



# **Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization (First, Import)**

*Jack Zipes*

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(from front jacket flap) Even though the fairy tale may be one of the most important cultural and social influences on most children's lives, critics and scholars have failed to study its historical development as genre. Jack Zipes now makes one of the first attempts to develop a social history of the fairy tale. He shows how educated writers purposely appropriated the oral folk tale in the 18th century and made it into a discourse about mores, values and manners so that children would become civilized according to the social code of that time. He asks questions which link the fairy tale to society and to our political unconscious. How and why did certain authors try to influence children or social images of the children? How did they react to the prescribed fairy-tale discourse? The first four chapters focus on the major classical writers in Europe and America from the 17th to the 20th centuries: Charles Perrault, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, George MacDonald, Oscar Wilde, and L. Frank Baum. They all helped evolve, expand and reform the fair-tale discourse; some wrote to legitimate, some to criticize the course of the western civilizing process. Two further chapters show the subversion of the fairy-tale discourse: firstly in the struggle to dominate it during the Weimar and Nazi periods in Germany, and secondly in the post-war attempts in the West at large to create liberating tales for children. This fascinating and elegant book will be read by anyone with a serious interest in literature and society.

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