

SWANWHITE: A FAIRY DRAMA

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Swanwhite: A Fairy Drama by August Strindberg

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AUGUST STRINDBERG

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FAIRY DRAMA**

SWANWHITE

BOOKS BY AUGUST STRINDBERG

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SWANWHITE

A Fairy Drama

By

AUGUST STRINDBERG

English Version by

FRANCIS J. ZIEGLER

SECOND EDITION

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FOREWORD

A LOVE idyl in the form of a drama; a fairy drama at that, with characters and incidents reminiscent of Grimm's Maerchen; is hardly what one would expect from the pen of an avowed misogynist, a playwright whose usual work out-Ibsens Ibsen in realism, and who has an almost diabolical genius for dissecting a woman's soul and laying bare its faults and weaknesses. Such an idyl, however, August Strindberg has given us in "Swanwhite," a play more suggestive of Maeterlinck than of any other modern writer, save possibly Gerhart Hauptmann. "Swanwhite" is the direct outcome of a love affair of its author, (which suggests that Strindberg's misogyny may be due more to an extreme idealization of woman than to an inborn dislike of the fair sex), as it was written partly just before, and partly just after his marriage to Harriet Bosse, the Swedish actress, in the spring of 1901. Maeterlinck's personality, too, may have had something to do with its form,

as Strindberg met the Belgian poet about the same time he was writing this little drama. "Swanwhite" is remarkable also as being one of the very few plays Strindberg has written with a literary flavor, his ordinary custom being to make his dialogue as realistic as possible, quite regardless of rhetorical flourishes.

If passages in the following translation appear stilted to the reader, he is asked to remember that Strindberg has invested his original with verbal forms never used in ordinary conversation, the evident intent being to produce an atmosphere of artificiality. I have thought it necessary to retain the second personal pronoun as a familiar form of address, as so much stress is laid upon its employment by Swanwhite in her initial scene with the Prince; she addressing him affectionately, while he strives to maintain dignity by the use of the more formal pronoun "you." Of the translation as a whole it may be said that, although the attempt has been made to follow the original as closely as possible, literal rendering has been sacrificed whenever it seemed more advisable to give the spirit rather than the letter of the play.

F. J. Z.

PERSONAGES

The Duke
The Stepmother
Swanwhite
The Prince
Signe }
Elsa } Maidens
Tofva }
The Gardener
The Fisherman

Swanwhite's Mother
The Prince's Mother
The Jailer
The Steward
The Bailiff
The Head Gardener
First Knight
Second Knight