



Clever Maids: The Secret History of the Grimm Fairy Tales

Valerie Paradiz

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Most people know the stories of *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty*, but very few know that behind the Brothers Grimm and their fairy tales stood a network of *sisters*-and mothers, neighbors, and female friends. In this intimate history, Valerie Paradiz tells the real story of the greatest literary collaboration of the nineteenth century, and gives the long-lost narrators of these beloved tales their due. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were major German intellectuals of their time, contemporaries of both Goethe and Schiller. But as Paradiz reveals here, the romantic image of the two brothers traveling the countryside, transcribing tales told to them by peasants, is far from the truth. More than half of the tales the Grimm brothers collected were contributed by women friends from the upper classes. Set against the backdrop of the Napoleonic wars and the high years of German romanticism, *Clever Maids* chronicles this most fascinating enterprise in literary history, and illuminates the ways the Grimm tales-with their mythic portrayals of courage, sacrifice, and betrayal-still resonate so powerfully today.

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