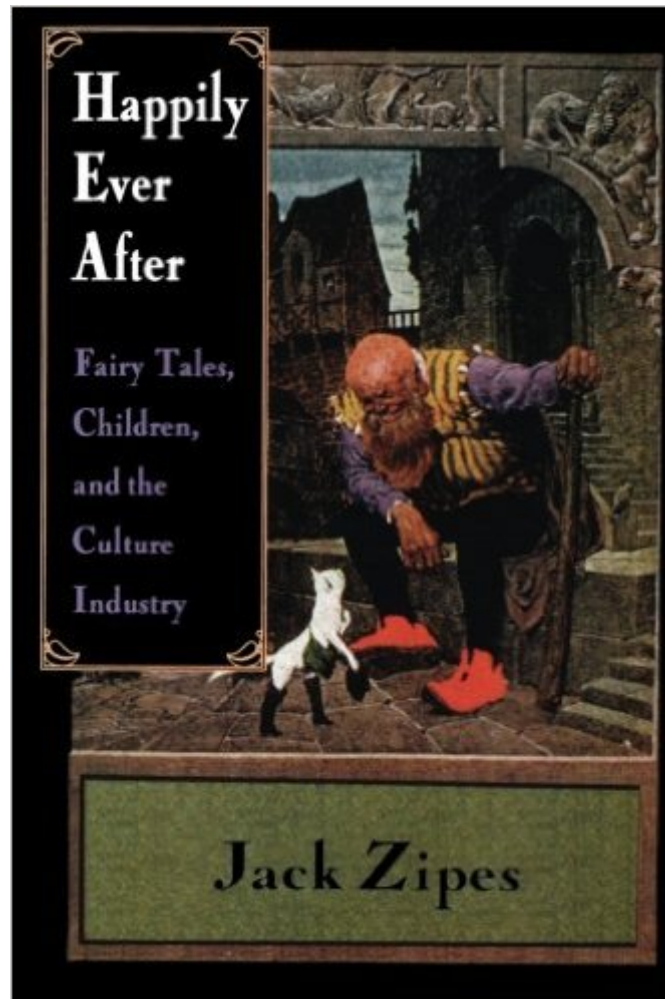


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Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children, And The Culture Industry



Synopsis

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Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I really disagree with the previous review of this book. Zipes doesn't distort the tales meaning at all. Instead he avoids the facile, obvious surface reading, and goes deeper into the many varied meanings of what any one tale can mean. I especially enjoyed the sections on how tales were twisted and edited to reinforce our ideas of childhood and what is appropriate for children to read. For instance, the Grimms' tales were heavily edited over time making them less violent, adding in strict moral messages, and generally making the female characters more annoying (see Bottigheimer's Grimms Bold Boys and Bad Girls for a great analysis of this). I highly recommend this book.

I definitely didn't agree with a lot of what Zipes had to say - he was much too pessimistic and bitter for my tastes. Additionally, the idea of Disney-as-embodiment-of-all-things-evil is a little tired. However, what I enjoyed about the book was how much it got me thinking about my own views on the material. Quite a few times I wished Zipes was in front of me so we could discuss and debate. That is always a sign of a good book to me - something that gets me thinking about my own belief system, whether I agree with the author or not. A very interesting read.

From what I gather, Zipes is a fairly prolific scholar writer in the field of fairy tale studies. The first half of the book I found deeply engaging as he did a bit of comparative study of the evolution of fairy tales prior to the 20th century. He concentrated specifically on the cultural values of specific historic periods that are reflected within each version, and how as these values change over time so do the stories. And within this framework, he also investigated how fairy tales have been used to socialize children. However, the latter part of the work began to read a bit too much like a manifesto against the consumerist monoculture--which wasn't what I was looking for. Analysis of how fairy tales rationalize the abandonment and abuse of children? Fun! Sweeping value judgements and generalizations about contemporary society and consumerist culture? Not quite what I was expecting. (Granted, the subtitle does talk about "the culture industry" but the last chapter was pretty exclusively discussing the culture industry, with very little reference to fairy tales).

The insights here are few and far between. Zipes labors much too hard twisting these tales to fit his own political agenda. In a typical chapter, Zipes tries to explain how fairy tales demonstrate that cats are better than people. Many better books have been written on the subject.

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