Faisal A. Aldukhi

Professor Marilyn Holguin

Rhetoric 105-Section Q7

15 October 2015

Breaking the Zipes’s Spell

While fairy tales existed for centuries and developed over time from an oral art to a literal one, it was not until the last century that fairy tales were adapted by animators and moviemakers due to technological advancement achieved in this field. Disney was such an innovative, smart and perseverant animator and businessman who changed the history of fairy tales by adapting them with his skillful and entrancing animated movies. While he only lived for sixty-four year, his works and movies lasted much longer than he did. The movies he created and the company he founded are still respected and remembered by generations. His name became a synonym for fairy tales because of his production for many fairy tales films. His great impact made even one of his prominent criticizers, Jack Zipes, agrees that Disney is not synonym for fairy tales. Zipes is a retired Professor of German at the University of Minnesota. His main interest is the evolution and history of fairy tales and their social and cultural purpose. As he analyzes Disney, Zipes seems to be a harsh opponent for Disney’s adaptation of fairy tales. From the beginning of the article, he likened Disney with a magician who casted his spell over the fairy tales, and left them captivated ever since (Zipes 332). He also accuses Disney of stealing (appropriating) the European fairy tales (332). However, Zipess’ arguments seem to not complete, and some have flaws in their logic when he analyzed Disney character and ideology.

A major claim that Zipes asserted Disney was able through his artful skills and use of technology to deceive people, and he did not provide anything to help the community (Zipes 345). First, Disney did not force people to watch his movies, and in my view it’s naïve to see that he deceived people in such manner. Let us look at this issue from Disney’s point of view. Disney was raised in a poor family and suffered from a terrible and exploitative treatment from his father and from the fact that his sweetheart abandoned him. These conditions are enough to presume that he wanted to get out of the poor situation he lived in and be independent. The problem with Zipes is that he portrayed Disney as wicked man who tried to deceive people with his colorful and captivating animation. Disney was an ambitious man who had a goal to prove himself and climb the ladder. Since Disney did not come to the revelation that he should make a social change, we should not demonize and degrade him. He did at least entertain the “community,” which is a help that Zipes should admit. Zipes also claims that by animating these fairy tales Disney deprived people from imagining their own characters and roles (346). While Zipes argument is to some extent valid, I don’t think people will loose much by imagining the fairy tales less. In fact, Zipes might have overlooked that animated fairy tales would open new doors for viewers to interpret and analyze the animator’s intentions and agendas. By doing so, viewers need less explicit content to understand the movie. The colors, the music, the voice tone, and the face expressions all combine to produce a semi-real experience for the viewers, which is open for interpretation and complex analysis.

In the movie Cinderella, Disney presented at the beginning a long list of animators, music artists, and others who helped him to make this movie. Although Zipes argued that Disney was difficult to give credit for animators, it was not the case with the discussed movie Cinderella. On the contrary of Zipes, I strongly think that Disney has the right not to include any of the names of the people who worked under him to create his movies, unless he wanted to. Walt Disney was a businessman who made movies and founded a company that has his name. Those animators who sought acknowledgment were merely employees whom Disney pays for their services. Although it’d be a nice of Disney if he included their names, it’s still a matter of choice for him since he’s the “big boss.” If we follow Zipes logic, we should also accuse many companies named after people for not giving credit for their employees on their products like Audi, Armani, Boeing, and so on.

In the original story of *the little Glass Slipper* (Cinderella) by Charles Perrault, the father was alive, although he played a secondary role. As Perrault narrated, Cinderella was afraid to tell her father because the stepmother controlled him completely.. However, in Disney’s adaptation, the father was removed completely. He only appeared at the beginning and then died. Several reasons can explain the removal of the father. First, Disney’s harsh father and miserable childhood might have inspired him to remove the father completely from the story since his father played a humble role for his success (self-figuration). As Zipes stated, “Disney felt drawn to fairy tales because they reflected his own struggles in life” (Zipes 343). Secondly, he might have removed the father to make Cinderella orphan in order to dramatize and emotionalize the story. His use of pathos in his adaptations was probably to attract much of an audience to watch the movie, which he excelled at. Patriarchally speaking, I think Disney did a good job by removing the father because in the original story the father was weak and not able to go against his evil wife. Perrault in his story suggests inexplicitly that if the father was weak and not able to be the head of the house, the mother (or stepmother in this case) might take over the control and end up destroying the house and the family. While it’s apparent that Zipes considered Disney as a traditional artist who likes to portray his ideology about patriarchal society in his movies, he admits that Disney was at least slightly better than Grimm’s traditional beliefs (348). Zipes was right. Disney employed his ideology specifically at the scene when two mice came to Cinderella and told her they had a guest. Cinderella instantly said she (the guest) needs a dress, and the pinky dress appeared. However, the mice told her that the guest was he, not she. Cinderella said, “that makes a difference.” Then, a yellow shirt appeared. In this scene, it’s clear how Disney showed what a girl should wear and what color should she choose. Since Cinderella won the sympathy of the audience, the audience might take her words and actions in serious manners especially for very young kids, who do not know much about the gender roles and differences

Works Cited

Zipes, Jack. “Breaking the Disney Spell.” The Classic Fairy Tales (1999): 332-52. 12 Oct. 2015

Cinderella. Dir. Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske. Walt Disney Pictures, 1950. m4v.