



The Erotic World of Faery

Maureen Duffy

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In her first full-length non-fiction work, Maureen Duffy examines the erotic meanings, hidden or obvious, behind the fantastic element in English literature. Those who have read her fiction will realise that she has long been interested in questions of myths. Now from the Dark Ages and the decline of the pagan gods and the fertility cults to the science fiction of the present day she traces themes, symbolisms, shifting nuances, double meanings whether conscious or unconscious, and a whole underworld of myth. She examines the clash between the world of St Augustine and the pagan world of the satyr; she looks at the coming of the fairies into the Christian twilight, and the concept of the elfin and the Arthurian knight; and gives us a glimpse of the rich background of folk legend. With the Renaissance is revealed a transmutation of the whole atmosphere of faery, and Miss Duffy looks closely at what Spenser meant in the *Faerie Queene* and what Shakespeare meant in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and later, differently, in *The Tempest*. Milton's supernatural is different again; and the satires of Pope and Swift mark another mutation. Gothic novels and fairy tales, Romantics and Pre-Raphaelites, 'decadents', exponents of whimsy, teachers and tellers of children's stories, all have their own expression of the fantastic, each with its underlying significance. Not least in importance is the whole idea of the 'other' in modern fiction. The illustrators of the faery world also receive some penetrating looks: Fuseli, Doyle, Beardsley, all make their contribution.

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