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Jack Zipes, ed. and trans., *Smack-Bam, or the Art of Governing Men: Political Fairy Tales of Édouard Laboulaye*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. vii + 276 pp. \$22.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-0-691-18186-8.

Review by Stephen W. Sawyer, The American University of Paris.

It is not one of the least surprising aspects of Edouard Laboulaye's extremely productive career that he wrote a large collection of fairy tales. A significant nineteenth-century political theorist, politician, historian, jurist, and—surprisingly—writer of fantasy fiction, Laboulaye (1811-1883) was the foremost expert in France on U.S. history and American law following Tocqueville's death. Professor and then head administrator of the Collège de France as well as, among his other accomplishments, a key organizer of the gift of the Statue of Liberty to the United States, Laboulaye played a central role in the founding of the Third Republic. While a growing number of studies have highlighted the importance of his work, thus far his fables and fiction have remained largely forgotten. Jack Zipes's edition and excellent translation, published by Princeton University Press, continues the recovery of Laboulaye's vast oeuvre.

The book contains an introduction of twenty-eight pages with notes and a short bibliography as well as sixteen short stories and fairy tales that were published in the *Journal des débats* newspaper and in three collections of fairy tales. In the introduction, Zipes offers a brief biographical sketch of Laboulaye as well as a rapid overview of his major works and his political theory. While Zipes's discussion of Laboulaye's political ideas remains at a relatively high level of generality, the author does make reference to a few key studies of Laboulaye and French liberalism in the second half of the nineteenth century, for example Sudhir Hazareesingh's *From Subject to Citizen*.<sup>[1]</sup> In particular, for Zipes, "Laboulaye's hopeful or utopian spirit" was part of the "progressive liberalism [that] was open, tolerant, trusting, and humane" (p. 19) described by Hazareesingh. There is no doubt some truth in this assessment. As Zipes suggests, Laboulaye certainly presented the ideals of a liberal democracy as a means of overcoming what he considered the impasses of Napoleon III's democratic despotism.

From this perspective, the stories in the collection offer insights into the work of Laboulaye and the larger climate of liberal democracy. First, there is clearly a certain "democratization" inherent in Laboulaye's project to write fiction for a very wide audience. While Laboulaye's political theory was juridically and philosophically informed, these stories were published in newspapers with a wide circulation and could be read aloud both to children and to a much wider public.

Secondly, as Zipes points out, there are a whole range of critiques of the Second Empire and especially of Napoleon III and his government in Laboulaye's stories. Yet, as one moves through the collection, one must consider not simply the specific content of these stories. French historians of the period will also be interested in considering *how* the audience would have read the fables. Though they are presented here as a collection, it is important to keep in mind that many of them appeared serially in a newspaper that was co-edited by Lucien-Anatole Prévost-Paradol, a leading liberal democratic critic of the Empire. This would have been known to many of Laboulaye's readers. As such, the tales would have been surrounded by articles that offered more or less veiled critiques of the regime.

Many of the readers who first encountered these stories were therefore already of a liberal democratic bent. Their critical approach to imperial politics would have spread into their reading of these *feuilletons*. The first story, which gives the book its name, *Smack Bam, or The Art of Governing Men/Pif Paf, ou L'art de gouverner les hommes* (1862-1863), was published amidst the growing center-left opposition to the emperor in the early 1860s. The tale would have invited the reader to think politically even as the story recounts the spoiled son of an emperor blinded by arrogance and a thirst for vengeance to such a degree that he imprisons first his tutor and then his wife. The title, the main characters, the abuses of power, the influence of the masses, everything within the story, is ripe for *political* interpretation. The same could be said for a later short story, *The Young Woman Who Was Wiser than the Emperor/De la demoiselle qui était plus avisée que l'Empereur* (1866-1867). In this sense, Zipes's collection reveals to what extent politics did not stop at the door of public institutions and the vote, but increasingly saturated private lives and even amusing pastimes in the second half of the nineteenth century.

#### NOTE

[1] Sudhir Hazareesingh, *From Subject to Citizen: The Second Empire and the Emergence of Modern French Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

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