



Giambattista Basile's The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones (Series in Fairy-Tale Studies)

Giambattista Basile

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The Tale of Tales, made up of forty-nine fairy tales within a fiftieth frame story, contains the earliest versions of celebrated stories like Rapunzel, All-Fur, Hansel and Gretel, The Goose That Laid the Golden Egg, Sleeping Beauty, and Cinderella. The tales are bawdy and irreverent but also tender and whimsical, acute in psychological characterization and encyclopedic in description. They are also evocative of marvelous worlds of fairy-tale unreality as well as of the everyday rituals of life in seventeenth-century Naples. Yet because the original is written in the nonstandard Neapolitan dialect of Italian-and was last translated fully into English in 1932-this important piece of Baroque literature has long been inaccessible to both the general public and most fairy-tale scholars.

Giambattista Basile's "The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones" is a modern translation that preserves the distinctive character of Basile's original. Working directly from the original Neapolitan version, translator Nancy L. Canepa takes pains to maintain the idiosyncratic tone of The Tale of Tales as well as the work's unpredictable structure. This edition keeps the repetition, experimental syntax, and inventive metaphors of the original version intact, bringing Basile's words directly to twenty-first-century readers for the first time. This volume is also fully annotated, so as to elucidate any unfamiliar cultural references alongside the text. Giambattista Basile's "The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones" is also lushly illustrated and includes a foreword, an introduction, an illustrator's note, and a complete bibliography.

The publication of The Tale of Tales marked not only a culmination of the interest in the popular culture and folk traditions of the Renaissance period but also the beginning of the era of the artful and sophisticated "authored" fairy tale that inspired and influenced later writers like Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. Giambattista Basile's "The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones" offers an excellent point of departure for reflection about what constitutes Italian culture, as well as for discussion of the relevance that forms of early modern culture like fairy tales still hold for us today. This volume is vital reading for fairy-tale scholars and anyone interested in cultural history.

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