

## A Treasury of 19<sup>th</sup> Century European Folk and Fairy Tales

**Jack Zipes, ed. 2013. *The Golden Age of Folk and Fairy Tales. From the Brothers Grimm to Andrew Lang.*** With Introduction and Translations by Jack Zipes. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 752 pp. ISBN: 978-1-62466-032-0

Leafing through the latest offering by one of the leading experts in the field of fairy-tale studies, Professor Emeritus Jack Zipes, one is instantly reminded of this amazingly prolific scholar's 2001 anthology, *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Basile and Straparola to the Brothers Grimm*. Indeed, *The Golden Age of Folk and Fairy Tales* is, by the author's own admission, intended as a "complement" (xxxv) to the previous collection and, in a sense, picks up where its predecessor left off. Both books are collections of folk and fairy tales, but with different thematic and temporal focuses: while *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition* brings together literary fairy tales spanning three centuries (from G. F. Straparola in the 16th to the Brothers Grimm in the 19<sup>th</sup> century), *The Golden Age* contains oral tales written down and published during the "long" 19<sup>th</sup> century (more precisely, between 1812 and 1912). The reason for choosing this particular time frame is that it constitutes a period when "hundreds of educated European collectors, who called themselves antiquarians, philologists, traditionalists, and later folklorists, began taking an intense interest in the tales of the folk [...] and gathering all sorts of oral stories, writing them down, and publishing them so that they would not perish" (xvii). A narrower time span allows Zipes to bring numerous lesser known (some even previously unavailable in English) tales and authors/collectors to the reader's attention (in contrast, the previous anthology mostly consists of Italian, French and German "classics"). In addition to his invaluable work as an editor and collector, Zipes should also be commended for his translation efforts (he is responsible for most of the translations from German, French and Italian).

Both informed and informing, this anthology does a great service to the scholarly community by bringing together a large number of texts (182 tales, to be exact) and making them conveniently accessible by organizing them into 18 comprehensive sections, each built around one or more tale types. This kind of organization is particularly conducive to comparative readings and analyses which simultaneously highlight the national/cultural *differentia specifica* of each tale, as well as the common features shared by all tales belonging to the same type. Each of the 18 sections opens with a contemporary black-and-white illustration of the tale type in question, made by a student at the Art Department of Anglia Ruskin University, and a succinct introductory text by Zipes himself. The introductions generally begin with a brief description of the tale type(s), and then proceed to discuss the historical and cultural background of the tales presented in the section, their variants, sometimes even contemporary (literary, film, etc.) retellings. The texts usually conclude with comments on the Grimms' tales featured in that section (it should be noted that many of the sections, as well as substantial portions of the introductory texts, overlap with those found in *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition*).

Though the reader is treated to a variety of tales from different (European) socio-cultural contexts and storytelling traditions, the staple of the collection is Zipes' pet topic, the Brothers Grimm. Tales from their collection *Children's and Household Tales* (*Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (hereinafter: *KHM*) are featured in every section, appearing in both their final (1857) and first published versions (varies depending on the tale, but usually 1812, 1815 or 1819). Zipes' decision to include the lesser-known original versions of the *KHM* tales is predicated on the fact that these older variants are much closer to the oral tradition the Grimms were (by their own admission) trying to capture. Furthermore, he wanted to give his readers a glimpse of the complex editorial history of the *KHM*.

The 18 sections which form the central part of this anthology are framed by a general introduction and two appendices (sections containing biographical and bibliographical information). The majority of Zipes' introductory text entitled "The Golden Key to Folk and Fairy Tales: Unlocking Cultural Treasures" is dedicated to the Grimms and their collection, which is viewed as a metaphorical golden key which "opened the golden casket so wide that thousands if not hundreds of thousands of wonderful folk tales came pouring out into books throughout Europe, and they have kept coming" (xvi). After outlining a brief history of the *KHM* and debunking some of the most popular and persistent myths about the *Märchenbrüder* and their work, Zipes discusses the influence which the Grimms' tales as well as their pioneering work in the emerging field of folkloristics had on other European scholars and collectors. Stating the importance of ideological, social and political aspects of the process of collecting and publishing tales in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Zipes ends the introduction with a brief discussion of the problems brought on by attempts to draw up a classification of folk and/or fairy tales.

The section entitled "Short Biographies" includes biographical notes on the 81 authors/collectors whose work is featured in the anthology. The extensive bibliography section (which contains some minor, technical errors, such as omissions of authors' names) is divided into two parts: the lengthier 17-page part lists numerous collections of folk tales, legends, myths, fairy tales and other types of folk narratives from all over the world. Regardless of how exhaustive they are, lists such as this one (understandably) cannot encompass the full extent of available publications, so a certain degree of omissions and even "imbalances" in representations of specific countries/parts of the world (depending on the author's field of expertise, linguistic competences, etc.) is to be both expected and excused. The second part of the bibliography section includes a useful list of select works of criticism.

With the publication of *The Golden Age of Folk and Fairy Tales*, Zipes has presented us with a rich and comprehensive anthology which functions equally well as a reference/resource book and a textbook, thus being well-suited for both the seasoned researcher and the novice scholar. Like *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition* before it, it seems to lend itself particularly well for use in the classroom. This accessible and highly useful volume will certainly make an excellent addition to the library of any scholar or student interested in folk narratives in general, and folk and fairy tales in particular.

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