

More Sidhe

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 10 May 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2638>

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Roy C. Lackey — 10 May 2001, 23:00

Rostrum asks:

So, don't keep me in suspense--what happens to the children in the original version? Does it have the bit about the flock dwindling to a single bird? I think that's the coolest part of the story. (Also, Wolfe's bit about baptism captures what really happened to the pagans in Ireland pretty well. And the baptism vs. attempted immortality is what makes it such a good end to Weer's story.)<<

Well, they weren't part of a larger flock, per se. The spell laid on them by Aeife was that they retain the forms of swans (but with minds and speech intact) for three periods of three hundred years each, each period to be spent near a particular body of water. There were four swans. After many hardships and nine hundred years (during which time the Tuatha Dé Danann were supplanted by the Milesians), they found themselves in the same sorry position that Ossian found himself upon his return from Tir nan og (the Land of Youth); the old gods were gone and the land and people were much diminished from their former glory. They retreated to an isle, where eventually they came in contact with a holy man (Christian, of course). Versions differ, but whether before or after baptism, they loose their swan shapes and find themselves shrunken, ancient, and decrepit, near death. They are converted and soon die and are buried together in one grave.

I have a variety of books on Irish mythology, folklore, fairy tales, etc. The story is a well known one, easily found in most any book that covers the subject. The details and spellings differ, but the basic story is the same wherever it is found. I like Charles Squire's Celtic Myth And Legend Poetry And Romance, first published in 1905 as The Mythology Of The British Islands.

-Roy

Michael Straight — 11 May 2001, 08:52 · follows Roy C. Lackey

On Thu, 10 May 2001, Roy C. Lackey wrote:
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That's funny. I assumed that the Christian holy man and baptism were the parts Wolfe had added. Neat to see that the nifty part (the flock dwindling to a single bird) is from Wolfe (of course, I guess he might have picked that up somewhere else as well).

Interesting that Wolfe leaves out what happens to the Sidhe after they revert to their original forms.

-Rostrum