



National Dreams: The Remaking of Fairy Tales in Nineteenth-Century England

Jennifer Schacker

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Fairy tales and folktales have long been mainstays of children's literature, celebrated as imaginatively liberating, psychologically therapeutic, and mirrors of foreign culture. Focusing on the fairy tale in nineteenth-century England, where many collections found their largest readership, *National Dreams* examines influential but critically neglected early experiments in the presentation of international tale traditions to English readers. Jennifer Schacker looks at such wondrous story collections as Grimms' fairy tales and *The Arabian Nights* in order to trace the larger stories of cross-cultural encounter in which these books were originally embedded. Examining aspects of publishing history alongside her critical readings of tale collections' introductions, annotations, story texts, and illustrations, Schacker's *National Dreams* reveals the surprising ways fairy tales shaped and were shaped by their readers.

Schacker shows how the folklore of foreign lands became popular reading material for a broad English audience, historicizing assumed connections between traditional narrative and children's reading. The tales imported and presented by such British writers as Edgar Taylor, T. Crofton Croker, Edward Lane, and George Webbe Dasent were intended to stimulate readers' imaginations in more ways than one. Fairy-tale collections provided flights of fancy but also opportunities for reflection on the modern self, on the transformation of popular culture, and on the nature of "Englishness." Schacker demonstrates that such critical reflections were not incidental to the popularity of foreign tales but central to their magical hold on the English imagination.

Offering a theoretically sophisticated perspective on the origins of current assumptions about the significance of fairy tales, *National Dreams* provides a rare look at the nature and emergence of one of the most powerful and enduring genres in English literature.

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