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ONCE: THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE

While the land of Once appears to have had a fascinating and unusual history, what we know of it is based on hearsay. No actual record names the original travellers who visited Once so many centuries ago, and then returned to Europe with reports of what they heard and saw there. Nevertheless, we can approach the extant records of these hearsay reports with some confidence. In the first place, those who passed on the original information about Once by word of mouth were quite obviously fascinated with their subject, and we must assume that they preserved what they heard with the loving accuracy of devotees. Furthermore, the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm developed a scholarly interest in Once just at that time when the reports of the original visitors had begun to fade from memory. The records the Grimms carefully gathered and compiled in that monumental document called *Kinder- und Hausmarchen* constitute our only source of trustworthy information about this storied land.

So buried in the mists of antiquity is Once that most people nowadays think of it as a legendary place--an Atlantis or Eldorado, a land of fairy tales and legends. The time has come for modern scholarship to cut through the vapid, nostalgic daydreaming that beclouds serious study of Once. The following, therefore, is a crude beginning, a statistical analysis of the records gathered by the brothers Grimm, in an attempt to establish the geographical, demographic, and sociological characteristics of Once.

The raw data analysed in this study were gathered from *Grimm's Tales for Young and Old*, the translation of the Grimm brothers' *Kinder- und Hausmarchen* by Ralph Manheim.

Unfortunately, the Grimms' focus was historical, so the matters that concern us in this study are reported only incidentally; and, as in any pioneering study of a complex matter, there may be errors in the recording and processing of the data. I apologize in advance for any such errors, and encourage other researchers to correct any false impressions I may have created here.

i. Topography

Once is a vast land; locations within it can be as much as thousands of miles apart (329). Yet it is not a land of great topographical variety, and in fact, the most noteworthy aspect of the Grimms' records, gathered from a variety of sources, is their single-minded unanimity about the homogeneous nature of the countryside. The most distinctive feature of Once is its forests. They are no fewer than eighty-seven forests mentioned in the 201 tales and ten legends of the Manheim translation, and readers of these documents will quickly realize that few human dwelling-places are more than a short walk from a forest. In fact, even major castles and large towns exist in close contiguity to forests.

The forests are dense and dark. In a typical report, one of the Grimms' informants suggests that "not a ray of sunshine found its way through the dense leaves" (368), and another speaks of a typical spot, "a dark forest . . . where from year's end to year's end nobody ever went" (520). The darkness of the forests promotes the growth of moss, reported four times; on the other hand, there is at least one report of a spot in the forest where brightly coloured flowers grow, and in season strawberries can be found.

As for the makeup of these dense woods, oak, mentioned fourteen times, predominates. Other common trees are the hazel, mentioned six times, and the lime or linden, mentioned four times. More rare are aspens and walnuts, each mentioned twice, and there is the occasional beech or birch. While quite common, willows, mentioned six times, seem to grow primarily in swampy and marshy spots. Some trees have been cultivated for

their fruit: we know of the existence of at least eight apple trees, three pears and two cherries; there is also one Tree of Life in a remote garden, the apples of which are sought by the citizens of Once for their healing powers. That such fruit-bearers are either indigenous to Once or adaptable to its climate is suggested by a report of wild apple and pear trees.

While the forest of Once is primarily deciduous, there are two mentions of pine, one of fir, and one of juniper. Nevertheless, the climate seems not to promote the growth of such northern vegetation; it is typical of the temperate zone, and quite salubrious. There are four distinct seasons. While snow is frequent in winter, it rarely gets extremely cold, and the sun in summer is hot, making the inhabitants grateful for the density of their forests. It rains infrequently, but copiously; on one of the six occasions when rain is reported it rains buckets (424), and on another it rains so hard that it makes a hole in a man's skull (491). But there are few storms, and if there is wind at all, it tends to be gentle. Only in the mountain heights is there always a harsh wind (622).

There is no deficiency of water in Once. There are three streams and eleven brooks, at least two of them running through palace gardens. There are also eleven rivers, including the "mossy, deep, and tranquil" Moselle (408), the characteristics of which seem to be quite different from the narrow, winding Moselle of our own Germany. There are four lakes, seven ponds, a marsh and a swamp; at least seven springs can be found in the forest, and the inhabitants have dug at least fifteen wells, apparently with no difficulty. Perhaps the general availability of water accounts for the even distribution of the population. The country also has access to a large sea, mentioned twelve times.

As well as being heavily forested, the characteristic landscape of Once is rugged and mountainous. One need not go far from any civilized spot to find a mountain or a mountain pass. Of the twenty-five mountains reported, most can be reached quickly from centres of civilization; indeed, an isolated spot where the ravines are so narrow and the mountains so close together that a horse and a rider become stuck can be found within a day's ride of one of Once's many palaces (340).

Some of the mountains of Once have unusual characteristics. One is golden, one is bald, and at least one is hollow. One, the Diamond Mountain in an area of Once called Lower Pomerania, is three miles long and three miles wide (493), and another, the Garnet Mountain, has the unusual characteristic of growing precious stones (418). There are a surprising number of glass mountains: five in all, one man-made (602).

These unusual mountains introduce us to one of the most interesting aspects of Once's geography: the tendency, in various parts of the countryside, for the normal patterns of nature to be suspended. On occasion, various aspects of the environment--springs, fingers, bones, corpses, brooms, carts, rubbish heaps, trees, bread, apple trees, straw, coal, stone, birds, the wind, the sun, the moon, the stars--develop the ability to converse with the inhabitants. Those inhabitants themselves sometimes find themselves turning into other creatures or objects, such as statues, toads, frogs, ravens, fish, ants, swans, ponds, ducks, bramble bushes, stones, dogs, flowers, snakes, donkeys, and trees; and in some cases they started out life as other creatures: dogs, toads, horses, foxes, or cats. These transformations are so much an accepted part of life in Once that, in one instance, a shaved bear is reported to have passed as a man (354).

Other transformations occur also: people splinter, dead bodies join together again, trees grow to heaven, pins and broomsticks develop the ability to move of their own accord. On occasion, also, large objects may be placed in small containers: dresses inside nuts, men in raven's eggs or fish's stomachs, ladders in pockets, an entire castle in a glass case. Sometimes, even the laws of mathematics are suspended; in one instance, four men are each given half a kingdom (442). The inhabitants of Once are so inured to such occurrences that they approach them with stoic fortitude. Fortunately, too, such suspensions of normal procedures are rarely permanent, and most of them can be accounted for by a basic tenet of Oncean natural law: should a citizen of Once not be treated according to his social position or natural desert, then natural laws will vary their usual procedures until such time as justice has been done. In Once, the laws of physics are often superseded by the demands of justice.

In addition to the many mountains of Once, there are a number of hills, and some evidence of fallen rock scattered in the forest (426) and elsewhere, including on one heath (505). That the country is rugged is confirmed by a number of precipices and cliffs within the forest itself, and by the nine reports of caves and caverns. These caves frequently provide access to unusual places. Indeed, one of the distinctive characteristics of the topography of Once is the opportunity it affords of egress to underground dwellings and chapels, and to places such as Purgatory, Heaven, and Hell. Seven Onceans are reported to have visited Heaven, and four Hell. It was also once possible to reach the sun and the moon through the more isolated passages of the Oncean forest (97); but it appears that the moon, which once hung over a Oncean village, and which was filled with oil and had its wick trimmed by the villagers, is now hung in the sky and presumably unreachable (538).

Five heaths are recorded, including one that takes more than an hour to cross (288); and there is at least one plain (413). The natural vegetation of these unforested flatlands seems to consist primarily of brier, brambles, and thorn bushes, mentioned eleven times and often utilized for hedging.

But given the rugged and mountainous nature of much of the landscape of Once, we should not be surprised to discover that most of the available useful land is under cultivation; newly cleared land is mentioned only once (330). Twenty-four reports of fields, many of them hedged, suggest a sizeable amount of agricultural activity; there are also two pastures and seventeen meadows, most used for grazing and presumably located on the lower slopes of mountains that are not suitable for other agricultural pursuits. In these meadows, one might find grass, wild thyme, milfoil or sloe bushes. In the fields, the primary crops reported are the grains typical of fairly dry, temperate climates: wheat (mentioned six times), barley (three), buckwheat, oats, millet, and rye. A sizeable amount of flax is grown for linen, and hay as a feed for livestock. Hop farms supply local brewers. Some farm turnips of various sizes, peas and lentils are grown for drying, and there are vineyards.

ii: Manufactures; the Gold Industry

The economy of Once is primarily agricultural; no industrial revolution has disturbed the ages-old lifestyle of its inhabitants, even though the existence of metal utensils imply the beginnings of industrial development. The numerous axes, cleavers, knives, hoes, needles, rakes, razors, saws, scissors, scythes, spades and shovels referred to in the records imply the existence of an iron industry, which is supported by nine blacksmiths. Glass is readily available, as implied by the presence of various looking glasses and such in the homes of those not particularly well off; and some knowledge of papermaking is suggested by various reports of letters, maps and books.

But the main industry of Once is based on its metals and precious gems. Diamonds and emeralds are made into elaborate gowns and pieces of jewellery. There is also no paucity of silver, which in some parts of Once is so common that it is made into items like axes, saws, and scythes (365). Even more common, however, is gold. Gold objects abound in Once; they include the decorative items we might expect, such as balustrades, chairs and tables, clasps, combs, dog collars, embroidery, garters, harness, necklaces, plates and cups. But the surprising abundance of gold is signalled by a gold roof (23) and at least two golden castles. Meanwhile, more esoteric golden objects abound: apples, balls, birds, blankets, bobbins, buckets, cages, eggs, fingers, fish, flutes, horses, keys, lilies, people, and spinning wheels. The amount of gold we must postulate in order to explain the profusion of such items might explain the sizeable number of kings Once is able to afford; we know for a fact that some of these kings live in golden castles. Given all the golden objects, it may be surprising to note the rare references to mining in the Grimm records; but in Once, gold has sources other than mines; in some places the snow is gold, and in some instances, it even grows on trees.

The Oncean attitude to gold is confusing. On the one hand, golden objects are treasured, much sought after, even fought for, despite the sizeable number of them. On the other, Onceans do not appear to have based their currency on this valuable commodity.

While gold changes hands in a number of transactions, there is also a complex system of coinage that includes talers, mentioned fourteen times, kreuzers, mentioned four times, ducats, mentioned five times, pennies, mentioned six times, and groschen, mentioned five times. In one instance a nickel is referred to, in what seems to be a common saying (382); we can only assume that either the saying or the coin found its way to Once by means of one of those early European travellers.

Apart from those times when wars occasioned famine, the economy of Once seems to be relatively stable. There is only one suggestion of an inflationary trend in what appears to be a sound fiscal system (267).

iii. Population: Distribution and Employment

If the inhabitants of Once are never far from forests and mountains, then forests and mountains are never far from centres of civilization. In fact, the Grimm documents record sixteen cities, thirteen towns, and twenty-three villages. But despite the many cities and towns, most of the inhabitants of Once live in one of three locations: a castle or a village surrounded by fields or meadows, or a hut in the forest. There are no fewer than twenty-nine such huts mentioned, and they seem to be centres of activity, for not only do the forest-dwellers of Once work hard to keep alive by pursuing such unrewarding occupations as wood-gathering, but much of note occurs in or near their homes, including frequent disruptions of natural law.

For us who live in a more democratic time, the oddest aspect of Once is its sizeable component of royalty. As one of the Grimms' informants says, "There were lots of petty kings" (336). There are at least seventy-three kings, and reports of at least sixty-two castles. Between them, these kings have at least thirty sons and at least forty-four daughters. We might also assume that many more than the sixteen of them whose queens are mentioned are married. Equally surprising is the small number of members of the aristocracy who are

not themselves royal; this top-heavy hierarchy contains only one baron, seven counts (one with a son), one duke, and an unspecified number of knights, royal councillors, courtiers, and noblemen. This means a minimum of 198 reports of members of the aristocracy--astonishing when we consider that the Grimms' sources record only thirty peasants, one of them rich and therefore presumably freed from the usual feudal obligations. Of course, it is possible that the European visitors to Once found the activities of royalty more interesting than those of the peasantry, and that, consequently, these proportions are distorted; but such distortion seems unlikely in the light of the apparent accuracy of the records as a whole. We must, therefore, assume that a large number of kings rule over a surprisingly small number of peasants; nevertheless, the Oncean aristocracy is lavishly cared for by numerous servants: undefined numbers of these are mentioned thirty-three times, and there are twenty-two mentions of maids and a small number of cupbearers, pages, messengers, and stable-boys.

In addition to the thirty peasants mentioned above, a number of others are occupied in agricultural pursuits--although presumably outside of the context of feudalism. An unusual characteristic of Once is the co-existence of a feudal hierarchy and a bourgeois world of independent trade; in fact, the top-heavy nature of the feudal hierarchy may be accounted for by the fact that so many Onceans manage to survive outside it--although that still does not explain how the many kings of Once maintain their splendid lifestyles. In any case, the independent agriculturalists of Once include seven farmers, one foreman, one bailiff, four hired men, twelve shepherds or shepherdesses, three cowherds, two swineherds, and one gooseherd.

But the trades are also well represented in Once; away from the castles, it is a land of small businesses, and most of its workforce is self-employed. In agriculture-related businesses there are nine blacksmiths, two carters and a wagoner, one cattle-dealer, and thirty-four millers, twenty of them employed by one sizeable establishment (167). In the building trades, there are four carpenters, a locksmith, three masons, and a turner. In food-

related businesses are a baker, five butchers, nine cooks, six fishermen, a fowler, thirteen self-employed hunters (in addition to the thirteen groups of huntsmen who work for royalty), and two knackers. In hospitality we find eleven innkeepers and one tavern keeper. Domestic suppliers include two broom-makers, four charcoal burners, and a scissors grinder; in clothing-related businesses we find five shoemakers, twenty-one tailors, and a weaver. Involved in sales are one dealer in live animals and one moneychanger, as well as three peddlers and two wandering scholars. And there are at least five goldsmiths.

It is clear from these figures that Once's economy is based primarily on agriculture, with some secondary emphasis on the processing of gold. But there is some evidence of foreign trade, including several mentions of ships, sea captains and sailors, and the use by various inhabitants of materials that do not appear to be native to Once. These include cinnamon (168), coral (211), pearls, silk, and sponge (453), which the generally temperate climate of Once is not likely to produce. What Once trades for such materials is unknown; the most likely candidates are grain, timber, or gold.

The professions are poorly represented in Once: seven physicians and four teachers, including just one university teacher. There are no accountants, no dentists, no advertising men. There are six judges but not a single lawyer to plead cases before them; but then, the enforcement of justice is most frequently accomplished by either the mutable capabilities of the Oncean environment or the vengeful customs of the tightly knit family groups.

The military component of the Oncean population is sizeable—at least forty-six groups of soldiers of all types, including armour bearers, cavalry, hussars, swordsmen, and various guards and sentries. Note the typical Oncean mixture of the feudalism that dominated Europe in the middle ages and the bourgeois hegemony that in Europe replaced feudalism; in Once, knights in armour exist simultaneously with Hussars. Such curious mixtures characterize the weaponry of the Onceans; while they are in possession of at least thirteen assorted guns, pistols, muskets, and rifles, one cannon, and one battery of field guns, they also have at least twelve swords and two bows with arrows; even more primitive

are the various spears, staffs, sticks, clubs, and cudgels used by the vast majority of Onceans in acts of self-defence. The sizeable military establishments of Once might be accounted for by fairly frequent wars between the various kings; eleven are reported, two of them accompanied by famine after the lands are laid waste. But despite their frequent need of soldiers, Oncean kings have little gratitude for military services rendered: when wars finish, the soldiers are usually retired without pay or pension.

As for the church, Once has just one Bishop (who, in a typical Oncean outbreak of mutability, appears to have been consecrated by mice [500]), an unspecified number of church dignitaries (75), sixteen priests and parsons, and seven sextons. The small number of priests suggests that organized religion does not bulk large in the lives of Onceans; only twenty-four churches and chapels are mentioned. Perhaps outward displays of faith are unnecessary in a land which God, the Devil and a variety of angels regularly visit. Sightings of God are reported thirteen times, of various devils (including Lucifer himself) seventeen times, and of angels nine times. But there may be other reasons for the paucity of priests; they tend in Once to be surprisingly wealthy and rather lecherous, and perhaps the family-oriented inhabitants of Once feel they are well off without such disruptors of domestic bliss. Nevertheless, most of the citizens of Once do profess to be Christians; only three Jews are reported in this distant arm of the Diaspora. It is not always an advantage to belong to the Christian majority, even though Jews tend to be treated badly; there is at least one Griffin in Once whose food supply is primarily Christians (518).

The superstitious bent of Onceans, not unwarranted considering the mutability of Oncean natural law, is served by a magician, a fortune-teller, a stargazer, two sorcerers, and a sorceress.

The arts have few representatives; like many Alpine peoples, Onceans tend to lack both the inventive mind of the Northern races and the artistic fervour of the Southern (see Morrison, 26). There is only one painter, and the existence of three statues, all of religious subjects, imply a sculptor. There is at least one town band, a drummer, and a fiddler, and

reports of a number of musical instruments suggests the existence of those able to play them: six fiddles, six drums, one double-bass, one horn, two lutes, four trumpets, and one set of bagpipes. The books of Once tend to the practical: a Bible, a book of chivalry, an ABC book with a rooster in it. There is a certain amount of storytelling, however. In fact, this activity causes some confusion, for Onceans find it difficult to distinguish between the genuinely historical and the merely imagined. In one instance, events recorded in one Grimm document are reported elsewhere to be a fairy tale (360), but in three other cases, references to other documents respect their historicity (513, 526, 600).

iv. National Characteristics and Social Structures

Generally speaking, Onceans are a rather serious, unimaginative lot; they are naturally submissive, and well adapted to carrying out the details of routine work. They accept the vagaries of their land with cool complacency, and spend their time at work or in pursuit of the onerous demands of marriage and inheritance. Their lack of frivolity is made clear in the rare references to pastimes such as gambling and dancing, which are usually disapproved of. Only three Onceans are reported to smoke. Sports seem to be non-existent--except for hunting, indulgence in which for pleasure rather than profit is a practice exclusive to the aristocracy. The only parties Onceans indulge in are the feasts and balls held on significant family occasions, particularly weddings. The children possess few toys; one four-year-old is reduced to playing with some pieces of wood (274). Indeed, Oncean children are often encouraged to eschew frivolity and do their duty.

It is something of a relief to note, in the midst of all this uprightness, thirteen reports of robbers and one group of hired murderers (484). Not surprisingly, the criminal elements of Once restrict their activities to the darkness of the forests, thus avoiding contact with the country's four executioners. But in fact, most crime on Once is domestic, involving attempts at the lives of relatives, and most justice is handled internally by the

families involved, who often subject their erring members to surprisingly inventive punishments: hanging, burning, boiling in oil, being torn apart by wild beasts, being placed in a barrel drilled with nails and rolled downhill, having their eyes pecked out or otherwise removed, being covered in pitch, wearing heated iron slippers, being thrown into a snake pit. Public justice is less inventive, consisting mainly of the use of the gallows. But it can be harsh: forging a letter is a capital offence (93). An interesting sidelight in regard to the inventive violence of Oncean justice is the apparent conviction of many Onceans that amputation or beheading is an appropriate punishment. This amounts almost to a national obsession; there are 122 reports of various mutilations or threats thereof, including one princess who is solely responsible for 99 beheadings (582).

Family life tends to the conservative in Once. There is no divorce, although wife beating is reported; adultery is exceedingly rare unless a priest is available, and a witch who preys on innocent girls has no difficulty in finding seven thousand of them (255). Marriages tend to be between people of similar social background, perhaps not so surprising in a country with such a clearly defined hierarchy. Common wisdom is, "if a man wants to get married, he should take a wife of his own kind" (577), and members of the aristocracy will go to any lengths to prevent their daughters from marrying men they consider unsuitable for reasons of social standing. Nevertheless, some tailors do marry princesses, and the occasional good-looking peasant girl does find a husband of royal blood. These fortunate few upwardly mobile Onceans usually have that quality so desirable in Once: not, as we might expect, ambition, but rather the ability to accept strange-sounding advice without questioning it.

Marriage is the most important event in the life of a Oncean, and there are many reports of them: the Grimms' informants mention no fewer than seventy-seven weddings. Marriage is so important, indeed, that the marital contract is considered to be an unbreakable vow. Six different Oncean women are reported to have gone through years of hardship and deprivation in order to regain the attention of fiancés who have forgotten

their very existence.

Marriages in Once are followed quite rapidly by the births of children, for the overriding concern of most Onceans is to produce heirs. Children thus figure prominently in the lives of Onceans. Thirty-nine young ones appear in the Grimm's reports, many of them mistreated by step-parents and such because their mere existence interferes with these relatives' plans for the family fortune. In fact, disruptions of domestic tranquillity in Once usually involve matters of inheritance. That getting ones' children settled in life is a matter of prime concern is confirmed not only by the constant interest in matters of inheritance but by the fact that at least seventy-nine women of marriageable age figure prominently in the Grimm records, many of which end on the happy note of a marriage. Furthermore, marriages involving boys of fourteen (106) and girls of seven (184) do not appear to be unusual.

Surprisingly, and unlike our own European ancestors, Onceans are not much concerned with the extended family. Cousins are mentioned only four times, grandfathers only twice; only the devil is reported to have a grandmother, and there are no aunts and uncles of significance. Apparently, the Onceans so jealously protect the inheritance rights of their children that they avoid contact with potentially dangerous relatives outside the immediate family circle. It is probably for this same reason that so many stepmothers mistreat the elder children of their husbands; in typical Oncean fashion, they cannot bear to think of their own children not inheriting the family fortune.

It is interesting that there are so many stepmothers in Once, and so few stepfathers. Men tend to die earlier than women, and in fact, there seem to be more women than men; considering only royalty, princesses outnumber princes three to two. Even so, the women of Once tend to avoid the public eye; perhaps their lack of involvement in the anxieties of business accounts for their relative longevity. They occupy themselves in domestic pursuits, while the men earn the family income; most of the women mentioned in the Grimm records are referred to only as daughters or wives. Indeed, the only occupations open to women

appear to be nursing, midwifery, animal herding, domestic service, and witchcraft. Oncean women accept their lot in life, for they realize they are quite different from men; in Once, men have a firm tread while women trip and skitter and shuffle their feet, and women smile at the sigh of a spinning wheel, while men do not (252). In fact, an astonishing number of the women occupy themselves with spinning when they are not being pursued by a prince or having a baby.

The children of Oncean families tend to be of one sex. While there are seven reports of one son and one daughter, one of two sons and one daughter, and one of three sons and three daughters, the vast majority of families consist of either all boys or all girls. At least twenty-eight families have one daughter, at least six have two daughters, thirteen three daughters, one twelve daughters, and one plenty of daughters. Meanwhile, at least ten have one son, seven two sons, two twin sons, fifteen three sons, and one four sons. One exception to the general pattern is the number of families in which a number of sons is followed by one daughter. In all such cases, the sons inevitably turn into birds at some point in their lives, and must be rescued by the daughter. One should also note the preponderance in Once of small families over large ones, and the predominance of only children.

v. Engineering, Urban Spread, Architecture

As I suggested earlier, the villages and towns of Once are distributed evenly throughout the land, wherever the topography makes settlement possible. They are joined by a variety of highways: some are sanded, some are gravel, and most have ditches running beside them. There are many inns and taverns along these highways; most of the eighteen inns and nine taverns mentioned are surrounded by countryside rather than in villages. Onceans love to travel; at least 124 of them are reported to go on significant journeys in the Grimm records. They travel almost always on foot, except for the aristocracy, the single

male members of which travel on horseback, while their female partners and elders favour carriages.

The villages of Once are random collections of houses, each with its various barns, granaries, pigsties, woodsheds, and goose houses; many have kitchen gardens. Places of business, like the fifteen mills, tend to be apart from other buildings in the open countryside. The towns are more organized; most have gates that are guarded, the streets are cobbled, and there is a civic organization of mayors and aldermen. One also tends to find marketplaces in these towns. In both villages and towns, the churches have towers, many of them equipped with clocks that chime the hours. The cities are similar to the towns; while larger, they are still equipped with gates and sentries. The capital city of Once is set on a plain; it has magnificent gates and a hundred towers, and its church spires are ornamented with golden balls and crosses (370). Unfortunately, its name is not recorded; we do, however, have records of the names of a number of villages, towns, cities, and districts of Once, including Brakel, Bremen, Buxtehude, Constantinople, East India, Farther Pomerania, Hinnenberg, Hohenfurt, The Land of the Golden Snow, Regensburg, Rome, Soist, Strassburg, Stromberg, Swabia, Trier, Walpe, and Werrel.

One of the great paradoxes of this paradoxical land is that, while the citizens of its villages and towns lives in a bourgeois respectability that is reminiscent of our own seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the many members of the aristocracy have a more feudal, almost mediaeval existence. Their castles and palaces are separate from towns and cities. They are frequently walled and have guarded gates, and their grounds include walled gardens, courtyards, and various outbuildings. Their staffs are sizeable, and they are often the centre of a feudal agricultural organization.

The castles themselves are sumptuous. They contain antechambers, bedchambers, royal apartments, and secret rooms. Below stairs, there are numerous kitchens, storerooms, vaults, and dungeons. There is at least one heatable iron room for torture purposes (262). Ablutions are performed in a special bathroom, or in a bathhouse nearby. The floors and

stairs of these castles are of marble or stone, covered with carpets, and tapestries hang on the walls. One such carpet is embroidered with roses, lilies, and green vines, through which birds and animals can be seen (579). The typically ostentatious taste of a wealthy citizen of Once is revealed in an interesting passage from the Grimm documents in which one we hear of walls covered with green silk embellished with long golden flowers and an ivory bed with a red-velvet coverlet (531).

The less fortunate citizens of Once must be content with simpler surroundings. Indeed, the vast gulf between the well off and those who are not makes the lack of social upheaval surprising. The poorest Onceans live in huts in the forest, gather wood for a living, and make do with roots and berries. The homes of those more fortunate tend to consist of one large room, which contains either a hearth, as fifteen do, or a stove, usually cast iron, as fifteen others do. These fires are the only source of heat in the house; light is provided either by candles or oil lamps. The inhabitants appear to be inured to the disastrous possibilities of the Oncean environment, for they either latch or bolt or lock their doors even though their houses contain little that would interest thieves. They are furnished simply, containing usually only a few benches or chairs, including perhaps a Grandfather chair, a table, and either some feather beds or a copious supply of straw on the floor that is used for sleeping. Few use sheets; and unlike the silver and gold utensils of the wealthy, those of the less fortunate are earthenware and wood. Many houses have cellars, reached by trap doors and used primarily for storage. Some have attics reached by ladders where some of the inhabitants sleep. There is no running water, and aside from the occasional washbasin, no sanitary facilities within the house; but some larger houses do have drainage runnels in their yards that run from the kitchen area to a nearby stream. Most such houses appear to be built from the lumber so readily available from the nearby forests; some of the more pretentious ones are built from stone. Occasionally, less fortunate purchasers use a red sandstone that is reputed to never dry properly and that causes breathing problems (545).

While there may be a bench outside the door, the yard in front of the typical home of Once tends to the practical rather than the decorative. Some contain dung heaps or rubbish heaps, some stone troughs for washing up (101); and there are the usual assortment of agricultural outbuildings.

vi. Food and Clothing

The Oncean diet is simple and relatively nutritious. It consists primarily of bread and meat of various sorts, with a concentration on simple roasts; the most complicated dishes reported are hearty soups and stews. The Onceans eat few vegetables, mostly the ones that can be stored easily over the winter: cabbages, turnips, potatoes. Oncean peasants make the latter into dumplings (584). Fresh vegetables are not popular; indulgence in greens such as lettuce or rapunzel can lead to trouble, such as having ones eyes torn out or being turned into a donkey. Food is preserved by traditional pre-industrial methods: there are salted meat, sausages, and dried fruits, peas and lentils. While some Onceans appear to have a sweet tooth, they usually satisfy it with honey; there is only one report of manufactured sweets, bags of coloured candies (374), and the climate would not support the growth of sugar cane. The beverage of choice is wine, drunk twenty-nine times; some of this is imported from Hungary, although how it gets to Once remains a mystery. A few Onceans prefer beer, and one is reported to drink coffee (399). Although cows abound, milk is drunk rarely, and then primarily in bread soup; much of it seems to go into the production of cheese.

This simple diet, or perhaps the salubrious climate, seems to promote good health. Few Onceans are ever seriously ill, at least not for medically identifiable reasons; many survive quite nicely on a diet of roots and berries, and those few who are undernourished can be identified by their white cheeks and red eyes (369). The few illnesses reported that are not caused by vengeful relatives are along the lines of bad sweats, scurf, vomiting, fevers,

and dizziness, and these can often be cured by herbal mixtures, various precious balms and ointments, and sometimes even the water from certain wells. Some congenital diseases such as deafness, blindness, and such, are less open to cure; but the Water of Life, available in various parts of Once, can cure anything, including death.

As befits a conservative society, Onceans have clearly defined dress codes. Peasants' clothes and kingly garments are so readily recognizable that they need not be described. The poor wear rags, while the rich bedeck themselves in finery with an utter disregard for good taste or comfort. Their clothing tends to gold dresses, dresses adorned with gold and diamonds, and dresses embroidered with stars, suns and moons.

Between these two extremes, the average citizen of Once goes in for the layered look. The men wear shirts, either trousers or breeches, vests or jerkins, and a variety of jackets, coats, and cloaks--the latter particularly while travelling. The women wear a variety of garments on top of each other: shifts, bodices, blouses, skirts, shawls, and such. They almost always wear aprons, also, even those of royal blood; presumably this is a symbol of their inferior status in relation to men. The most distinctive quality of Oncean costume is what amounts to a footgear fetish. The Grimm reports, while usually vague on matters of clothing, draw attention again and again to elaborate footwear: buffalo-hide boots, shoes with red heels, glass slippers, embroidered silk slippers, pearl-embroidered slippers, and so on. Whereas either wooden or leather shoes are the normal order of the day, there appear to be few Onceans who would not be tempted to indulge in something unusual for their feet. But perhaps this is, again, a matter of social standing; in the country, we are told, people prefer to go barefoot (367).

The vast amount of clothing that even the least well off of Onceans wears at the same time suggests a certain modesty. In fact, the Onceans are an exceedingly diffident group. There is only one report in the Grimm records of a Oncean announcing his need to eliminate (137); and even in a moment of great excitement, a Oncean male dressed in rags finds it necessary to hold the rags together in front in order to keep himself covered (366).

It might be the Oncean modesty that accounts for the small number of baths reported, except amongst the aristocracy, who can afford separate bathrooms. And it might be the infrequency of bathing that accounts for the frequent need of Onceans to be loused by their close relatives.

vii: Other Inhabitants

The human beings of Once are not its only inhabitants. Unfortunately, we have no clear idea of the extent of the non-human populations; European travellers, human beings themselves, naturally involved themselves mainly with Once's humans, and consequently, they could report only those instances where human Onceans had had contact with other creatures. These include at least fifteen giants (one of them man-eating), eight Little Men, eight dwarfs, some little fog men, at least five elves, two nixies, an ogre, two griffins, two giant birds, some spirits of the air, and a spirit in a bottle. Onceans do not always make a clear distinction between witches and Wise Women, but there appear to be eighteen of the former and six of the latter; the witches can be identified by their red eyes and by the fact that their heads wag from side to side (171). The occasional saint also shows up in Once from time to time. St. Peter appears to be particularly fond of Onceans, and they report a total of six different contacts with him.

viii. Fauna

Statistical analysis of the fauna of Once is complicated by the fact that at some point in their life, many Oncean humans turn into animals, and vice-versa. Furthermore, it is hard to determine to what extent the animals of Once are considered to be equal to its human inhabitants and to its other sentient life-forms, since so many of them are capable of speech. In the long run, it seems wisest to categorize Oncean animals in terms of their linguistic capacity. Even so, there is bound to be confusion; for some Oncean animals speak only

their own language with each other, some once possessed such a language but no longer do, some are capable only of speaking with other animals, and a small number actually do converse with humans.

The talking animals include six bears, forty-three birds (including seven chickens and seven ravens), a boar, six cats, a cow, two deer, five dogs, four donkeys, eleven fish, three frogs, two goats, four hares, a hedgehog, four horses, five lions, a monkey, a mouse, an ox, a rabbit, a sheep, a snake, three toads, and eleven wolves. There are also nine talking insects of various sorts, including ants, bees, fleas and gnats. Those most likely to converse are foxes; fifteen talking one are reported, as opposed to only one who says nothing.

As for non-talking animals, horses predominate. The thirty-three of these reported usually have riders, and may be too proud to converse as equals with the humans who control them. Similarly, we have reports of twenty-one non-talking dogs (including three greyhounds, a spitz, and a poodle), eighteen non-talking cows, fourteen groups of non-talking sheep, and eight groups of non-talking oxen and non-talking goats. While domestication reduces volubility, there is a peculiar paucity of non-talking cats--only four of them. Other than domestic animals, non-talking creatures tend to be those that human beings might run into in the course of their normal daily lives--the mice and squirrels found in the fields, and the deer and wild boar that are the object of most Oncean hunting. One oddity of the Oncean forests is the presence of lions in them; five who talk and three who do not are mentioned. Otherwise, the forest contains the sort of game we expect of a deciduous forest in a temperate zone: deer, bears, and wolves. There are also the expectable insects, with flies and gnats predominating.

ix. Conclusion

As can be seen, the Grimm records contain a treasure-house of information about the land of Once and its inhabitants. Even this brief survey reveals the homogeneity of the

Oncean landscape, the overall regularity of its social systems and values, and the consistency of its national character: a devouring interest in matters of marriage and inheritance, a placidity in the face of natural mutation, a seriousness that eschews frivolity, a faith in hard work and the integrity of the family. It is hoped that this brief survey will encourage other serious-minded researchers to continue such studies, and thus enrich our knowledge of this by-now almost mythical country.

So mythical is Once considered to be, in fact, that study of it nowadays is the pursuit of literary scholars, who have inherited the subject in the absence of sounder, more scientific approaches. While I would be the last to downplay the ingenuity of such scholars, I must insist that their assumption that the records they so fancifully discuss are mere products of the human imagination is tantamount to treating as fictions the reports of Narnian civilization documented by C.S. Lewis, or the chronicles of Oz gathered by F.L. Baum. In addition to initiating serious study of an important subject, the geographical and sociological data documented in this study should throw some much-needed cold water on the more febrile imaginings of literary scholars, in whose charge I happily leave the literary implications of my study.

Works Cited

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