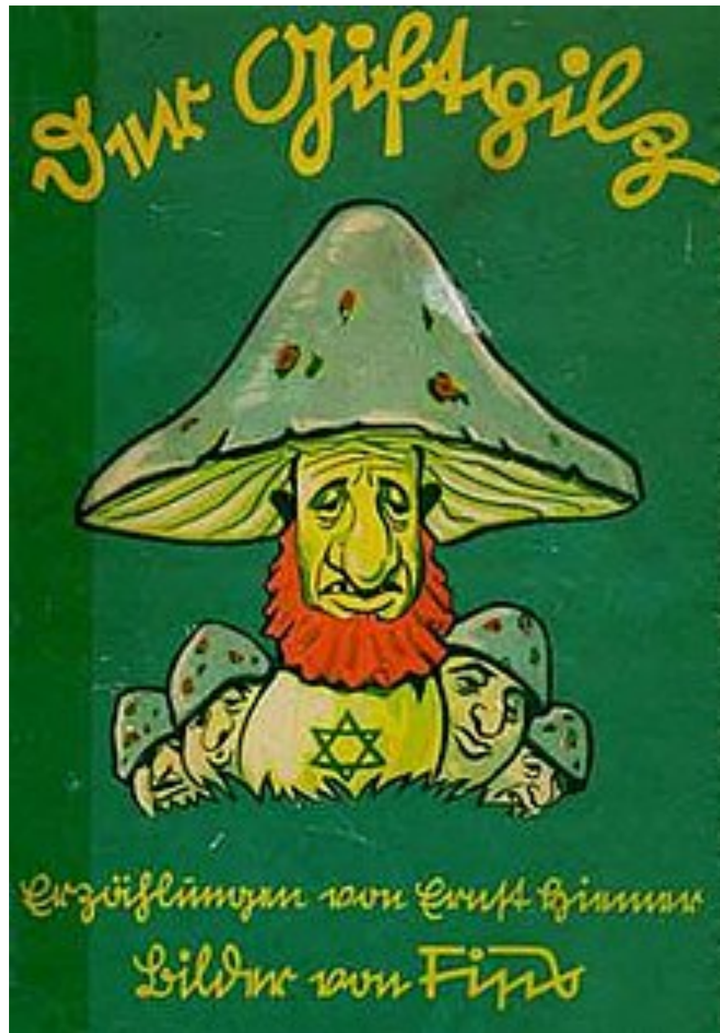


Fig. 1.27 Ernst Hiemer, *Der Giftpilz*, Philipp Rupprecht, illustrator, 1938.

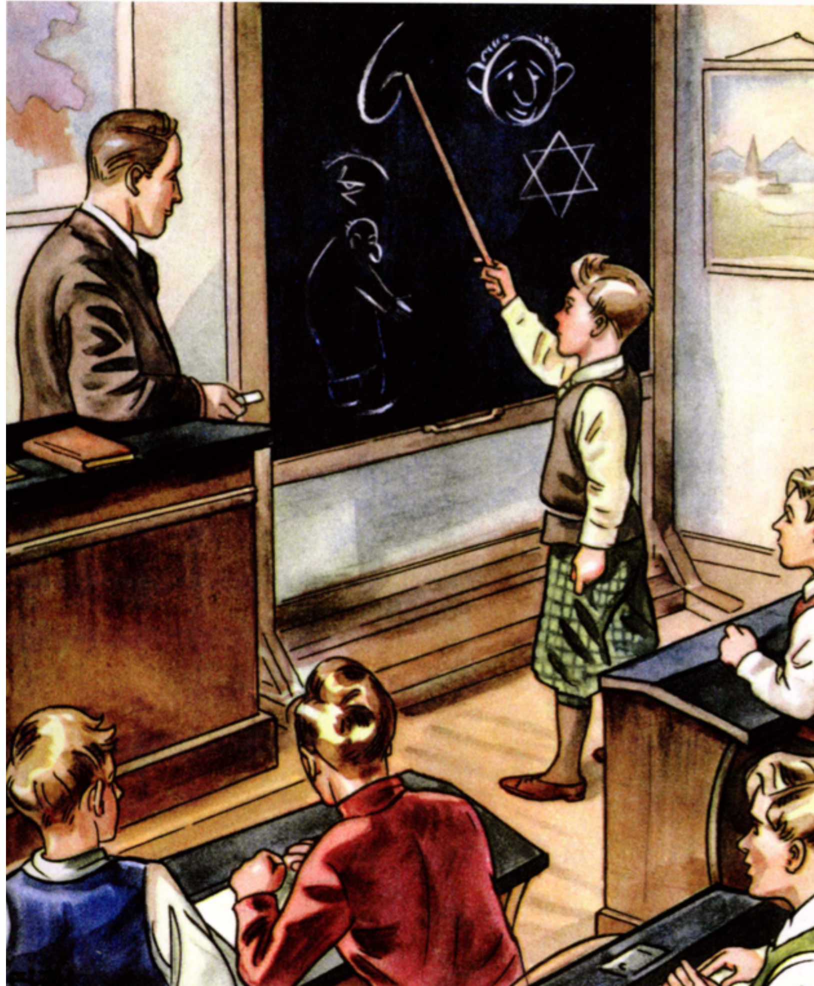


Fig. 1.28. "How to Tell a Jew," in *Der Giftpilz*. Philipp Rupprecht, illustrator, 1938.

Fig. 1.29. Arthur Rackham, *Hansel and Gretel*, 1909.

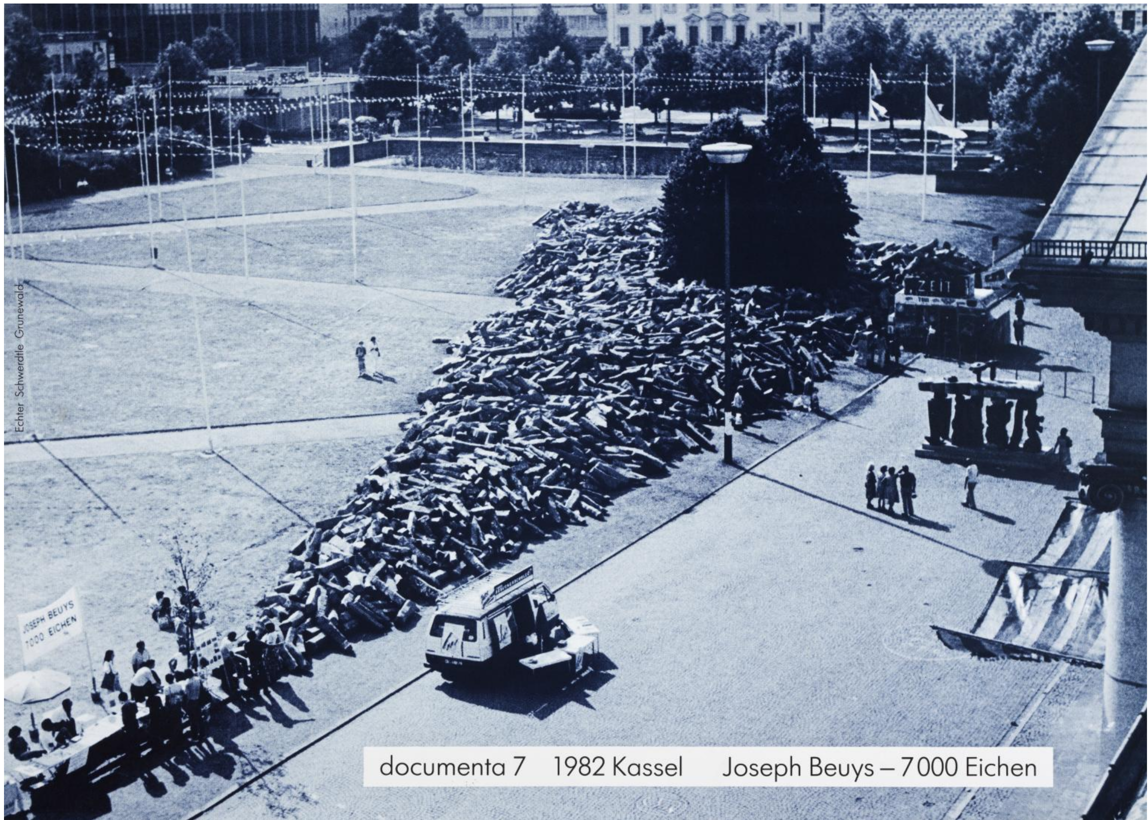


Fig. 2.1. Joseph Beuys, *7000 Oaks*, 1982.

Fig. 2.2. The Fridericianum in Kassel after the Allied air raids of September 8 and 9, 1941.

Fig. 2.3. Joseph Beuys planting an oak tree in front of the Museum Fridericianum, *7000 Oaks*, 1982.

Fig. 2.4. View of basalt stele, *7000 Oaks*, on the Friedrichsplatz.

Fig. 2.5. Georges Angeli, “Inmates’ laundry and “Goethe Oak,” June 1944. Photo taken secretly by the French inmate Georges Angeli.

Fig. 2.6. The Stump of the Goethe Oak, Buchenwald.

Fig. 2.7. Karl Albiker, *Der heilige Sebastian* (St. Sebastian), ca. 1920.
Fig. 2.8. Käthe Kollwitz, *Gedenkblatt für Karl Liebknecht* (Memorial Sheet for Karl Liebknecht), 1919.

Fig. 2.9. Korbinian Aigner, *Six images of different fruits (apples)*, ca. 1913-1960.

Fig. 2.10. Photograph taken immediately after the departure of the Germans from Auschwitz-Birkenau. Sacks of human hair packed for dispatch to Germany. Photo credit: Glowna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu. USHMM Photo Archives.

Fig. 2.11. Joseph Beuys, *Plight*, 1985

Fig. 2.12. Nazi *Totenkopfring*

Fig. 2.13. Book Seal of Adolf Hitler, featuring the swastika, eagle, oak branch, and wreath.

Fig. 2.14. Top: 1 Deutsche Mark, 1950-2001
Bottom: 50 pfennigs, 1949-2001

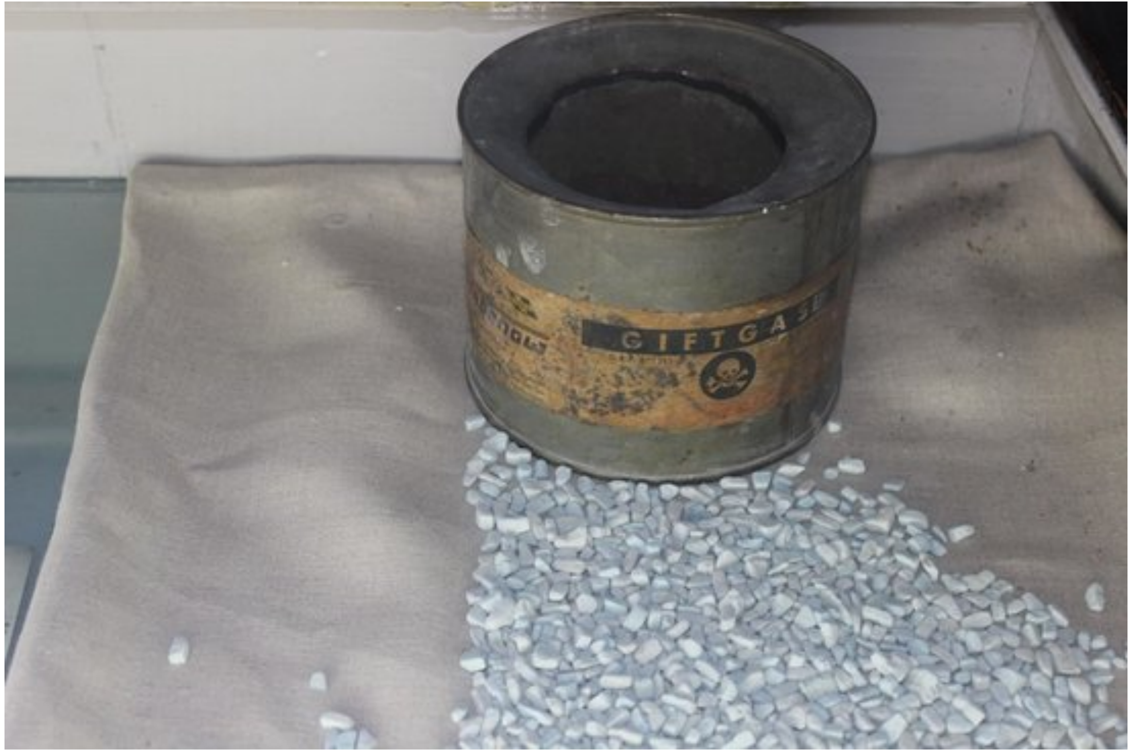


Fig. 2.15. Zyklon B. National Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Fig. 2.16. Joseph, Beuys, *The End of the Twentieth Century*, 1983-5.

Fig. 2.17. Students plant a tree as part of the *7000 Oaks* project, coordinated by independent curator Todd Bockly, in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. October 4, 1998. Photo: Walker Art Center Archives.

Fig. 2.18. Sam Durant, *Scaffold*, 2012. At dOCUMENTA (13), in the Karlsaue.

Fig. 2.19. Sam Durant, *Scaffold*, Walker Sculpture Garden, Minneapolis, MN. Photo: Jim Mone, AP Images.

Fig. 3.1. Kassel-Wilhelmshöhe, Hercules with cascades, photochrome print, ca. 1900. Public domain.

Fig. 3.2. Schloß Wilhelmshöhe and Kassel, as seen from the Herkules Oktagon, ca. 2010.

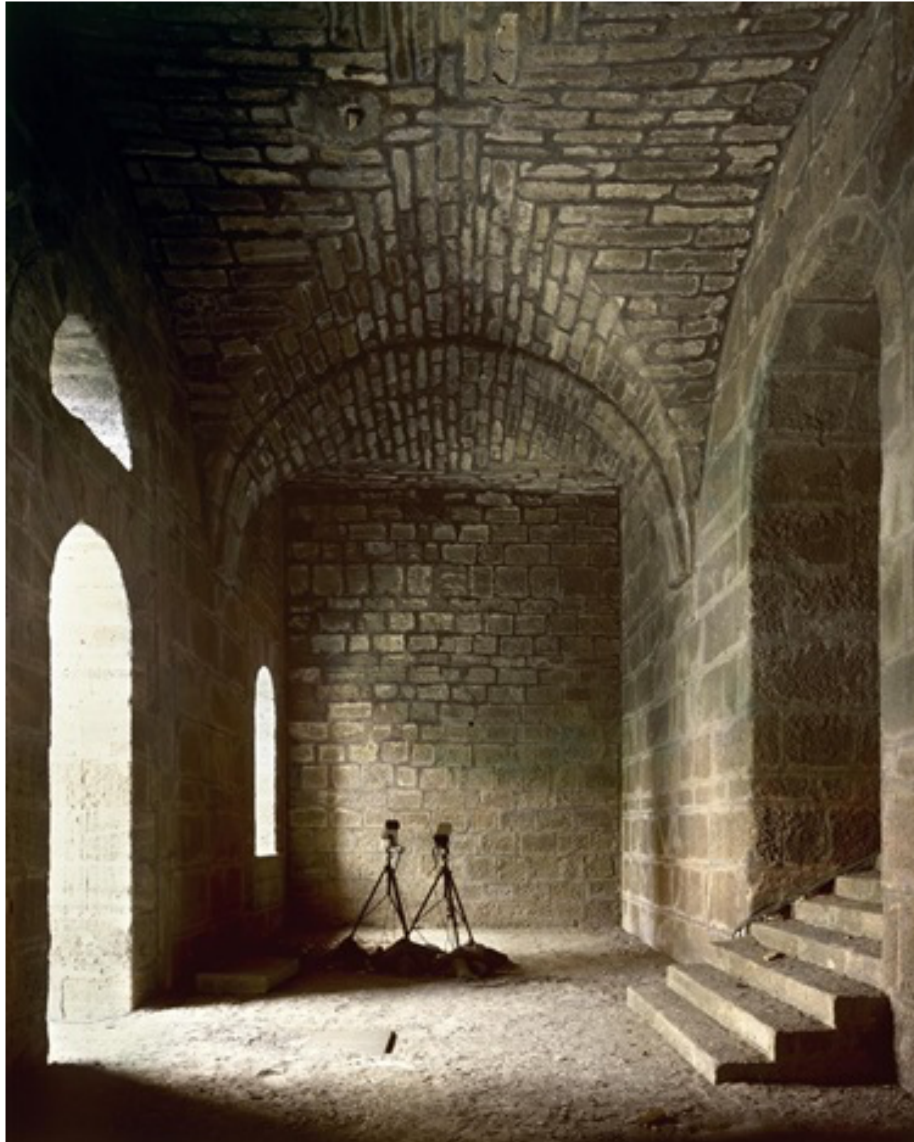


Fig. 3.3. Stan Douglas, *Suspiria: Camera 1 and 2*, 2002.

Fig. 3.4. Stan Douglas, *Suspiria (video* still), 2003, Vancouver Art Gallery.

Fig. 3.5. Johann Jakob Anthoni, *Herkules*, ca. 1717. Herkules Oktagon, Kassel, Germany.

Fig. 3.6. Stan Douglas, Else in *Suspiria*, 2002.

Fig. 3.7. Stan Douglas, *Suspiria* (instillation view), 2002.

Fig 3.8. Diane Arbus, *Identical Twins, Roselle, New Jersey*, 1967.
Fig. 3.9. Stanley Kubrick, video still from *The Shining*, 1980.

Fig. 3.10. Film Still from Dario Argento's *Suspiria*, 1977.

Fig. 3.11. Film still featuring wall décor based on M. C. Escher's *Study of Regular Division of the Place with Fish and Birds* (1938), from Argento's *Suspiria*, 1977.

Fig. 3.12. Film Still from Dario Argento's *Suspiria*, 1977.

Fig. 3.13. Film Still from Dario Argento's *Suspiria*, 1977.

Fig. 3.14. Eugène Atget, *Cabaret de L'Enfer, boulevard de Clichy 53*, 1910.

Fig. 3.15. Hans Bellmer, *La Poupée*, 1936.

Fig. 3.16. Frontispiece and decorative title page of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, illustrated by Ludwig Emil Grimm, 1819.

Fig. 3.17. Sir John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, 1852.

Fig. 3.18. Stan Douglas, Else in *Suspiria*, 2002.

Fig. 3.19. Lawrence Weiner, *Bits & Pieces Put Together to Present a Semblance of a Whole*, 1991.

Fig. 3.20. Film Still from Dario Argento's *Suspiria*, 1977.

Fig. 3.21. Graffitied wall in *Suspiria*, Herkules Oktagon, Kassel, 2002.

Fig. 22. Stan Douglas, *Panopticon, Isla de Pinos/Isla de la Juventud*, from *Cuba Photos (2004-2005)*, 2005.

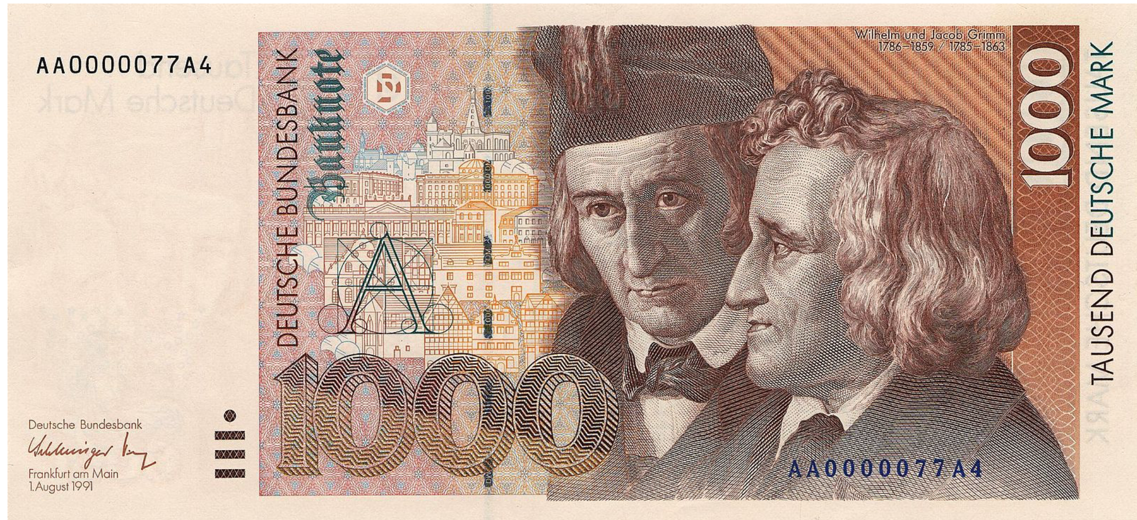


Fig. 3.23. The now-obsolete 1,000 Deutsche Mark Note, which features Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm, as well as the Herkules Octagon and monument (the triangular spire to the left of Wilhelm's hat, directly left of the uppermost metallic strip), 1991.

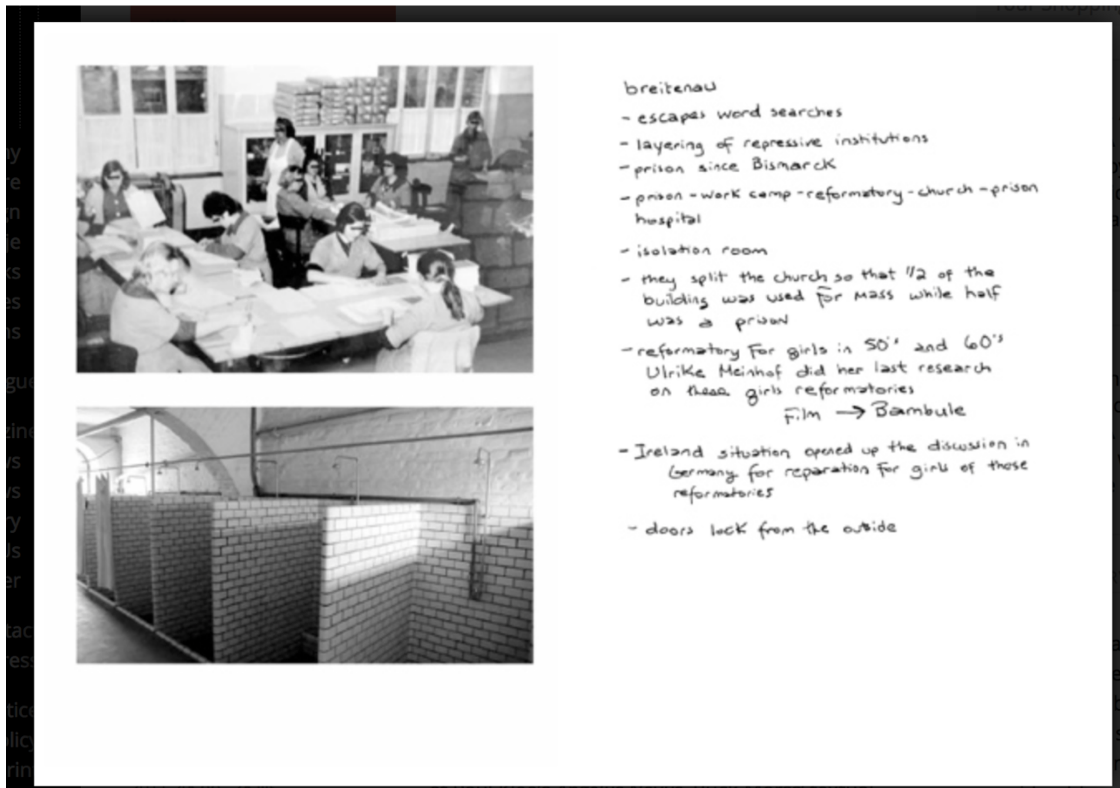


Fig. 3.24. Emily Jacir, page from “No. 004,” *dOCUMENTA (13): 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts*, 2011.

Fig. 3.25. Stan Douglas, *Der Sandmann* (video still, 4:00), 1995.

Fig. 3.26. Stan Douglas, *Der Sandmann* (video still, 1.20 min), 1995.
The nearly-imperceptible dividing line between videos bisects Nathanael and his face; a slightly darker shadow may be seen above his head.

Fig. 3.27. Stan Douglas, *Der Sandmann* (video still, 2.33 min.), 1995.

Fig. 3.28. Stan Douglas, *Der Sandmann* (video still, 7:30 min.), 1995.

Fig. 3.29. Philippe Curtius, *Sleeping Beauty (Madame du Berry)*, 1765

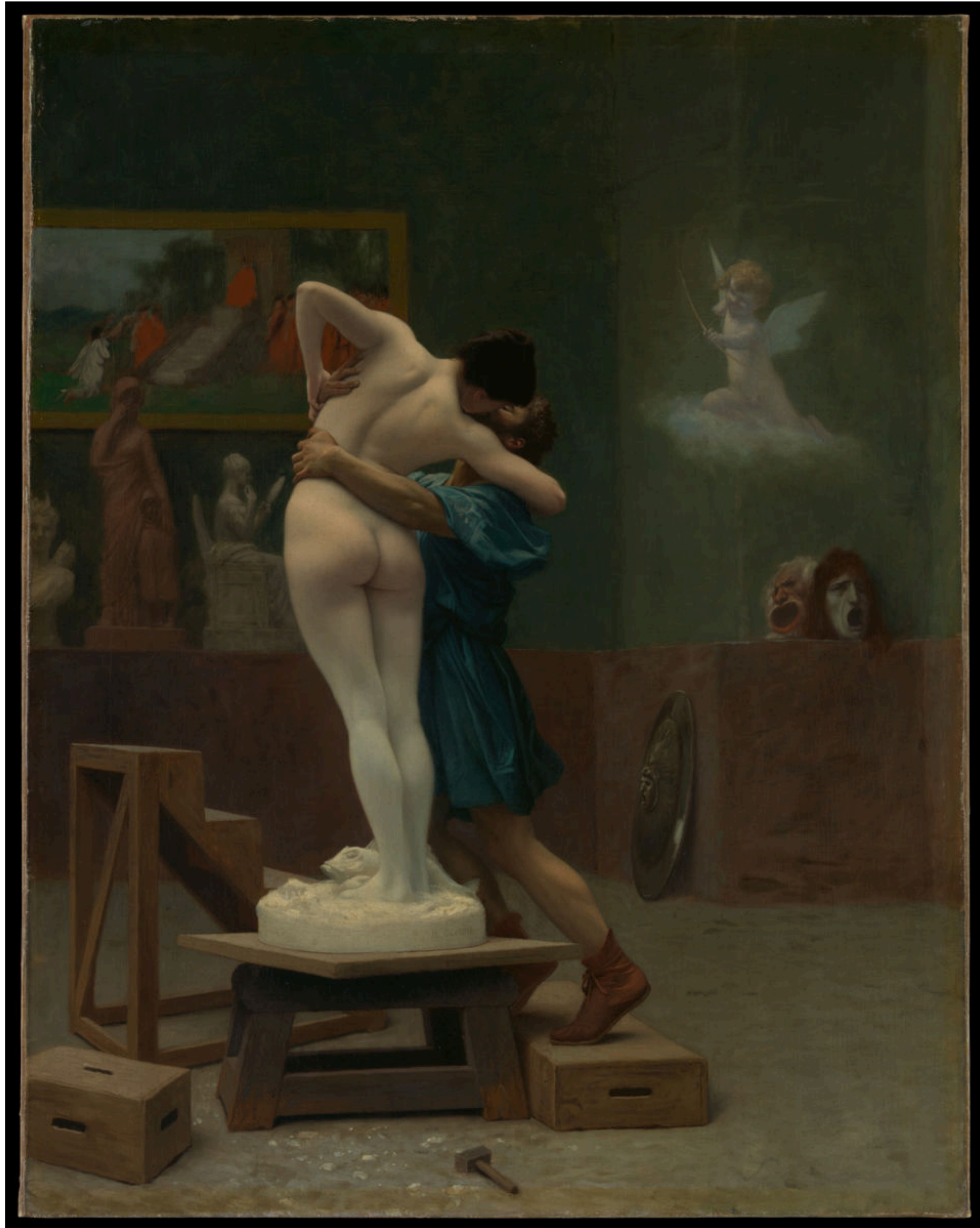


Fig. 3.30. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Pygmalion and Galatea*, 1890.

Fig. 4.1. Mariam Ghani, *A Brief History of Collapses* (2011-2012), installation view, dOCUMENTA (13), 2012.

Fig. 4.2. The Fridericianum after air raids, Kassel, 1943.

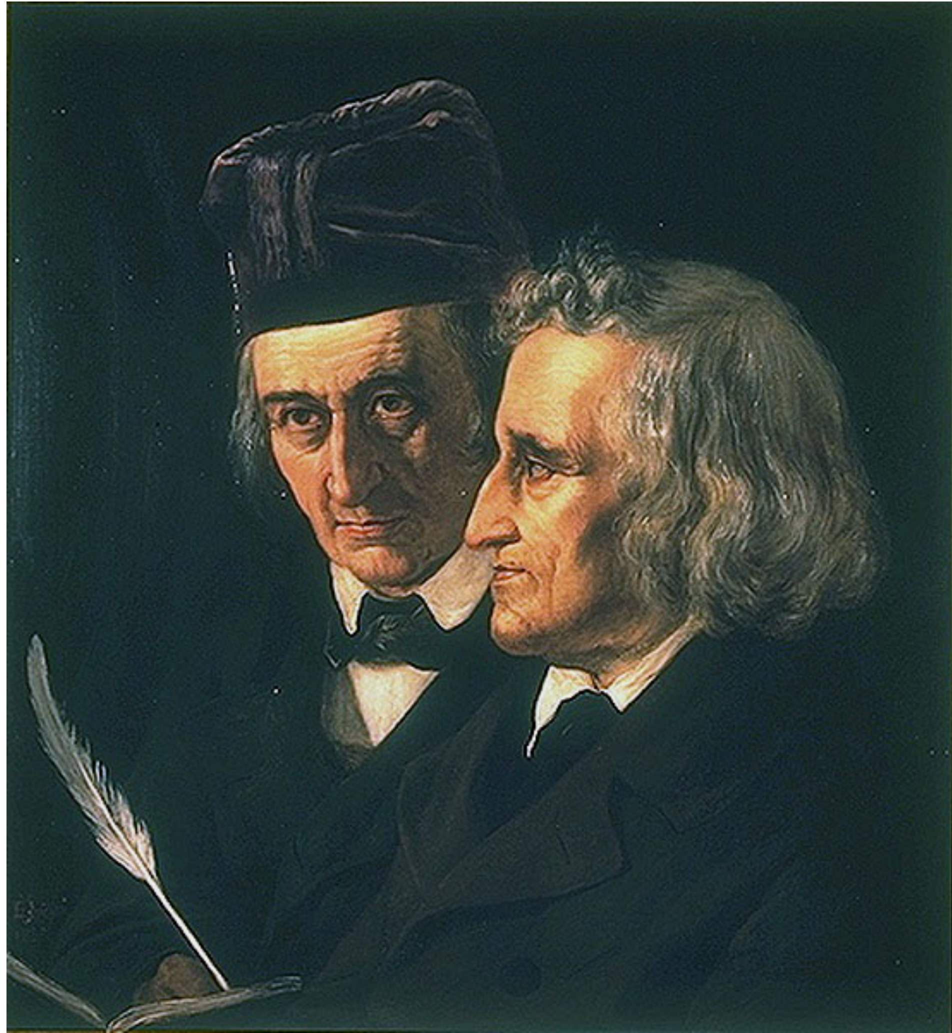


Fig. 4.3. Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann, *Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm*, 1855.

Fig. 4.4. Sanja Ivekovic, *Poppy Field*, 2007. Photo, Jens Ziehe.

214 | dOCUMENTA (13) | Catalog

№029

Mariam & Ashraf Ghani
*Afghanistan: A Lexicon**

(*selective; associative; may include myth, speculation, and rumor as well as facts)

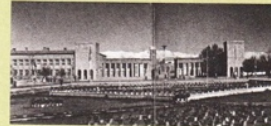
Amanullah

Amanullah ruled Afghanistan from 1919 to 1929, first as amir and then, after he changed his own title, as king. During his brief reign, Amanullah launched an ambitious program of modernization from above, which was cut off prematurely by a revolt from below. After inheriting autocratic power built through immense repression by his grandfather Abdur Rahman, who had reigned from 1880 to 1901, and his father, Habibullah, who had ruled from 1901 to 1919, he attempted to turn that power toward transforming the organization of both state and society. His many reforms included promulgating rule of law through Afghanistan's first constitution and the wide-ranging regulations of the *nizamnamah*; investing in education through literacy programs, study abroad, and the building of primary, secondary, and technical schools; promoting unveiling and the end of purdah (the separation of women from society); encouraging intellectual exchange by fostering an active press, literary societies, and archaeological missions; transforming the traditional institution of the *Loya Jirga*, or Grand Council, into a mechanism for public consultation; winning Afghanistan's independence from Britain, and forging new relationships with Europe and the Soviet Union; and large-scale urban planning, represented in theory by the regulations for Laghman, Paghman, and Dar ul-Aman and in practice by the partial completion of the "new city" of Dar ul-Aman, just to the west of Kabul.

While he accomplished a remarkable amount during his ten years in power, Amanullah did not succeed in permanently changing Afghanistan, since his ultimate failure to forge a broad political consensus for his reforms left him vulnerable to rural rebellion.

After returning from a prolonged European tour, he attempt
speed up modernization by arguing for more radical reforms
marathon speech at a 1928 *Loya Jirga*, after which his previous
of support among the elite was fractured, fragmented, and
weakened beyond repair. In 1929, a relatively minor revolt
sibly fomented by British agents and factions of the divided
forced Amanullah out of the capital and ultimately into exile,
put into power a new dynasty that reversed many of his most
novative initiatives. Amanullah spent the rest of his life in
where he brooded over what had gone wrong. Both his
and his failures have set the pattern for successive generation
Afghan modernizers, who have returned again and again
unfinished project, only to succumb to their own blind spots
collapse in their own ways.

Arg



In the revolt of 1929, much of the fighting took place around the
the palace built by Amanullah's grandfather Abdur Rahman
the fall of the Bala Hissar. When Habibullah Kalakani and his
took Kabul from Amanullah and when Habibullah was overth
scant months later, by Nadir Khan and his Musahiban brothers,
scenes of conflict centered around the Arg. Amanullah's new
Dar ul-Aman and its new royal palace were (perhaps because
were situated outside the city center) left out of the conflict
When Nadir became the new king, Amanullah's plans to move
the new city and the never-quite-completed Tajbeg, or Queen's
ace, were scrapped, and the royal family retreated behind the
and gates of the Arg. Today, the president occupies the Arg,
gates are further reinforced by a system of concrete blocks and
ricades, checkpoints, and scanners. The Arg is in one of conte
rary Kabul's no-photo zones, the military and diplomatic
where no camera can go, so we must look at it instead as it
the 1960s, when Zahir Shah was king.

Fig. 4.5. Page from Mariam and Ashraf Ghani's "Afghanistan: A Lexicon," in *dOCUMENTA (13): Catalog 1/3, The Book of Books.*

Fig. 4.6. The Dar ul-Aman Palace, Kabul, Afghanistan. Kabul Chamber of Commerce.

Die 7 km lange Eisenbahn zwischen Kabul und Darul-Aman war stark überfüllt.

Fig. 4.7. “Die 7 km lange Eisenbahn zwischen Kabul und Darul-Aman war stark überfüllt.” (The 7km-long train between Kabul and Dar ul-Aman was completely packed.) *UHU*. February, 1930.

Fig. 4.8. Francis Alÿs, *Reel-Unreel* (film still), 2012.

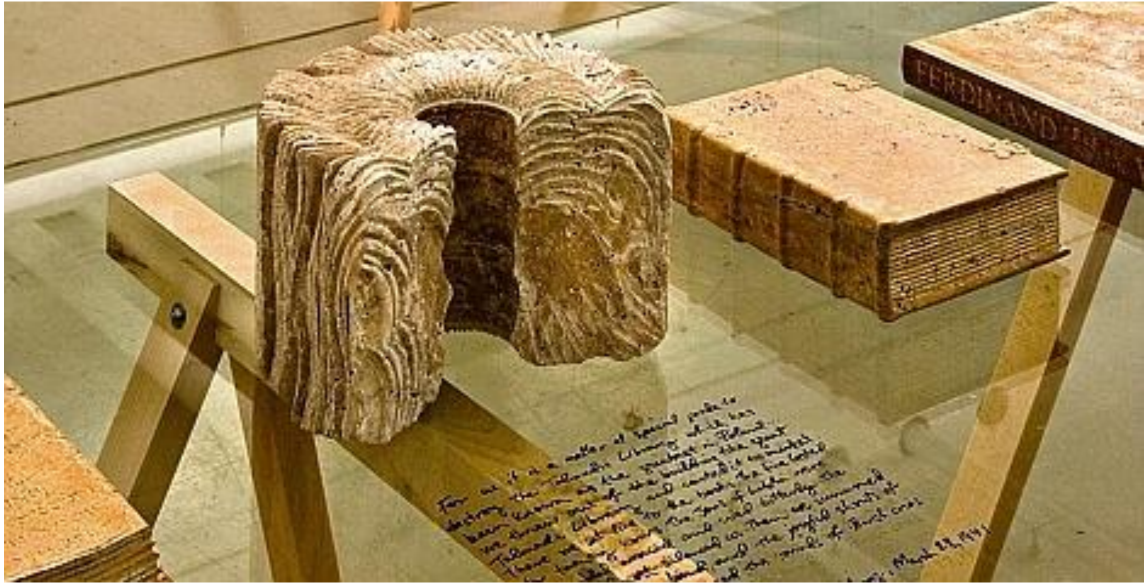


Fig. 4.9. Michael Rakowitz, *What Dust May Rise?*, 2012

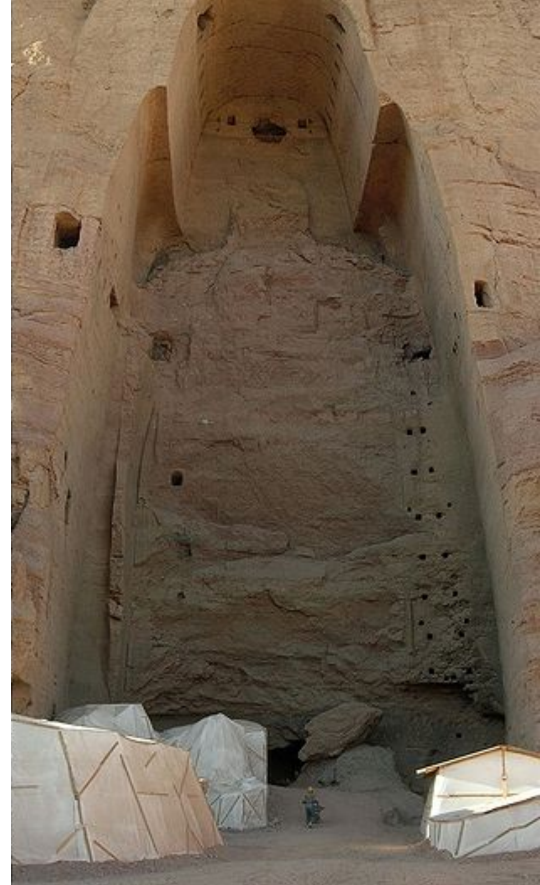


Fig. 4.10. Western Bamiyan Buddha, Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan. Pre-2001.
Fig. 4.11: Western Buddha niche after it was demolished on March 12, 2001.

Fig. 4.11. Bactrian Princess, ca. 2,000 BCE, modern-day northern Afghanistan.

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