



Children into Swans: Fairy Tales and the Pagan Imagination

Jan Beveridge

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Fairy tales are alive with the supernatural - elves, dwarfs, fairies, giants, and trolls, as well as witches with magic wands and sorcerers who cast spells and enchantments. *Children into Swans* examines these motifs in a range of ancient stories. Moving from the rich period of nineteenth-century fairy tales back as far as the earliest folk literature of northern Europe, Jan Beveridge shows how long these supernatural features have been a part of storytelling, with ancient tales, many from Celtic and Norse mythology, that offer glimpses into a remote era and a pre-Christian sensibility. The earliest stories often show significant differences from what we might expect. Elves mingle with Norse gods, dwarfs belong to a proud clan of magician-smiths, and fairies are shape-shifters emerging from the hills and the sea mist. In story traditions with roots in a pre-Christian imagination, an invisible other world exists alongside our own. From the lost cultures of a thousand years ago, *Children into Swans* opens the door on some of the most extraordinary worlds ever portrayed in literature - worlds that are both starkly beautiful and full of horrors.

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