

Reviews

Grimm Legacies: The Magic Spell of the Grimms' Folk and Fairy Tales, by Jack Zipes. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

The Complete First Edition: The Original Folk & Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm, by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. Translated by Jack Zipes. Illustrated by Andrea Dezsö. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Reviewed by Jan Susina

Jack Zipes has spent much of his academic career studying folk and fairy tales. Having written sixty critical books, edited collections, and translations, Zipes is perhaps the best known and the most influential American scholar working on folk tales. Zipes could be considered the James Brown of the field of folk and fairy tale research: the hardest working guy in the business. Becoming a professor emeritus hasn't slowed him down in the least, as these two volumes attest. It is the Grimms and their influential collection of folk tales that consistently bring out his best critical work. So it comes as no surprise that in 2012, the bicentenary year of the publication of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's first volume of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, Zipes was a frequent speaker at many academic conferences held in North America and Europe celebrating this literary anniversary. The six interlocking chapters of *Grimm Legacies* are based on presentations that Zipes gave at conferences and universities focusing on the cultural legacies of the Grimms' tales and the changing nature of the ways that the Grimms' tales have been interpreted and promoted during the past 200 years. *Grimm Legacies* takes a long look at the evolving cultural impact and influence of the Grimms' tales as folklore and children's literature. The book's subtitle, *The Magic Spell of Grimms' Folk and Fairy Tales*, cleverly alludes to Zipes's first critical study, *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales* (1979); this volume simultaneously functions as a summing of some of the key arguments of Zipes's impressive scholarly career.

While some of information found in *Grimm Legacies* was previously examined in Zipes's *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forest to the Modern World* (1988), the complicated changing nature of the tales is worth repeating. At times reading *Grimm Legacies*, it seemed that the common perceptions about the Grimms and their tales were wrong.

Zipes reminds readers that the Grimms' tales are not strictly fairy tales and that they did not use the term "fairy tales" when referring to the stories. With the title *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children and Household Tales*), the Grimms did not mean to suggest that the collected tales were for children, or even about children, but that they believed that the stories were innocent and pure, like children. In preserving these stories, the Grimms sought to reinforce and reinvigorate the cultural memory and heritage of the German people. But the title was confusing for many readers; the first volume of their collected tales, when it was published in 1812, was not well received. Critics complained the stories were too crude and not appealing to children. Zipes notes that two key terms are absent from the title, German and fairy tales, which over time have become intimately linked to the collection. The first edition was intended for adults, particularly scholars and antiquarians. But gradually the Grimms expanded their readership to include children, and subsequently modified the tales in the seven editions published during their lifetimes to make them more acceptable to children, or at least to the parents of children. Their collection is diverse and includes a range of stories including tall tales, animal tales, nonsense stories, religious tales, and magic tales (*Zaubermärchen*), which are the most familiar of the stories that have come to be known as fairy tales. Despite what the Grimms stated in their prefaces to various editions of their collection, not all of the tales came from the oral tradition; they adapted stories that they located in texts from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. While the Grimms maintained that they recorded faithfully without embellishing the oral versions of the tales performed by their informants, a close reading of seven editions of the tales show that the Grimms were constantly revising the tales to better conform to their concept of the folk tale. Zipes argues that only Wilhelm's artistic reworking of the tales made them more accessible to middle-class families, which increased their popularity. In fact, Ludwig Bechstein's *German Fairy Tale Book* (1845) and *New German Fairy Tale Book* (1856) outsold the Grimms' collection in Germany until the 1890s. The Grimms sought to reinforce and reinvigorate the cultural memory and heritage of the German people by collecting and editing their tales. According to Zipes, the Grimms were not simply collectors, but "translators, adaptors and mediators" (84). Rather than transcribing folk tales, they wrote poetic stories based on German folklore and refashioned the tales so that these became what they imagined authentic folk stories should be. Consequently, the Grimms are, at best, profolklorists. Ironically, their

manufactured folk tale collection encouraged systematic collections of folk tales by subsequent folklorists.

The reception of the second volume, in 1815, did not fare much better. The Grimms felt their project was misunderstood. Zipes argues that, beginning with the second edition of their collection published in 1818, the Grimms began the process of "hyping their own tales to change their reception" (58). With the introduction of paratextual material, they hoped to increase readership, but in doing so the integrity of their collection was compromised. In the preface to the second edition, the Grimms began to promote the idea that all their tales were from the oral tradition. They also introduced Dorothea Viehmann as the archetypal peasant storyteller to confirm the authenticity of the tales. Viehmann was their favorite storyteller; she provided 40 tales to the collection. The second edition also included, for the first time, an illustration, which was a portrait of Viehmann, drawn by their brother, Ludwig.

However, the person most responsible for popularizing and redirecting the collection as children's literature was Edgar Taylor, the first English translator. Taylor's first volume of *German Popular Tales* was published in 1823, followed by the second volume in 1826. Taylor radically changed the Grimms' collection by re-ordering and selecting those tales that he thought would appeal to children. Taylor's first volume of *German Popular Tales* only included 31 tales as compared to 86 in Grimms' first volume. Taylor based his translations on the second edition of the Grimms' collection, which was published in 1819. Taylor's two volumes only contain 55 tales, compared to the 156 tales found in the two volumes of the Grimms' first edition. Taylor consciously shifted the intended audience for the tales to children. He removed the Grimms' scholarly notes and asked the popular cartoonist George Cruikshank to create 22 illustrations, which emphasized the humor of the stories.

Zipes considers Taylor to be the "consummate censor" who sanitized the tales by reducing violence and horror, eliminating sexual references, and deleting references to God and the Devil (52). Titles, characters, and episodes in tales were changed and, in some cases, tales were combined. Several of the tales that appear in Taylor's second volume did not even come from the Grimms. Nevertheless, Taylor's freely adapted translation of the Grimms into English would have revolutionary consequences for their collection of tales.

Unlike the Grimms' first edition, Taylor's *German Popular Stories* was a roaring success in England and went through multiple printings. Grateful, Taylor sent a copy of his adaptation to the Grimms. The Grimms were so impressed by the reformatting of Taylor's translation and its financial success that they chose to publish their own "small" edition as a companion volume to their "large" edition in 1825. The small edition (*Kleine Ausgabe*), unlike the two-volume edition, only contained 50 of the most popular tales and included four illustrations by their brother. With the small edition, the Grimms, following Taylor's lead, attempted to secure a wider readership for their stories by including children as part of their intended audience. Wilhelm began to edit the tales so that they would conform to the values of bourgeois families. Unlike the large edition (*große Ausgabe*), the small edition did not include a scholarly preface, or notes, but featured illustrations. These two different versions of their collected tales were intended for distinctive audiences. The small edition turned out to be more popular than the large edition and it was published ten times between 1825 and 1858. Ironically, it was as children's literature, rather than folklore scholarship, that the Grimms' collection has had its most enduring influence.

Taylor would eventually combine his two-volume *German Popular Stories* into a single volume titled *Gammer Grethel, or German Fairy Tales* in 1839. It was Taylor, not the Grimms, who transformed the Grimms' stories into fairy tales. His selection of tales—that emphasized magic, featured fairies, added fairies into stories where they did not previously exist, and referred to the stories as fairy tales—established a label that would endure. He structured his single volume around a fictitious, older, female, peasant storyteller, Gammer Grethel, a character loosely based on Dorothea Viehmann, whom the Grimms had introduced in their second edition of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. Zipes shows the process by which Taylor transformed the Grimms' stories into classic fairy tales, subverting the Grimms' original intention of preserving folk tales as part of German cultural heritage.

The later chapters in the book detail how the Grimms' tales, once firmly established as children's texts, were further commercialized as they were Americanized, which Zipes also refers to "globalized Disneyfication" (74). Not surprisingly, Zipes has little positive to say about Disney film adaptations of the fairy tales or for most film adaptations of the Grimms' tales. Ironically, he suggests that in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as the result of the power of the American culture industry, the United States has become home to the Brothers Grimm

more than Germany; the Americanized versions of the tales are better known than the German versions.

In the chapter focusing on the ways the Grimms' tales are represented in Germany, Zipes shows that their reputation as pioneering scholars who encouraged others to collect oral folk tales has slowly improved, while scholars acknowledge the changes that the Grimms made to the texts. In Germany, the Grimms' tales are second only to the Bible in terms of popularity. However, Zipes sees a gradual shift in adaptations based on their tales that celebrates the kitsch aspects and trivializes them.

In the chapter on the legacy of the Grimms in contemporary adaptations, Zipes sees a healthy trend in contemporary adaptations to restore the Grimms' tales as adult texts, and to reintroduce a "Grimmness" (152) back into the fairy tales while exploring darker aspects of their stories. For Zipes, the power and importance of the Grimms' tales is confirmed by the many adaptations in prose, poetry, and film that attempt to revise and reinterpret the tales.

Grimm Legacies is perhaps Zipes's most autobiographical book and is filled with numerous personal asides. He refers to himself as a "fairy-tale junkie" (132) and reveals that his favorite Grimms' fairy tale is "How Six Made Their Way in the World," which he regrets is barely known today. One of the appeals for Zipes of the Grimms' tales is that most take the underdog point of view of the disenfranchised characters. His Marxist approach to fairy and folk tales is well established. Zipes mentions that he has "an immense fondness" for stories that "involve collaboration and radical action to defeat tyranny" (133). So it seems fitting that his study ends with a short epilogue that examines a 1961 radio conversation between Ernest Bloch and Theodor Adorno on the value and meanings of fairy tales and the Grimms. Adorno was the major Frankfurt School critic of the culture industry who frequently critiqued the commercialization of literature and art. Bloch, on the other hand, championed the utopian aspects of popular culture and saw traces of utopian longing and hope in fairy tales. Throughout his career as a scholar of fairy tale and folk tales, Zipes has attempted a synthesis of these two schools of thoughts. He consistently praises fairy tales for their utopian potential, but, at the same time, is critical of the banal and overly commercial adaptations of the Grimms' tales.

Zipes's translation of the first edition of the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812/1815) makes a valuable companion volume to *Grimm Legacies*, given his analysis of how Edgar Taylor's English translation has both popularized and distorted their collection. Since the

Grimms produced seven different editions of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, which included additions and deletions of individual tales as well as significant modifications to the text of many tales, the corpus of the Grimms' tales is extremely fluid. The multiple, but different, editions of the same text raise the question of which version is the most authoritative the first edition, as it was initially published, or the final version, which included the Grimms' final selection and changes to the text. Zipes notes that most readers are familiar with the tales as they appeared in the seventh edition, published in 1857. Zipes has previously published a translation of the Grimms' final edition as *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* (1987). Scholar Press reprinted a facsimile edition of Edgar Taylor's first English translation of *German Popular Stories* in 1977. A comparison between Zipes's translation and Taylor's translation quickly confirms that Taylor radically adapted and changed the tales. It is difficult to consider them translations of the same text. By my count, only eight of the tales published in the Grimms' first volume, published in 1812, appear in the 31 tales that Taylor included in his first volume of *German Popular Stories* in 1823. There have been several more accurate English translations of the Grimm tales published since Taylor; Zipes mentions Margaret Hunt in 1884, Ralph Manheim in 1978, Maria Tatar in 2004, and Philip Pullman in 2012. But most of these translations are selections of tales based on the final 1857 edition. Zipes allows readers to have access to the tales as the Grimms originally published them for adults and without the changes they would add to subsequent editions. His translation reveals that the original printed versions of the Grimms' tales are more violent and frank. Maria Tatar, in her *Annotated Brothers Grimm*, includes 37 tales and adds nine tales for adults. The majority of the tales that Tatar identifies as adult tales—which feature ominous titles such as "The Hand with the Knife," "How Some Children Played at Slaughtering," and "The Stubborn Child"—were published in the first edition of the Grimms' collection when all the stories were intended for adults rather than children. Since the first edition of the Grimms' tales appeared without illustrations, I don't think Andrea Dezsö's striking paper cut illustrations are necessary to accompany Zipes's stark translation of the 156 tales. While Zipes expressed his approval in *Grimm Legacies* to the modern trend to reintroduce the "Grimmness" to the adult adaptations based on Grimms' fairy tales, his translation of *The Original Folk & Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimms* confirms that these contemporary adaptations come closer to the original nature of the tales than the many cleaned up children's versions of the fairy tales.

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