RESEARCH ARTICLE

Making ‘Modern Fairies’: Making Fairies Modern

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Abstract

An AHRC-funded project ‘Modern Fairies and Loathly Ladies’ investigated what happened when a number of artists (musicians, writers, filmmakers) were asked to respond to and re-mediate a curated selection of traditional stories about fairies and loathly ladies. The artists came to the project with a spectrum of different views about fairies, ranging from belief in their existence to absolute scepticism about the supernatural. The works-in-progress they created were performed in a series of experimental shows at The Sage Gateshead theatre in 2019. The artists took up certain themes such as the otherworld, time slippage, fairies and children, but were not attracted by others. Fairy material was reconfigured to reflect contemporary concerns about the natural world and to explore ways in which magical human-animal transformation spoke to women’s experience.

Introduction

> Enchantment conjures up, and is rooted in, understandings and experiences of the world in which there is more to life than the material, the visible or the explainable; in which the philosophies and principles of Reason and rationality cannot by definition dream of the totality of life; in which the quotidian norms and routines of linear time and space are only part of the story: and in which the collective sum of sociability and belonging is elusively greater than its individual parts. (Jenkins 2000, 29)

Creative appropriation of British folk material, re-used and re-imagined in different media, can range from simple retellings of folktales to highly sophisticated and allusive use of folklore motifs; any number of different approaches is possible. This creative move has much in common with the parallel phenomenon of ‘neomedievalism’, defined as ‘a post-postmodernist medievalism: fragmentary, fluid, attempting to encompass all truths, yet also brazenly fictionalizing these apparent truths . . . a medievalism . . . fully aware and celebratory of the constructed nature of its world(s)’ (Robinson and Clements 2009, 62) or David Marshall’s ‘a self-conscious, ahistorical, non-nostalgic imagining or reuse of the historical Middle Ages that selectively appropriates iconic images . . . to construct a presentist space that disrupts traditional depictions of the medieval’ (Marshall 2011, 22). So, too, we can posit the emergence of a ‘new-folkloric’, emerging in parallel to neomedievalism. This might be defined as the possibility of postmodern, self-conscious, and non-nostalgic approaches that aim to make traditional material new, vivid, relevant, and modern, and contrasting with more straightforward retellings or new compositions using familiar techniques and styles. Scholars of folklore reception have an increasing corpus of material to analyse from this perspective, but, in a sense, their task is of necessity reactive:

they must work on the topics and with the motifs that writers, artists, and musicians have chosen to deploy (see Hutton 2019 for an exemplary study of the history and treatment of the Wild Hunt). But what might happen if academics could choose a particular subset of folk stories and commission artists to respond to them across a range of media? This was the starting point of the research project 'Modern Fairies and Loathly Ladies', which ran from March 2018 to September 2019. It was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and undertaken by Fay Hield (Principal Investigator [PI]), Carolyne Larrington (Co-Investigator [CoI]), and Steven Hadley (Research Assistant).[1]

New creative work made in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has frequently incorporated elements of traditional British folklore, very often in pursuit of projects of (re-)enchantment as conjured up by Richard Jenkins above. This kind of appropriation has occurred across different artistic media, whether film or television in the distinctive 'folk-horror' movement of the 1970s (see, among others, Rodgers 2019; Scovell 2017) or literary fiction for children (for example, Alan Garner's *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*, *The Moon of Gomrath,* and *Elidor*), for young adults (as in Diana Wynne Jones' *Fire and Hemlock*), or adult short stories and novels (notably Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Kingdoms of Elfin* and Susanna Clarke's *Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell*). As in literature, so too in folk music: singers and musicians have composed new works drawing their inspiration from the narratives and motifs of the British folktale tradition. While published works are relatively few (see, for example, Julie Fowlis's 'Selkie-Boy' and Gavin Davenport and Jess Arrowsmith's 'Changeling's Lullaby'), there are also a number of amateur singers composing and performing original works of this kind at folk clubs around the country.[2] Interest in and enthusiasm for folklore-influenced tradition has become a key element within the creative vision of a good number of contemporary artists: writers, musicians and filmmakers.

The project was initially conceived as involving musical performers with experience of working with traditional materials. It was to be an experimental undertaking which aimed to explore how musicians and singers might make use of relatively unfamiliar stories and motifs from the fairy traditions of the British Isles to create new material—music and songs—in a broadly folk idiom. It was hoped that this might be particularly attractive to new audiences not currently involved in the established close-knit folk network (see Hield and Crossley 2015). The investigators subsequently decided to expand the group of commissioned musicians in order to include illustrators, animators, poets, writers, and a filmmaker, in addition to the musicians, generating a team of thirteen artists. The creative group was curated by Creative Project Manager Andy Bell, drawing on his existing contacts and those of the PI and CoI, to produce a diverse group that had the potential to develop coherent collaborative work. This included UK residents ranging from the Highlands of Scotland to Devon, and from London to St Davids. Distinctive international perspectives were provided by American-born Terri Windling, and Patience Agbabi who is of Nigerian heritage. Some artists were previously associated with a 'folk music' background, although many did not identify as working in the folk or traditional idiom. They did, however, all have experience of working in various ways with narrative archival material.

The possible corpus of material to be presented to the artists as inspiration was selected from the huge range of folktales and other folklore of Britain to comprise a selection of representative tales about fairies and loathly ladies drawn from across the British Isles. These were chosen as the project's source material partly because such stories engage with a wide and perennially relevant range of themes—including gender, family relationships, and large existential questions about time, loss, and value—and partly because the investigators aimed to challenge and unsettle contemporary Disneyfied ideas of fairies as tiny, pretty, and benevolent winged females by foregrounding their very different presentation in traditional tales and songs. Loathly ladies were also incorporated into the corpus in order to offer a contrast to the beautiful, seductive fairy-queen figure, and to open up some different questions about the erotic supernatural and its relationship to power from those posed by other fairy narratives. The invited artists were commissioned to produce works that responded to the fairy material and which could be incorporated into a reasonably coherent ninety-minute work-in-progress experimental performance, produced by Andy Bell.[3]

The project's principal aim then was to investigate how artists would re-imagine and re-mediate the fairy material in order to make it 'modern', and that is the focus of this article. No definition of modernity was offered in the project's initial stages; the artists were invited to create within the context of their own individual understanding of what might constitute 'making new'. The project also had some subordinate research objectives: to probe into the possibilities for and hindrances to cross-media artist collaboration; to discover how artists with long experience of working in a particular medium could be encouraged, and would react, to sharing their ideas and techniques with relatively unknown creative artists working in other fields. The artists were interviewed during the course of the project and asked to blog about how they felt about the cross-collaborative approach. A second aspect of the project was to elicit and analyse audience feedback via focus group and other data-gathering exercises. How did different kinds of audience—those who were variously familiar, or unfamiliar, with fairy themes and folk music performance—react to the work(-in-progress) being presented to them, and how did the artists respond to this feedback? A third research question examined the benefits to The Sage Gateshead cultural centre, as our industry partner, in supporting and promoting this kind of unconventional, experimental performance, while the fourth concerned itself with the ways in which the project might provide a template for local and national government arts officers for the conception of local tradition- and heritage-based community arts projects. The answers to these subordinate questions have been addressed in a number of other research papers generated by the project and variously authored by Mary Craig (the project's engagement officer), and by Hadley, Hield, and Larrington.[4]

The Corpus

Larrington selected the stories (drawing substantially on work done for Larrington 2015) and grouped the tales about fairies into four distinct thematic categories, with the loathly lady

tales forming a fifth category. A list of the tales is given in the Appendix. The material was drawn primarily from local folktale collections of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but also from traditional ballads, medieval chronicles or similar works composed in Latin, and medieval verse romances, in order to generate the largest possible range of themes and to present stories that were localized in different parts of the British Isles. Online availability was also critical; the artists did not necessarily have access to library resources. The four categories were: Fairies and Fairyland (with particular emphasis on the otherworldliness of the fairy realm and the time slippage between worlds); Fairy Lovers and Fairy Wives (including tales in which humans gained husbands or wives from the otherworld, or recovered loved ones who had been taken by the fairies); Helpful Fairies (tales of cooperation between fairies and humans); and, finally, Fairies and Children. The last category included changelings, 'midwife to the fairies' stories, and tales in which human women nursed fairy babies and were rewarded.

The Loathly Ladies category encompassed a number of romances such as Geoffrey Chaucer's 'Wife of Bath's Tale', John Gower's 'Tale of Florent', and the anonymous late fifteenth-century romance, 'The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell'. In these versions the transformation of lady into hag could be undone by allowing her to choose freely the conditions under which she might recover her loveliness (whether she might choose beauty only at night or by day, or, as in Chaucer, in the combination 'beautiful and unfaithful' or 'loyal and ugly') (see Passmore and Carter 2007). The category also included well-known ballads such as 'Kemp Owyne' and 'Allison Gross' (Child 34 and 35) in which a girl is transformed, often by her stepmother, into a monster and must be rescued by a lover who dares to kiss her (the 'Fier Baiser' motif). The five 'folders' in which the tales were grouped by category were presented to the artists shortly before a workshop held in July 2018 at St John's College, University of Oxford. The artists were also encouraged to undertake their own research around the fairy themes, and many of them did so.[5]

The Artists and their Perspectives

The project artists were: Fay Hield, here in the role of singer, lyricist, and musician as well as project leader; Ben Nicholls, Ewan MacPherson, Barney Morse-Brown, Inge Thomson, Lucy Farrell, and Marry Waterson, all musicians and/or singers. Marry Waterson is also an animator. The writers/poets were Terri Windling, Sarah Hesketh, and Patience Agbabi. Visual artists were Jackie Morris, who later had to step back from the project, and Natalie Reid. Jim Lockey was commissioned to make a video record of the project, and also to produce his own film. A good number of the artists worked in more than one medium: some musicians were also writers and filmmakers; writers might also be illustrators. After the Oxford workshop the team convened again at the University of Sheffield Festival of the Mind in late September 2018, at a further workshop at The Sage in January 2019 and at The Sage again for a four-performance run showcasing work in progress in April 2019. Several of the project artists also took part in the Soundpost Singing Weekend at Dungworth, Sheffield in May 2019.

The artists' individual backgrounds in terms of familiarity with fairy lore were extremely varied; some came to the project with preconceptions about fairies as twee or unserious, or with no knowledge at all of British folk tradition, while others, in particular Terri Windling, were already thoroughly expert in the material or had an intimate knowledge of the related pre-existing folk-song repertoire. At the first meeting they shared past experiences of working with traditional materials and their opening perspectives on the subject of fairies. While all had worked with some traditional material before and had confidence in creating new works from archival materials, their attitudes towards fairy stories differed substantially from person to person. Opinions varied. Jackie Morris described a personal encounter she had had with Herne the Hunter, glossing her story thus: 'ever since I've been a child I've had a belief—maybe it's just a really strong desire. Some people claim to have Christianity and other people cling to the spirits and the land and I guess that's where my interest in fairies comes from'. Inge Thomson, raised on Fair Isle, reported that it was more common for people in her community to believe in the supernatural than not; on Fair Isle it would still be unusual to admit that you did *not* believe in fairies. Taking the middle ground, Fay Hield, Sarah Hesketh, and Patience Agbabi advanced more sociological views, asserting the power of traditional fairy stories to affect people, cognitively and emotionally. Hield reflected during the discussion that she 'wasn't expecting so much belief in fairies themselves'. Agbabi noted that she had not been brought up reading typically English children's retellings of folktales, although she identified parallels between the source material and comparable Nigerian traditional tales. Several other artists, like Ewan MacPherson, struggled to articulate a firm position on what they believed with regard to the supernatural:

> I'm not saying that they're here nor there. I've never seen a fairy myself in the way that I might perhaps imagine seeing a creature moving in front of me, but I certainly have a vivid imagination and have been in many locations where fairies might dwell… I don't know whether I would say I'm a firm believer in fairies, but why not?

Some artists recognized that even if they could not admit to a belief in physical fairies, there was something powerful about the stories and the ideas they contained. At the other end of the spectrum was Jim Lockey, whose eyebrows rose higher and higher during the discussion; finally, he admitted that he had absolutely no belief in the supernatural and was now rather worried about what he had committed to in joining the project. Nevertheless, the artists all shared the feeling that they intended to take the stories absolutely seriously; no one wanted to be involved with a project that regarded the stories as twee or superficial. There was a strong desire to maintain artistic credibility and present meaningful work.

After investigating the folders individually, the artists began to discuss what they found interesting and talking with one another about how they might set about making work. This raised issues with regard to the different art forms and established clearly different patterns of working. The musicians were familiar with developing work as a group, the writers and illustrators by contrast were more comfortable creating in private, and they

found it difficult to see how they might creatively collaborate with others. A form of 'speed-dating', pairing writers and musicians in the first workshop, proved beneficial in promoting cross-media collaboration. Some artists were quick to generate materials to bring to the group, while others were more focused on establishing common connections before beginning to produce work. Whichever approach was initially taken, talking and sharing perspectives on the themes of the stories fed into one another's ideas and thus affected the kinds of work, and the forms they took: 'we practitioners who had not previously worked together found ideas were flying through the air like sparks', said Thomson in her blog piece.[6] Through the process of discussing and exploring the potential meanings of stories each of the artists developed their own perspectives; some were shared, others sparked responses in a kind of dialogue.

The focus on individual interpretation was a central aspect of the project; no art was produced without this process. The artists all had to undertake a journey of understanding the materials, investigating what personally interested them and what connected with something they wanted to explore or felt moved to develop. This came more quickly for some than others, but even the sceptical Lockey was inspired to produce a film that he was pleased with and which had powerful resonances for him as a father. He reflected on his initial anxieties about the project after showing his film:

> I can do whatever, but what am I gonna put in this film? There's no constraints. It's got to do with English fairies and reflect the project, and it was only when I heard 'parallel worlds' I thought, I'm into that. I like that. But for the actual story, there's a lot from my personal life involved in that film . . . it just clicked for me. I don't know how to explain it really. It just fell into place and that was it really.

This emphasis on personal connection meant many of the artists moved quite far away from the initial set of stories, developing their own research avenues and questioning any perceived limits on the scope of the project. They needed to feel ownership of the resulting work, rather than being required to act as objective translators of the source material or as puppets in a project whose outcomes were already predetermined. The artists' creative autonomy meant that their work was less homogeneous than it might have been if they had been working to a strict commission; in some works—particularly those relating to animal transformation—the connection to fairies became relatively loose or diffuse. Similarly, as the artists were left to evolve their own understanding of what constituted 'modernity'—with some differences of opinion about using archaic lexis in lyrics—no explicit unifying perspective on what this entailed could emerge.

Creative Responses

In practice, the Modern Fairies project artists largely engaged with four key themes, two of which coincided with the folder classification. These were: Fairyland—specifically the warping of time and space in the otherworld; and Fairies and Children, in particular the changeling and the well-known medieval story of the 'Green Children'. Two other domains

emerged from the artists' own research: fairies and nature, a theme that intersected in part with the Fairyland cluster; and magical transformations.

The original five folders met with remarkably varied responses from the team of artists. Only Sarah Hesketh was interested in the idea of the loathly lady; this inspired an Instagram poetry project envisaged as the work of a persona called Alyson Loathly, which combined photographs of the urban surreal or fairies in city settings with brief haiku-like poems in the emerging tradition of the gnomic and pithy Instagram poet. Jackie Morris answered with two short poems of her own in the comments, completing or calling back to the original posts. Hesketh was interested in fairies as emblematic of storytelling tradition, but, in common with a number of other project members, she also identified Alyson Loathly as voicing an environmentalist message:

tell everyone

I am tired
of watching the forests burn

it is time for us
to remember

we have always been
a species of magic

Jackie Morris's answer to this evokes the supernatural as offering resistance:

tell everyone
the green man stirs
even as leaves
turn to gold

he comes . . .[7]

The contents of the Helpful Fairies folder did not attract any of the artists and the theme of Fairy Wives and Fairy Lovers, surprisingly, was also relatively neglected. The 'reluctant fairy-wife' tale type did reappear in the project, but as assimilated to the Animal Bride, in a number of songs and stories associated with a selkie theme (see further below). Only Fay Hield took up one of these stories. Following her earlier successful adaptation of the Middle English romance *Sir Orfeo* into song form, she condensed the lengthy narrative of the Middle English romance *Sir Launfal*, recasting its tale of a knight, a predatory queen, and a fairy mistress into ballad metre.[8] The process of editing a 6,014-word Middle English narrative into an 879-word, seven-minute song involved not only reducing the text, but being selective about which characters, activities, and thematic elements to retain. Hield found it important not merely to abbreviate the story, but also, primarily, to engage with the meanings of its action. It was vital to take an individual perspective in order to filter the

elements that were central to the message she wanted to communicate in the new format: the important values of loyalty and justice. Hield reflects:

> Wealth is worthwhile if given away, Launfal gains his fairy-mistress's love and respect for his earlier generous actions, and when he is rewarded with fairy wealth he gives it away. Launfal breaks the taboo in speaking the truth to the queen and the fairy realm apparently abandons him, yet even when he is most in personal danger, he does not change. Despite technically breaking his promise to keep his lover's existence secret, his motivation was honourable; his loyalty is tested, and he is ultimately rescued by his lover. He disobeys Triamour not for his own gain but to defend himself against a false accusation—thus justice is served. In contrast with the clear-cut self-serving indiscretions resulting in the Queen's blindness, Launfal's misdemeanours are morally harder to navigate—what was right?

While some new works responded to, or made use of, traditional tales as a springboard into modern material, Hield intended this piece to remain close to the traditional canon, to write, as it were, a 'fake folk song'. To this end, several instances of direct quotations (translated into modern English) from the original text were re-incorporated: 'Sche was as whyt as lylye yn May/Or snow that sneweth yn wynterys day' (ll. 27-8) are translated as 'Pure as a lily in May she lay/like fresh fallen snow on a cold winter's day'. Similarly, picking up on the earlier snow imagery: 'All that he hadde before ywonne,/Hyt malt as snow ayens the sunne' (ll. 67-8), translated as 'all that he'd won, did melt away fast as the snow in the sun'. So too, the verses were put to an existing traditional melody, and a commonly used rhyming structure in traditional song was used.

Re-Enchantment: Fairies and Nature

One approach that the artists found strikingly productive in terms of 'making new' was a re-imagining of fairies as guardians of the environment, unseen fellow-inhabitants of degraded habitats and industrialized spaces: a move that actively challenged those arguments that equate modernity with disenchantment. In his play, 'The War of the Fairies', Ben Nicholls adapted the Somerset tale of 'The War between the Piskies and the Fairies' (recorded in Tongue 1965, 111-12 and Bray 1854).[9] Bray's account is brief, but suggestive:

> Indeed, it is matter of tradition, that the Fairies wished very much to establish themselves in Devonshire, but the Pixies would not hear of it; and a terrible war ensued. Oberon was, with his host, defeated; and his majesty received a wound in the leg which proved incurable; none of the herbs in his dominions have hitherto had the least beneficial effects, though his principal secretary and attendant, Puck, has been in search of one of a healing nature ever since. (Bray 1854, 11)

Nicholls melded this tale with his own researches into the life of General Sir Hugh Dowding, architect of the Battle of Britain. His independent online research into fairies and the modern era had led him first to a World War II American propaganda video which featured small, cackling demonic figures in Russian uniforms, hell-bent on sabotaging in mid-flight a

German fighter plane, en route to bomb Moscow and flown by Hitler himself (Clampett 1944). This piqued Nicholls' interest; it reminded him of Roald Dahl's novel *The Gremlin*s, which drew on Dahl's wartime experience as air attaché in Washington, DC. Dahl made use of the many contemporary accounts of gremlins, reported by aviators across the combatant airforces of World War II. These goblin-like figures were glimpsed at altitude, grimacing through the windshield, trying to disconnect fuel-lines or hanging from the fuselage (Dixon 2008; Massinger 1944; Griffith 1942). In Dahl's novel the gremlins' hostility is motivated by the destruction of their environment, and this became a key theme in Nicholls' re-mediation. Nicholls found the unlikely combination of World War II military technology and malevolent supernatural figures intriguing; his further research into this phenomenon led him to General Dowding, his unexpected involvement with the Fairy Investigation Society and the emotional trauma he experienced before and during the War (Young 2013).

Nicholls' short play was framed in part as a dialogue between Dowding and the invisible Fairy King (a version of Oberon) whom Dowding encountered in his later years at a misty stone circle on a Devon moor, and in part as a biographical account of the later stages of Dowding's life. The drama incorporated the imagined fairy fight-back against human encroachment and dealt with themes of loss—of the young pilots who died under Dowding's command in aerial battle and whom he continued to mourn; of fairy habitat, taken over by the Royal and American Air Forces to build airfields; and of Dowding's own catastrophically curtailed career. Nicholls sums up:

> For me, this is the essence of the fairy phenomenon, they're something that can be grasped by humans in times of stress or uncertainty to explain situations out of their control. . . . At the start of this project, I wasn't sure how to engage with the fairy world and in the end it was the human stories of fairy faith that brought them to me.

The 'War of the Fairies' thus addressed a theme that inspired a number of other artists' work: the fairies as guardians or protectors of nature. In contrast to the nineteenth-century anxiety that industrialization and urbanization had caused the fairies and other nature-spirits to retreat to distant, inaccessible spaces where they no longer came into contact with humans, a new eco-aware imagination regards the fairies as mobilizing in defence of wild habitats. The threat that fairies can pose and the hostility they sometimes show to humans in the traditional tales is now motivated by human degradation of the environment. Ewan MacPherson's initial reaction to the project brief included 'realizing that fairies can also represent the loss of our connection to the natural world and being excited by the possibilities this connection allows within the project'.[10] MacPherson's song 'Sleeper' took its inspiration from a photograph he took of his companion on a sleeper-train heading north from London late on a summer evening.[11] The slanting light through the window captured the friend's shadow, now endowed with a strangely pointed nose, a shape whose edge was jagged and strange, and which appeared as a mass of intense darkness. In MacPherson's imagination, the shadow was on the verge of slipping away from its owner, to run out onto

the mountains and moors, to dance 'on the back of the wild'. The song laments what has been lost: 'shoot your deer, beat your grouse, lay the trees low with your iron', and its chorus, 'I saw what I did not see/you saw but you did not see' points up the 'corner of the eye' intuition of otherness that a number of artists noted in their treatment of the fairy existence as parallel to the human, as in Barney Morse-Brown's music for Lockey's film 'Parallel Worlds', discussed below.

Seeing and not seeing, a palimpsest of past and present, is a thread that runs through MacPherson's black-and-white film 'Lost Fairies', shot on an iPhone and combining sequences shot in locations as varied as St Kilda, Dartmoor, Jodhpur in northern India, Shetland, and the Outer Hebrides: seascapes, mountains and forests in winter and summer, as well as Berlin autobahns, the Forth Bridge, and other cityscapes.[12] The film starts from where 'Sleeper' leaves off, the clearing of the Highlands for the pasturing of sheep, the beginning of wholesale environmental loss in Scotland. The voiceover warns how 'our gaze is becoming compromised; we no longer feel the ten thousand trembling secrets at the edges of our visions'. Over a haunting soundtrack (MacPherson on guitar and programming, Lauren MacColl on fiddle and viola), MacPherson edits in the voices of many people who have encountered fairies or the supernatural or have memories of fairy customs from their childhoods. One voice suggests, tellingly:

> I'm just wondering whether the realm of the imagination, the realm in which fairies dwell is in fact a sort of intermediate realm, neither completely in your head neither completely in the world, but somehow crossing over, transcending the two, belonging to both and yet belonging to neither. (Mark Fox, in 'Lost Fairies')

Juxtaposing stories from Scotland and Devon, from places on the edge of different kinds of wildness, MacPherson weaves together music, voice, and image to suggest that the realm of the fairy is just there in our peripheral vision, if we only turn to look, and that it is urgent that we do begin to look differently at the habitats we share with the unseen.

Terri Windling's poem about trees and language was inspired by the idea of tree-fairies, spirits who inhabit trees, and at some level *are* the trees themselves – a conceptualization that seems to fuse classical dryads and the tree-spirits of C. S. Lewis's Narnia chronicles. It begins in the voice of an older person who seeks to teach and inform a younger one: 'The thing you need to know, child/is that trees do speak./They do tell tales'. Humans cannot normally understand or recognize what they are saying, but the soundscape that trees generate contains 'stories older than/the oldest tales of humankind'. And, so the speaker assures us, 'yes, you will understand their speech one day/root child, sweet sapling'.[13] When that 'one day' might come is not specified. Does understanding come after death, when the child is returned to the soil from which the trees take their nutrients? Windling's poem acknowledges that trees have a mysterious life of their own, analogous to human life, if much longer. Yet they are better than humans for they 'hold no grudges,/claim no debts' and they remember their lineages and affiliations in a way that humans have forgotten.

Time and the Fairy World

Ewan MacPherson also wrote an atmospheric short story, 'The Light-cutters', which amplifies some of the themes from his film and transforms the tradition of the mortal and the fairy into a moment of epiphany, of revelation of an inexpressible secret, entrusted to an ordinary man to keep.[14] The protagonist Gregor begins the story in the city as the snow falls, finding himself drawn by whispering voices to take the train out to a village, then out from the last stop deep into the forest. Here despite the snow, a winter light gleams, and he follows his instincts in finding a path through the whiteness: 'this is a place where anything can be', he realizes. A shadowy figure appears, holding a lantern that paradoxically collects and directs light rather than emitting illumination. Gregor follows it and comes to a hilltop where there is music 'or rather the feeling that music gives' and dancing, almost invisible figures spinning out a light that comes from the stars. The man watches, astonished and joyful, but, as in traditional stories of mortals who interrupt the fairy dance, the figures suddenly stop and vanish into a tiny tunnel. One figure turns and gazes into Gregor's eyes; as the spell is broken and he stumbles back through the forest towards the station he tries to make sense of what he has seen. He is charged with a new knowledge, with a mission that—if the 'lantern-bearer' is lost or captured by powers of darkness—he must preserve and communicate the memory of the light-cutters, the knowledge that there are invisible figures that work to save souls, who are 'guardians of balance and beauty'.

The musicians faced a particular challenge in transforming stories into an art form that is not necessarily itself narrative. They recognized however that 'the quotidian norms and routines of linear time and space', as Jenkins characterizes disenchanted 'reality', could be re-enchanted through musical forms that departed from linearity. Inge Thomson's 'Time Squint', an intense instrumental piece, came from her experiments with 'tinkering with ideas of time bending and pitch shifting to reflect the nature of time when an earthly being is transported to the underworld'.[15] Thomson also wrote a fierce song, 'Wood and Blood', that explores the paradox of the fetid marsh that yet gives life and produces its own ancient wisdom.[16] Humans have shed blood over this unpromising landscape, but the 'winged warriors' who haunt the mires, perhaps the will o' the wisp, are recouping their powers and regrouping their forces: 'casting spells to replenish' (but to replenish what?). The song ends mysteriously with a human hand clutching a coin—to be cast as sacrificial offering into the stagnant waters, or received from the spirits as a reminder of their powers? 'Wood and Blood' is a sinister, disturbing song, suggesting that humans merit and will receive punishment for their unheedingness and that invisible forces are marshalling to exact some kind of vengeance. The will o' the wisp, this time, is mobilizing to do more than mischievously lead humans astray.

The time-shift that occurs when humans journey into the fairy world intersects with the environmental theme in Patience Agbabi's 'We Dance to An Other Tempo'.[17] Agbabi's poem was one of the few works that re-mediated fairy themes in a clearly urban setting. Beginning with a pulsing rhythmic chant of tree names: 'alder, elder, aspen, rowan, hazel,

maple, beech, birch', the poem relates how the speaker moves through the trees and falls underground into another world that is also the entrance to an amazing club, where 'elves frisk/giant scans guest list'; a fairy woman sings 'three satin notes' and the speaker is lost: 'I drown in front vocal'. Being in the fairy world is not just intoxicating: like True Thomas of Erceldoune in the Child ballad (37C), who gains a tongue that can never lie, the speaker finds a new language: 'I speak razor sharp fairy slang . . . I'm under her lingo'. But the mortal cannot linger forever in the enchanted world; with first light the dance floor cracks, and the speaker is flung out. The trees, invoked and listed once again, are now gone; in their place are: 'alder house elder house/tower block after tower block'. Agbabi's poem draws on traditions of time-slip in the fairy world, the return to a human world which, as in so many tales, is no longer recognizable, and the allure of the fairy dance, its insistent rhythms and intoxicating drugs. But the world to which the speaker returns is a fundamentally disenchanted one; no magic survives among the high-rises.

Sarah Hesketh's 'Glitches' imagines travellers on their morning commute, whose only brush with magic is 'coffee-smoke [that] speaks modest spells into the air/we plug our ears with tinny incantations'.[18] This, again, is a disenchanted world, yet, suggests Hesketh, the commuters secretly long for 'faces forcing their way out/of the stone, quick bodies etched in gold'. In an echo of the chorus of MacPherson's 'Sleeper' the commuters 'saw but we/did not see; the residents of the edgelands made flesh'. These elemental spirits are glitches in the mundane reality of the railtracks: 'just tricks of the light'. Both 'Glitches' and 'Sleepers' contrast the quotidian train journey with what can be glimpsed beyond the window: different kinds of landscape where the fairies might once have been, and for whose appearance the traveller longs, without knowing how to name or acknowledge that longing.

In a more traditional vein, Waterson's 'King Herla' fuses the whirling journey of the legendary king—cursed after a visit to an otherworld king to keep riding until the little dog he has been presented with jumps down from the horse—with the Seven Whistlers, spectral creatures who are a version of the Wild Hunt and the Gabble or Gabriel Hounds heard in the autumn and a harbinger of ill omen, part of the traditional folklore of North Yorkshire, Waterson's home.[19] Whoever hears their cries will die and join the 'souls [who] race/doomed to a moonless chase', and who are aligned with the 'hounds of hell'. This disturbing song in its minor key evokes the thrill and horror of the unceasing motion of Herla, his men and dogs, and the sounds that signal their presence in the modern and everyday world: the autumnal honking of wild geese migrating south (Robinson 1876, 74; Hutton 2019 and 2014).

Fairies and Children

Like other musicians seeking metaphors for the expression of the themes of fairy tradition through non-narrative forms, Barney Morse-Brown is drawn by the idea of the unseen fairy world, writing of his apprehension of 'a fairy world that you know is only there out of the corner of your eye and vanishes when you try to look straight at it'.[20] Morse-Brown's 'Parallel Worlds' accompanied Jim Lockey's extraordinarily moving film of the same title.[21] The intensely eerie cello track uses reverb and delay, a minor key, counter-melody, and

sustained rhythm to 'create a sense of walking': the rhythmic movement that unites the two strands of Lockey's film. The filmmaker took his inspiration from the tale of Elidor, the boy who could travel into the world of the fairies, summoned by a golden ball that allowed him to pass through the magic portal, a tale recorded by Gerald of Wales in the late twelfth century. But Elidor is encouraged to steal the golden ball, and thereafter he can never find his way to Fairyland again. This story signals the boy's maturation as adopting the values of the humans around him, growing greedy and materialistic in coveting the ball; his loss of innocence entails the loss of access to wonder and beauty. Lockey's film offers at first a similar invitation to pass into another space: a young boy sits alone in a long empty gallery, a stark, white space framed by successive rectangular arches. He is drawn by what seems to be a canvas on the wall at the far end in which a tangle of black lines pulses and rotates; in close-up the knot seems iridescent, made perhaps of black shot silk. The boy walks towards it, half wary, half entranced; reaching out with a tentative finger he somehow passes through the nexus into an almost sepia, yet sunlit, world, flooded with a low afternoon light. Here he walks through woodland, his arm slung affectionately around the neck of another boy, uncannily similar in appearance to himself (the two boys are in fact brothers, Lockey's sons). The woodland is a place of timeless enchantment. The point of view cuts between the boys walking and skipping within the woodland and the pulsing canvas in the gallery. The tangled, boiling mass is shrinking and dissipating; the passage between worlds is folding in on itself, and finally the canvas becomes blank. The portal has closed, and the boy can never return. Unlike Elidor, shut out of Fairyland, this lad is shut in, lost forever, like so many other mortals in fairy tradition.

Marry Waterson took up the theme of the Green Children, first in an original song, 'Green in my Growing Pains', and then in an adaptation of a poem by the American writer Jane Yolen (Yolen 1993). The tale of the Green Children, drawn from the two late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century overlapping accounts by Ralph of Coggeshall and William of Newburgh, is distinct in its structure from the familiar patterns of folktale. The two bright-green children who are found by harvesters at the edge of a wheat field, who have great difficulty in adjusting to human ways, and who can only maintain their green colour on a diet of beans have been interpreted in various ways. While the medieval chroniclers report the girl's description of 'St Martin's Land', an underground country where there is neither sun nor moon, and where the two children were herding their father's sheep until they were drawn into this world by the sound of church-bells, modern commentators have noted the ways in which the accounts can be assimilated to contemporary traditions about Fairyland. Naturalistic explanations—that the children suffered from jaundice or some other kind of dietary deficiency (hence the green colour) and were immigrants or refugees (hence their inability to understand English or to consume local food)—have also been put forward (Clark 2006; Walsh 2000). Waterson's two songs engaged with both the traditional tale and with the rationalization of the children's situation.

The 'Green Children' song, adapted from Yolen's poem, is a retelling that makes vivid reference to the original green colour that fades away, as does the boy, and the white hue

that the girl gains once she is christened and humanized, marrying at last in a white that counterpoints the green hue with which she started. Waterson also made an animation to accompany this song, using drawings by Natalie Reid.[22] The predominant colour scheme is, of course, white and green. The two near-identical children are lying on dark soil with mists around them, and as they stand up images from the natural world appear, showing all the shades of green that the children are not: ivy-green, apple-green, sea-green. Rather, the song observes, they have the green of newly opened leaves—a green that extends to their eyes and to the tongue that they speak. As their mouths open, the speech bubbles that emerge are filled with leaves for, in Yolen's words, the language that they spoke was one shared with trees and flowers. The community that encounters and absorbs the Green Children is not shown in the animation; rather, the children are seen from the fascinated villagers' point of view. The song traces how the girl adapts to human ways and apparently loses her strangeness, or at least learns how to conceal it.

'Green in my Growing Pains' places the children in a more clearly modern context.[23] It depicts the two as child refugees, journeying towards an uncertain future, ripped away from their own home and family, and cast on the mercy of strangers. Waterson's song transposes the mysterious medieval anecdote into a familiar and politicized setting. The turning of the seasons and children's play turns into danger and horror: 'Fiery colours of the fall, catch the flame, throw the ball,/from the hands of war, the hounds of war into the eye of a storm'. The brother 'dies along the way', but his sister survives, 'green in my growing pains', struggling with a new language ('borrowed tongues'), with the memory of 'childhood songs' and waiting for 'friends to call on foreign shores', perhaps to call her home or simply to make contact with news from home.

Terri Windling developed the idea that the girl, as claimed in William of Newburgh's version, marries a man from (King's) Lynn, and perhaps had children. Her 'interview' with the Green Girl's grandchild, sharing the secrets that his grandmother had imparted to him draws on the information given by Ralph and William.[24] Martin Carthy recorded the interview; this was captured in part on a crackling wax cylinder recording, which then faded into normal speech, emphasising ancientness and also continuity. The grandmother had spoken a secret language and she remembered the 'Green Land' from which she originally came. Or were these just stories invented to entertain a child? Was she really, as the narrator's mother maintained, 'only a foreign girl from across the sea'? Windling's piece chimes with Waterson's song 'Green in my Growing Pains', capturing ideas of loss, deracination, and the surviving child's determination to survive—and even to thrive—in the place that she must now consider home.

Patience Agbabi takes up the traditional changeling story in her poem 'Double'. This unfolds with the story of a baby who seems fine until the poem's midpoint where the mother registers that something has definitively, and inexplicably, changed about her child, with 'I don't understand'.[25] Thereafter the poem goes into reverse: a form known as the 'specular'. There are two halves to a specular, the second exactly repeating the lines of first in reverse order, although punctuation can be changed. Now the questioning and tentative

opening line, ‘Something’s happened to my son’, sounds a closing note that is desperate in its finality. Agbabi blogs about the personal background to the poem, reimagining a mother’s apprehension that her son has autism or some other developmental disorder; the child she loved and thought she knew has vanished, replaced by a creature she can no longer recognize.[26]

Magical Transformation

Fay Hield’s research into magical incantation and spells led her to Isobel Gowdie, the best known of the seventeenth-century Scottish witches. In her court testimony, Gowdie recounted how she would transform herself into a beast—a cat or crow or hare—in order to visit the King and Queen of the Fairies who lived in the Downie Hill near her home in north-east Scotland, and there she would feast with them (Wilby 2010). Hield used the words of Gowdie’s transforming charm to create a song, generating a melody from those letters in the charm that double as musical notes.[27] The song ‘Hare-spell’ uses only Gowdie’s words to incantatory effect.[28] Hield and Hesketh wondered what it might be like for the hare to feel herself suddenly, but regularly, taken over, inhabited, by another being. Does she fear or welcome the invasion? Hesketh’s poem ‘When She Comes’ was set to music and sung by Hield; the words make vivid the intoxication of possession in a mode that is almost sexual: ‘when she comes I feel her dark ask/pressing its shade to my skin’.[29] In the two central verses woman and beast are joyously one: ‘we leap like flame/and turn up our hearts to the moon’. Gowdie must always in the end return to her own shape and leave the hare behind. Nevertheless, the act of possession is imagined as volitional: the hare willingly lets the woman in and equally she lets her go: ‘she leaves me gold-flecked/and I kick the dawn o’er the fields’. The song is a powerful one, speaking to a queer erotic, rather like Agbabi’s fairy club where any kind of pleasure is possible; the two poets clearly perceive how integral desire is to the human longing for the fairy and the magical. Along with the selkies then, which became a distinct subset of work within the project, these two hare songs, with a reading of two stories about transforming hares retold by Terri Windling, form a related cluster, edited as a podcast by Inge Thomson.[30]

This expansion into the concept of witches contributed to a debate within the project; early in the first workshop, Jackie Morris raised the question of what a fairy was. Could the project’s definition expand to contain mermaids, brownies, selkies and the like? Larrington argued that these were distinct magical beings and their stories were generally different from those associated with fairies. Nevertheless, some of the artists decided to pursue the selkie theme, and the songs, animations, and poems about selkies constituted a major element in the project’s realization. Lucy Farrell made a podcast about selkies; this included a round that she had composed for choir use, and which hypnotically repeats in the voices of the selkie herself, perhaps her child, and also the abandoned husband: ‘Come back for your heart; come back for your home’; ‘I will unmoor, I will undo, I will untie’; ‘For me now, for me come’.[31] This song is accompanied by Natalie Reid’s animation in which, in an endless loop, the outline of a swimming, somersaulting woman in the dark blue depths of the sea

transforms into a diving seal, and back into a woman.[32] Also speaking in the podcast were Inge Thomson and Mary Craig. Both talked about encountering seals (selkies) on the shoreline in different parts of Scotland. Craig recalls how at the age of two or three at the beach at Dunoon, near Glasgow:

> I saw these two ladies and they were singing to selkies, and what terrified the living daylights out of me was the selkies were singing back. . . . they weren't dressed strangely or anything, they were just two women, but I was half scared, thinking maybe they were witches, but I was utterly fascinated by these two women singing to these selkies and singing, and the selkies just singing back and singing back. And that's it.

Thomson recounted how she used to sing to the selkies in her childhood and had experimented with the same song again during the past summer while at home on Fair Isle. She drew to her a curious young female who followed her up and down the beach, listening intently. Some visitors asked her father what she was doing, and he replied 'nonchalantly, "Oh, she's just singing in the selkies"'.

The (female) selkie tale is an example of the Animal Bride type (ATU 402) and thus has resonance with some of the fairy-bride examples included in the 'Fairies, Wives and Lovers' selection, in particular the stories of Wild Edric recorded by Gervase of Tilbury and the Welsh story of 'The Lady of Llyn y Fan Fach' (see Appendix). In the artists' reworkings of the selkie theme, there is less emphasis on the taboo and its breaking that liberates (or forces) the wife back to her original home and less too on her joyful sense of recovered freedom (compare the little ditty of the selkie in 'The Goodman of Wastness' : 'Goodman o' Wastness, fareweel tae thee!/I liked dee weel, doo war geud tae me; /bit I lo'e better me man o' the sea!') (Black 1903, 176). Rather, these selkie women find themselves in stasis: caught between land and sea, between home and elsewhere. They long for their freedom out in the ocean, but they cannot yet quite commit to leaving the land forever. The artists talked about the powerful bonds between selkie mothers and their children, a tie that seems to anchor the women on shore as much as their hidden skins. Thus, the selkie theme allowed artists to explore ambivalences about the loss of identity entailed by being half of a couple, and about the ways in which motherhood might seem to compromise selfhood. Farrell's round, with its interweaving, repeating, and harmonizing voices, strikingly imagines the different tensions in the traditional selkie tale.

Re-Mediation and Modernity

The 'Modern Fairies' artists thoroughly interrogated the practice of *re-mediation* in their responses to the folklore material. Most transposed narratives or themes into a different medium altogether—visual or musical—and almost none opted for a straightforward retelling of the traditional material (see the discussion of Hield's *Sir Launfal* above). Where narrative forms were used, approaches were often indirect and allusive; the stories functioned as a jumping-off point for exploring contemporary concerns using fairy motifs or ideas, and usually, but not always, retaining an element of the supernatural. Two of the

musicians composed instrumental pieces that spoke to the idea of unseen or parallel spaces and times, while others produced songs that made oblique reference to fairy narratives. Most notably, the fairies were re-scripted as victims of human industrialization and other forms of exploitation. Where earlier analyses of the emergence of the modern have argued that disenchantment and scientific progress must go hand in hand (Weber 1946; see also Jenkins 2000 and now Josephson-Storm 2017), more recently figures of British folklore have been recruited as allies to environmentalist movements (in particular the Green Man; see Larrington 2015, 227 and 232-34).[33] Habitat degradation is no longer only addressed through nostalgia, mourning, and displacement; rather the project's Modern Fairies are recruited to fight back against different forms of encroachment and degradation. They are imagined as protectors and preservers of the past, but this is always a past that threatens and foreshadows loss of the present. This move goes hand in hand with the hope that the climate emergency, along with historic loss of habitat, can be ameliorated through harnessing imaginative modes of thinking.

The project imagined then a kind of enchantment that is somehow still fleetingly available within a quotidian experience that is held to be radically disenchanted. That enchantment may operate on a metaphorical plane, as standing for imagination and creativity, or it may suggest a process of re-enchantment, of existence on a different plane of reality, one that is glimpsed from the corner of the eye. This is signalled by references to squints or sideways glances, the shadow as independent of its owner. Another principal theme that surfaced in the artists' work was anxiety about the futures of children, both their own and other peoples': that children could be damaged or displaced, change so much that they seem unrecognizable, or vanish into another dimension altogether. 'Parallel Worlds', 'Green in my Growing Pains', and 'Double' each, in different ways, spoke to these fears in modes that were sometimes tangible, sometimes muted. Against these dark imaginings were more optimistic works, from Windling in particular, which foregrounded adaptation, flourishing, growth, and learning, not just for the individual child, but for humans across generations. Children then offered ways of personifying potential futures, not unlike the concept of the fairy itself.

The final theme that emerged in the corpus of work was that of transformation. Women transform temporarily into animals, their new shapes functioning as a locus of desire and longing, a liberation from an ordinary that was neither patriarchal nor oppressive, but which nevertheless constrained their dreams and desires. Transformation is never final, never permanent, but rather allows a temporary release that makes possible life in the everyday world. This theme is most directly addressed in the selkie material, but it is also foregrounded in the treatment of Isobel Gowdie's pain-infused transformations that grant her both mobility and a mode of being—inhabiting the body of the hare—that brings pleasure and release. One of the voices heard in MacPherson's film 'Lost Fairies' suggests that the capacity for transformation is inherently and necessarily female. Husbands, it suggests, must learn that their wives are not always as predictable as they seem.

> Myth says why on earth would you suspect that your wife is a woman twenty-four hours a day? Do you not realize that at dusk for at least forty-five minutes, she is a fox with eight tails? Have you not realized yet that when she is looking out of the window with those grey eyes of hers she has become a seal within the hole / whole of her heart, and she is down there in those deep oceanic waters. Best to leave her alone at that moment. (Martin Shaw in 'Lost Fairies')

While this voice invokes the familiar stereotype of women as essentially mutable and as aligned with nature, rather than culture, it also registers the deeply felt yearning to escape, if only for a moment, from a female social identity.

The project's fairies were recuperated for the modern through different strategies. For two of the poets, Hesketh and Agbabi, modernity meant incorporating them into urban settings, as glitches, glimpsed from the corner of the commuter's eye, their songs unheard and unhearable through the traveller's earphones. In Agbabi's 'We Dance to An Other Tempo' the fairies' modernization, their updating of the whirling fairy dance to the pulsing fairy club scene, seems to precede the transformation of the trees into tower-blocks, although chronology surely operates differently across the night-time world below and the concrete and glass environment visible in the dawn. Form and style also made the fairies modern. Hesketh's 'Alyson Loathly' is that most up-to-date of phenomena, an Instagram poet who ranges through an urban weird. During the performances, shadow-puppeteers projected cityscapes and railway tracks behind the performers for the more city-focused songs and poems. Animations—of selkies and Green Children—also brought these stories out of a medievalized past into a contemporary idiom; the Green Children wear modern clothes, for example. Language was a central issue for the writers; while Agbabi's lexis was consciously contemporary, Waterson employed a more traditional register. These individual choices generated lively debate among the artists. Some artists argued that the re-mediation of materials through the prism of their own subjective experience of the modern world in itself would in itself make the materials modern, or that the use of modern media would in itself reshape the stories so that they echoed and chimed with modern concerns. Self-consciously updating them was not then necessary, as they became so by implication.

Writing about the marked ahistoricism of medieval film, Arthur Lindley argues that:

> films of the medieval period present their matère in an analogical relation: as type or anti-type of current circumstances, as allegorical representation of them, or as estranged retelling. The distant past may mirror us – we, not it, are the real subject – but it does not lead to us. (Lindley 2014)

So too, the medievalism of the original fairy narratives is elided in some works, becoming erased as stories are transposed into a marked present. Lockey's film begins in a starkly modern gallery space; Nicholls' fairies battle against the impact of Spitfires and wartime airfields intruding into their space; the baby that does not develop normatively is a changeling—but no recuperation, no exchange with the fairies who took the healthy child is

possible. Thus, the encounter with the fairy operates as analogous to the contemporary world of the human, the fairy world's interaction with and impact on the present is half-glimpsed and fleeting, but, as Lindley emphasizes: 'we, not it, are the real subjects'. Artists employ the fairies to talk about present anxieties and desires.

The Sage audiences were summoned into the Northern Rock, the dark performance space in which the shows took place, by Hield's 'Calling On Song'.[34] This drew its inspiration from the opening lines of Chaucer's 'Wife of Bath's Tale'; already in the 1390s Chaucer's Wife noted that the fairies and elves that once thronged the countryside had vanished, driven out by the presence of the Church. Where once 'the elf-queene, with hir joly compaignye/Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede', now 'oothere holy freres' who cluster as 'thikke as motes in the sonne-beem' roam the fields and forests (Chaucer 1988, 116-17). Hield's song recalls how 'in days of old . . . the country was riven with fairies/the elf-queen and her sprightly elf-horde/. . . to dance in the meadows so green'. In a powerful twist on Chaucer's words, the fairies are 'Gold flecks turned to dust in sun-beams'. But, the song continues, the fairies are back: 'Called to arms . . . to take back built-up city and skyline' and the audience is invited to 'draw near, step inside, take a seat' to 'feel the scratch of their breath as we speak'. The modern encounter with the fairy is not comfortable or twee, rather it demands a process of re-enchantment. It is 'scratchy' and challenging, perilous and illuminating—and longed-for.

Appendix: Stories Provided as Sources in 'Modern Fairies' Project

The material used in the project reflects a range of folk materials collected and reworked in ways that are characteristic of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as some medieval literary and historical texts about fairies. The corpus was chosen for its thematic and geographical range, but a primary requirement was online availability so that the artists could access the material without having to seek out library collections.

Folder One: Fairies and Fairyland

1. 'St Collen and Gwyn ap Nudd'. In *The Mabinogion*, translated by Lady Charlotte Guest, 310-11. London: Dent, 1906. http://www.maryjones.us/ctexts/collen.html
2. 'November Eve'. In *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms and Superstitions of Ireland*, vol. 1, edited by Lady Frances Speranza Wilde. 145-48. Boston: Ticknor & Sons, 1887. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/ali/ali033.htm
3. 'Elidor'. In Gerald of Wales, *The Itinerary through Wales and the Description of Wales*, edited by W. Llewelyn Williams, 68-70. London: Dent, 1908. https://archive.org/stream/itinerarythroug00girauoft/itinerarythroug00girauoft_djvu.txt
4. 'The Fairy Dwelling at Selena Moor'. In *Traditions and Hearthside Stories of West Cornwall*, edited by William Bottrell, 94-102. Penzance: J. Beare & Sons, 1873. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/swc2/swc216.htm
5. 'Fairy Revels on the Gump, St Just'. In *Popular Romances of the West of England*, 3rd ed., vol. 1, edited by Robert Hunt, 98-101. https://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/prwe/prwe038.htm

6. ‘Man Plays Game of Chance with Supernatural Opponent; Hundreds of Years Pass’. In Ruth Tongue, *Somerset Folklore*, edited by Katharine M. Briggs, 124. London: Folklore Society, 1965.
7. ‘Tale of Oisin in the Land of the Ever-Young’. In *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race*, edited by Thomas Rolleston, 271-75. London: Constable, 1911. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/mlcr/index.htm

Folder Two: Fairy Lovers and Fairy Wives

1. *Sir Launfal*. In *The Middle English Breton Lays*, edited by Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, 201-62. TEAMS Middle English Texts. Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute, 1995. http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/laskaya-and-salisbury-middle-english-breton-lays-sir-launfal
2. ‘Thomas the Rhymer’ (Child 37). Tam Lin Balladry. http://www.tam-lin.org/library/thomas_text.html. Romance text in *The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*, edited by James A. H. Murray, 1-47. London: N. Trübner & Co. for the Early English Text Society, 1875. https://archive.org/details/romanceprophecie00thomuoft
3. ‘Tam Lin’ (Child 39). Tam Lin Balladry. http://tam-lin.org/versions/39A.html
4. ‘Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight’ (Child 4). Tam Lin Balladry. http://tam-lin.org/stories/Lady_Isabel.html
5. ‘Fairy-Mistress Who Follows her Lover to Nova Scotia’. In W. Y. Evans-Wentz, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*, 112-13. London and New York: H. Froude, 1911. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/ffcc/ffcc122.htm
6. ‘The Lady of Llyn y Fan Fach’. In *The Welsh Fairy Book*, edited by W. Jenkyn Thomas, 1-10. New York: F. A. Stokes, 1908. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/wfb/wfb03.htm
7. ‘Wild Edric’ (from Walter Map). In *English Fairy and Other Folk Tales*, edited by Edwin Sidney Hartland, 52-55. London: Walter Scott, 1890. www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/efft/efft08.htm
8. ‘Master and Man’. In *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, edited by W. B. Yeats, 84-90. London: Walter Scott, 1888. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/yeats/fip/fip25.htm
9. ‘A Wife to Sandy Harg’. In R. H. Cromek, *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*, 244-45. Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1880. https://archive.org/details/remainsnithsdal00gillgoog
10. A story from Shetland related to no. 9. In *Scottish Fairy and Folk Tales*, edited by George Douglas, 131-32. New York: A. L. Burt & Co., 1901. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/sfft/sfft40.htm
11. *Sir Orfeo*. In *The Middle English Breton Lays*, edited by Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, 15-59. TEAMS Middle English Texts. Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute, 1995. https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/laskaya-and-salisbury-middle-english-breton-lays-sir-orfeo
12. ‘Story of Kathleen’. In *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms and Superstitions of Ireland*, vol. 1, edited by Lady Frances Speranza Wilde, 143-45. Boston: Ticknor & Sons, 1887. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/ali/ali032.htm
13. ‘Eilian and the Tywyth Teg’. In *Celtic Folklore: Welsh and Manx*, vol. 1, edited by John Rhys, 212-14. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1901. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/cfwm/cf107.htm

14. ‘Cherry of Zennor’. In *Popular Romances of the West of England*, 3rd ed., vol. 1, edited by Robert Hunt, 120-26. London: Chatto & Windus, 1887. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044019769322&view=1up&seq=9
15. ‘Lovely Margaret and Dark Ailsa’. In John Gregorson Campbell, *Clan Traditions and Popular Tales of the Highlands*, edited by Jessie Wallace and Duncan MacIsaac, 97-99. London: David Nutt, 1893. https://archive.org/stream/clantraditionspo00campuoft#page/n12/mode/1up

Folder Three: Helpful Fairies

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2. The Fairy Woman of Sanntraigh’. In J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, *Orally Collected*, vol. 2, 52-54. Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1862. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/pt2/pt210.htm
3. ‘Dunvuilg is on Fire!’ In Campbell (as above), 62-63. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/pt2/pt212.htm
4. ‘Borrowing Oatmeal’. In Campbell (as above), 67-68. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/pt2/pt213.htm
5. ‘Mending Fairy Tools’. In *Celtic Folklore: Welsh and Manx*, vol. 1, edited by John Rhys, 241-42. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1901.
6. ‘The Smith’s Son’. In Campbell (as above), 57-60. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/pt2/pt212.htm
7. ‘Saving a Whisky Distiller from the Devil’. In *More Highland Folk Tales*, edited by R. Macdonald Robertson, 66-70. Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964.

Folder Four: Fairies and Children

1. ‘The Changeling of Brea Vean’. In *Traditions and Hearthside Stories of West Cornwall*, edited by William Bottrell, 200-205. Penzance: J. Beare & Sons, 1873. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/swc2/swc241.htm
2. ‘Betty Stogs’ Baby’. In Bottrell (as above), 205-206. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/swc2/swc242.htm
3. ‘Brewery of Eggshells’ In *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*, edited by J. Crofton Croker, 65-76. London: John Murray, 1825. http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/britchange.html#Brewery
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9. 'Midwife to the Fairies'. See a selection of tales at #FolkoreThursday: http://folklorethursday.com/folktales/fairy-midwife-magic-ointment/#sthash.xOLMQt9g.dpbs
10. 'Fairy Godmother'. In *Huon of Bordeaux*, translated by Sir John Berners. https://carleton.ca/chum/wp-content/uploads/Huon-for-Hums-3200.pdf (p. 7)

Folder Five: Loathly Ladies

1. Geoffrey Chaucer's 'Wife of Bath's Tale' (Chaucer 1988, 116-22).
2. John Gower, 'Tale of Florent'. In *Confession Amantis*, vol. 1, edited by Russell A. Peck and translated by Andrew Galloway, 139-50. TEAMS Middle English Texts. Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute, 2006. http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/peck-gower-confessio-amantis-book-1
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4. 'Kemp Owyne' (Child 34). http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/child/ch034.htm
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9. 'King Henry' (Child 32). 'Child's Ballads'. Wikisource. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Child%27s_Ballads/32
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Notes

[1] AHRC Grant Ref: AH/P013724/1. The authors are grateful to the AHRC for their support.

[2] Julie Fowlis, 'Selkie-Boy', *The Lost Words: Spell Songs*, Quercus Records QRCD04, 2019; Gavin Davenport and Jess Arrowsmith, 'Changeling's Lullaby', *Changeling*, WildGoose WGS315, 2003. For a selection of further examples see Fay Hield. 'Facebook thread on composition of new songs from folk-material', https://www.facebook.com/fay.hield/posts/10157658421751023. 2020.

[3] There were four performances which were held at The Sage Gateshead in the afternoons and evenings of 27 and 28 April 2019.
[4] Mary Craig, Fay Hield, and Carolyne Larrington, 'The A-Z of Academic-Artist-Audience-Arts Organisation Collaborative Research', 2019. http://modernfairies.co.uk/blog/the-a-z-of-academic-artist-audience-arts-organisation-collaborative-research.
[5] The folder contents are listed in the Appendix.
[6] 'Artist of the Week Blogpost', 2018, http://www.modernfairies.co.uk/blog/artist-of-the-week-inge-thomson
[7] Sarah Hesketh, 'Alyson Loathly', https://www.instagram.com/loathlyalyson/?hl=en; Jackie Morris, https://www.instagram.com/p/BoMRJf0neqV/ 2018.
[8] Fay Hield and the Hurricane Party, 'Sir Orfeo', *Sir Orfeo*, Topic Records, TSCD586, 2012; 'Sir Launfal', *Wrackline*, Topic Records, TSCD608, 2020.
[9] 'The Fairy Investigation Society', unpublished play, 2019. Available online in Jim Lockey, 'Modern Fairies', film of performance at The Sage, 2020: http://www.modernfairies.co.uk/blog/the-sage-gateshead-gatherings. Last modified 12 May 2020. This film is hereafter referred to as Lockey 2020.
[10] 'Artist of the Week Blogpost', 2018, http://modernfairies.co.uk/blog/ewan-macpherson;
[11] 'Sleeper', 2019. Online in Lockey 2020.
[12] 'Lost Fairies', 2019. Online in Lockey 2020.
[13] 'Fairies of the Trees', 2019. Online in Lockey 2020.
[14] 'The Light-cutters', 2019, http://www.modernfairies.co.uk/blog/the-light-cutters.
[15] 'Artist of the Week Blogpost', 2018, http://www.modernfairies.co.uk/blog/artist-of-the-week-inge-thomson; 'Time Squint', 2019. Performed in Lockey 2020.
[16] 'Wood and Blood', 2019. Performed in Lockey 2020.
[17] We Dance to An Other Tempo', 2019, http://www.modernfairies.co.uk/blog/we-dance-to-an-other-tempo. Also performed in Lockey 2020.
[18] 'Glitches', Poem 2019. http://www.modernfairies.co.uk/blog/glitches. Performed in Lockey 2020.
[19] 'King Herla', 2019. Performed in Lockey 2020.
[20] 'Artist of the Week Blogpost', 2018, http://www.modernfairies.co.uk/blog/artist-of-the week-duotone.
[21] Barney Morse-Brown, 'Parallel Worlds', soundtrack, 2019; Jim Lockey, 'Parallel Worlds', film, 2019. Online in Lockey 2020.
[22] 'The Green Children', song and animation, 2019. Online in Lockey 2020.
[23] 'Green in my Growing Pains', unpublished song.
[24] 'Green Girl Interview'. Performed in Lockey 2020.
[25] 'Double', 2018, http://www.modernfairies.co.uk/blog/artist-of-the-week-patience-agbabi. Also performed in Lockey 2020.
[26] http://modernfairies.co.uk/blog/artist-of-the-week-patience-agbabi
[27] See Hield's description of this compositional process in 'Artist of the Week Blogpost', 2018, http://modernfairies.co.uk/blog/artist-of-the-week-fay-hield
[28] 'Hare-spell', 2019. In Inge Thomson, 'Hares', podcast, 2020, http://www.modernfairies.co.uk/blog/hares. Also performed in Lockey 2020, and on *Wrackline*, Topic Records, 2020 TSCD608.

[29] Sarah Hesketh, 'When She Comes' (poem), 2019. Fay Hield, 'When She Comes' (song), 2019. Both in Inge Thomson, 'Hares', podcast, 2020, http://www.modernfairies.co.uk/blog/hares. Also performed in Lockey 2020.

[30] Inge Thomson, 'Hares', podcast, 2020, http://www.modernfairies.co.uk/blog/hares.

[31] Lucy Farrell, 'Selkies', podcast, 2019. Performed in Lockey 2020.

[32] Natalie Rae Reid, 'Selkie', animation, 2019, http://modernfairies.co.uk/blog/selkies. Also in Lockey 2020.

[33] The new BBC dramatization of Barbara Euphan Todd's *Worzel Gummidge* (original novels written between 1936 and 1963), scripted by Mackenzie Crook, broadcast on BBC One on 26 and 27 December 2019, epitomized this trend: Gummidge, says the journalist Stephen Armstrong, is 'reimagined . . . as a guardian of the natural world, battling to keep the seasons as they should be and prevent an endless summer'. The scarecrows are created by the Green Man, 'who harnesses them to spot danger and protect the earth' (*Sunday Times*, 15 December 2019, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/mackenzie-crook-interview-the-worzel-gummidge-star-on-his-woke-bbc1-reboot-n29cm37xt).

[34] 'Calling-On Song', 2019. Performed in Lockey 2020.

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