

Title	Fairies and falsehoods
Sub Title	
Author	辺見, 葉子(Henmi, Yōko)
Publisher	慶應義塾大学藝文学会
Publication year	2017
Jtitle	藝文研究 (The geibun-kenkyu : journal of arts and letters). Vol.113, No.2 (2017. 12) ,p.40- 55
JaLC DOI	
Abstract	
Notes	The decay of lying? : essays in honour of professor Keiko Kawachi
Genre	Journal Article
URL	<a href="https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AN00072643-01130002-0040">https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AN00072643-01130002-0040</a>

慶應義塾大学学術情報リポジトリ(KOARA)に掲載されているコンテンツの著作権は、それぞれの著作者、学会または出版社/発行者に帰属し、その権利は著作権法によって保護されています。引用にあたっては、著作権法を遵守してご利用ください。

The copyrights of content available on the KeiO Associated Repository of Academic resources (KOARA) belong to the respective authors, academic societies, or publishers/issuers, and these rights are protected by the Japanese Copyright Act. When quoting the content, please follow the Japanese copyright act.

# Fairies and Falsehoods

**Yoko HEMMI**

## **I The Cottingley fairy photographs**

The most famous, or infamous, lies ever told of fairies are the ones pertaining to the photographs of Cottingley fairies. The first two of the five fairy photos were taken by two girls, Elsie Wright and Frances Griffith in 1917, amid the First World War in the village of Cottingley in Yorkshire (Plates 1 and 2). Elsie was 16 and her cousin Frances, who was staying with Elsie's family, was 10 at that time. Frances was repeatedly scolded for getting her dress and shoes wet while playing by the 'beck' at the bottom of their garden, which she frequently stumbled into. When asked to explain why she kept going to the beck so often, Frances blurted out that it was to 'see the fairies'. They borrowed Elsie's father's Midg



Plate 1 'Frances and the Fairies'

Plate 2 'Elsie and the Gnome'



camera and took two fairy photographs so as to convince their parents that Frances's excuse was legitimate (Cooper, 25-27).

The photographs were not expected to be shown outside the family circle, but the two girls' mothers, Polly Wright and Annie Griffiths, came to develop an interest in Theosophy and, when attending a meeting on 'Fairy Life', Polly mentioned the two 'fairy' photographs, which were eventually sent to Edward Gardner, the then president of the Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society in London (Smith, 379). When Harold Snelling, an expert in fake photography, examined the original negatives sent from the Wrights and confirmed that they 'are entirely genuine unfaked photographs of single exposure, open-air work, show movement in all the fairy figures, and there is no trace whatever of studio work', Gardner asked Snelling to make two lantern-slides for him to use at lectures (Gardner, 18). Sir Arthur Conan Doyle heard of Gardner's lectures and contacted him, as Doyle believed that spirit photography was 'central to the cause of Spiritualism' (Wynne, 388). Gardner and Doyle submitted the negatives to Kodak as well as to the Ilford Company to be further examined before publishing the photographs. Kodak's experts, while admitting that 'the negatives are single exposure and the plates show no sign of being faked', did not offer any certificate of authenticity for the photographs, whereas the Ilford Company reported that 'there is some evidence of faking' (Smith, 385).

Gardner and Doyle chose to dismiss these inconclusive yet less than positive reports in favour of Snelling's assessment, yet they felt it necessary that 'the absence of any sign of faked work must be coupled with positive testimony on the personal side' (Gardner, 19). Visiting the Wrights in Yorkshire, Gardner found the family absolutely sincere, honest, unspoiled and trustworthy, lacking any motives for fraudulent work (23). Doyle and Gardner, now that they obtained 'satisfactory testimony on the personal side' to be coupled with the positive analysis of the photographs, decided to publish the photographs accompanied by an article by Doyle in the *Strand Magazine* in the 1920 Christmas edition. In order to provide additional evidence, the 'children', as they were referred to regardless of their ages now being 19 and 13<sup>1</sup>, took three more photographs (plates 3, 4, and 5), two of which (plates 3 and 4) were published in the *Strand Magazine* in March 1921. All five photos, with the 'whole of the evidence in connection with them', as Doyle writes in the preface, were published in his book, *The Coming of the Fairies* in 1922.



[upper-left] Plate 3

'Frances and the Leaping Fairy'

[upper-right] Plate 4

'Fairy Offering Posy of Hare-bells to Elsie'

[left] Plate 5

'Fairies and their Sun-bath'

However, it would not be until 1983 — that is, for another sixty or so years — that Elsie and Frances, then old ladies aged 82 and 76 respectively, finally confessed that the fairy photographs were fakes: the fairies had been cardboard cut-outs supported with hatpins. Frances believed that the fifth and the last photograph (plate 5) was genuine, though it was apparently a product of an 'accidental double exposure' (Bown, 191). The fact that Conan Doyle, the creator of the calm and logical Sherlock Holmes, declared the photos genuine, may have been a factor in keeping alive the interest in these mysterious photographs of fairies. The evasive attitudes of the photographers also contributed to deepening the mystery.

## II The Cottingley fairy photographs as a ‘fairy-story’

In 1965, Elsie told the *Daily Express* that the photographs were ‘pictures of figments of our imagination’, an assertion that she would repeat whenever interviewed in the 1970s (Cooper, 102). Elsie was considered to be evading the question of authenticity of the fairy photographs, which had been a central issue in the media’s coverage. However, as Bown proposed, she may well have been simply telling the truth; she was trying to convey what those photographs really meant to her and Frances, that is, the fact that the photographs were ‘portraits of girls-who-see-fairies’ and did not purport to constitute evidence or a record of fairies that had been seen by girls (Bown, 194). Crucially, it was Snelling’s ‘improved’ version, not the original, of the first photograph that was published and circulated (plate 1); Snelling’s ‘improvement’ involved reducing of the size of Frances’s head by 10 per cent and touching up the fairies so that these were made the focal point, thus disguising the fact that the photograph was actually a portrait of a girl, accompanied by fairy figures that served as decorative props (194).

Frances enclosed this photograph with a letter to her friend, stating that ‘I am sending you two photos, both of me, one is me in a bathing costume in our back yard, uncle Arthur took that one, while the other is me with some fairies up the beck, Elsie took that one’ (Gardner, 31). The matter-of-fact tone of Frances’s words, ‘the other is me with some fairies up the beck’ implies that for her and also for Elsie, the fairies in all their fairy photographs were representations of their imagination. Unlike Doyle and Gardner, who wished to prove the existence of fairies for the causes of Spiritualism and of Theosophy respectively, the two girls simply wanted to show to their parents photographs of themselves with their imagined playmates, fairies, at the beck.

The meanings of the photographs, therefore, have ‘less to do with proof and authenticity and more to do with fantasy and representation’; in other words, for the two girls, the photographs were ‘works of the imagination’ (Bown, 192). Through the statement that the Cottingley photographs were ‘pictures of figments of our imagination’, Elsie may have been protesting, if not successfully, that the photographs, however amateurish and inferior in quality, were not ‘lies’, in the same way that any works of art visualising or depicting imaginary things were not to be condemned as ‘lies’, the latter bearing the connotation of

deliberately intending to deceive others. As Bown points out, the case of the Cottingley fairies poses a question: 'are imaginary things true or false?'<sup>2</sup>. To Elsie and Frances, the fairies as they imagined them were not 'lies', in the same sense that for J. R. R. Tolkien the Elves in his fairy-story, that is, in his Secondary World, are not lies. It may thus be possible to view the Cottingley photographs as a 'fairy-story' so to speak, composed by the two girls using the medium of photography. Unfortunately, though, their work of imagination, their 'fairy-story', was far from satisfactory in providing verisimilitude or what Tolkien calls 'the inner consistency of reality which induces Secondary Belief' (*On Fairy-stories*, abbreviated as *OFS* below, 59).

### III Are fairy-stories 'lies'?

Here we may recall C.S. Lewis, who, according to Tolkien, 'described myth and fairy-story as "lies"; though to do him justice he was kind enough and confused enough to call fairy-story making "Breathing a lie through Silver"' (*OFS*, 64-65; cf. Carpenter (1978), 43). Tolkien wrote a poem, *Mythopoeia*, addressed to Lewis to explicate his claim that 'myths are not lies', an assertion that was further expounded in *On Fairy-Stories*. Tolkien regards a story-maker as 'sub-creator':

He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is "true": it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then out in the Primary World again, looking at the little abortive Secondary World from outside (*OFS*, 52).

Obviously, the Cottingley fairy photographers failed miserably in the art of fairy-story making.

Tolkien uses the term 'Fantasy' to denote 'both the Sub-creative Art in itself and a quality of strangeness and wonder in the Expression, derived from the Image: a quality essential to fairy-story' (59-60).<sup>3</sup> He also explains 'Fantasy' as the 'making or glimpsing of Other-worlds' and as being the 'heart of the desire of Faërie', though he never wished to

have dragons in ‘real life’, however much he desired dragons (54-55). (Of course, the same can be said of ‘fairies’ as of ‘dragons’ in this respect.) In a draft of his St. Andrew’s lecture, Manuscript B of *On Fairy-stories*, Tolkien says he does not remember ‘any particular desire to find that the creatures of [a] fairy-story were (primarily) true’ and that he finds ‘garbled and wilfully invented stories’ concerning them ‘frankly incredible’, though he preserves ‘an open mind about the primary existence of these things’ (286-87). Fairy-stories are, Tolkien argues, ‘not primarily concerned with possibility, but with desirability. If they awakened *desire*, satisfying it while often whetting it unbearably, they succeeded’ (55). Tolkien made no reference to the Cottingley photographs himself, but Lewis did, and it sounds as if it were Tolkien himself speaking:

When Sir Arthur Conan Doyle claimed to have photographed a fairy, I did not, in fact, believe it: but the mere making of the claim — the approach of the fairy within even that hailing distance of actuality — revealed to me at once that if the claim had succeeded it would have chilled rather than satisfied the desire which fairy literature had hitherto aroused. Once grant your fairy, your enchanted forest, your satyr, faun, wood-nymph and well of immortality *real*, and amidst all the scientific, social and practical interest which the discovery would awake, the Sweet Desire would have disappeared, would have shifted its ground, like the cuckoo’s voice or the rainbow’s end, and be now calling us from beyond a *further* hill. (Lewis, 236-37)

What Lewis labels here ‘the Sweet Desire’, the ‘desire which fairy literature hitherto aroused’ obviously corresponds to what Tolkien calls ‘the desire of Faërie’.

Tolkien claims that ‘Fantasy is a thing best left to words, to true literature’ because ‘the visible presentation of the fantastic image is technically too easy’ (*OFS*, 61). It is highly unlikely, therefore, that Tolkien would have appreciated the Cottingley fairy photographs as art-work which represented the girls’ fantasy, or as a sort of ‘fairy-story’ telling the story of themselves with their imaginary playmates; instead, he most probably regarded these photographs as something comparable to conjuring. Tolkien assumes that the conjurer’s object is ‘one allied to the making of puzzles or of detection stories: to make play between



Plate 6 'Dancing Fairies' by Claude A. Shepperson; used to illustrate Alfred Noyes' poem 'A Spell for a Fairy', *Princess Mary's Gift Book*, 1914.

basic disbelief and apparent reality, so as to pose the question: how was it done?' (275). It was exactly the central issue concerning the Cottingley photographs: 'how was it done?', but Tolkien did not live to see this disclosed.

Tolkien's greatest criticism of the fairy photographs, if he had ever uttered one, would have been that they, as a *visible* presentation, 'impose one visible form' (82). The Cottingley fairies, by way of being widely publicized photographs, imposed on us one fixed image, that of fairies in the illustration to Alfred Noyes's poem, 'A Spell for a Fairy' (plate 6), the very image of fairies Tolkien came to detest.

#### **IV The stuff that Tolkien's (early) fairy/elvish images are made of: the substrata of Tolkien's Middle-earth**

##### **(i) Tinfang Warble**

Tolkien was 25 years old when, in August 1917, 16-year-old Elsie and 10-year-old Frances took the first of their fairy photographs. He had been serving in the Lancashire Fusiliers in the Battle of Somme since the previous year (Scull and Hammond 2006, 82), and was admitted to an officers' hospital for the treatment of 'trench fever'. While in the hospital he continued working on his 'mythology', *The Book of Lost Tales*, which evolved from the poem, *The Voyage of Éarendel the Evening Star*, which he had written on 24 September 1914 (54).<sup>4</sup>

By mid-August in 1917, Tolkien's Elves had shed most of their pretty Victorian and



Edwardian looks,<sup>5</sup> but by no means completely. In *The Tale of Tinúviel*, for example, an Elven maiden, Tinúviel, called ‘a fairy’ here, was ‘in a silver-pearly dress, and her bare white feet were twinkling among the hemlock-stems’ (*The Book of Lost Tales*, hereafter, *BLT*, II, 10). The description evokes the typical image of dancing fairies found repeatedly in Victorian fairy paintings such as *The Visit at Moonlight* by Edmund Thomas Parris, which exhibits the striking influence of romantic ballet (Wood, 52; Maas, 13). The scene depicting Tinúviel dancing ‘neath the moon’ to the playing of Dairon, her brother, who was ‘among the three most magic players of the Elves’, when ‘there were many white moths abroad’ and ‘the white moths fluttered about her head’ (10-11), is also redolent of Romantic Celticism: the phrase used for Dairon, ‘the three most magic players of the Elves’ is undoubtedly modelled after the style well known in *Trioedd Ynys Pryden* (*The Welsh Triads*), while ‘many white moths abroad’ and ‘the white moths fluttered about her head’ are reminiscent of the lines of ‘The Song of Wandering Aengus’ by W.B. Yeats: ‘And when white moths were on the wing, / And moth-like stars were flickering out’ (ll. 5-6).

Tolkien’s earlier poems are known to contain a considerable residue of Victorian and Edwardian diminutive, delicate fairies that he later came to dislike fervently (*BLT I*, 32). The figure of Tinfang Warble, mentioned as one of the ‘three magic players of the Elves’ alongside Tinúviel’s brother in *The Tale of Tinúviel*, deserves closer attention in this respect. Tinfang Warble appears in two of Tolkien’s earlier poems written during the First World War. The first poem, ‘Tinfang Warble’ was written in April 1915, along with ‘Goblin Feet’, with which it shares images of typically Victorian and Edwardian fairies. The second poem featuring a fairy piper Tinfang, titled ‘Over Old Hills and Far Away’ (*BLT I*, 108-09), was written between January and February 1916 at Brocton Camp where Tolkien awaited being sent to the front (Scully and Hammond 2006, 76-77). Here, an ‘old elf’ Tinfang Warble danced lightly and the narrator says he must ‘follow the hoot of his twilight flute’ which was ‘Enchanting sweet, now clear, now remote / As clear as a star in a pool by the reeds, / As faint as the glimmer of dew on the weeds’ over ‘dim field, and through rustling grass/ ... Over old hills far away / Where the harps of the Elvenfolk softly play’. It has been noted that the elegiac and nostalgic note of the poem suggests its kinship with the long tradition of lamenting for the departure of the fairies from England, which culminated in Victorian and Edwardian times.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, however, the poignant longing that young Tolkien, who was facing

the grim reality of war, felt for Faërie is easily detected in this poem. Visually, with his slim little body and with the toes of his slippers 'twisted and curled', Tinfang looks like one of the Red Elves that Tolkien depicted in *The Father Christmas Letters* which were written for his children. The Red Elves, in turn, resemble slim and tiny Victorian fairies such as we find in George Cruikshank's *A Fairy Dance* and in Charles Doyle's, i.e., Conan Doyle's father's, *The Fairy Queen, A Procession*.

The prominence of fairy pipers such as Tinfang Warble in Tolkien's early works written during the First World War may be attributed, if only obliquely, to the popularity of a fairy painting by Eleanor Canziani, *The Piper of Dreams*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1915 (plate 7). Its original title, however, was *Where the Little Things of the Woodland Live Unseen*, in spite of the fact that it features a hatted boy, not a fairy, playing a pipe at the foot of a tree in the woodland. A robin is perched on the toe of his boot and a squirrel is

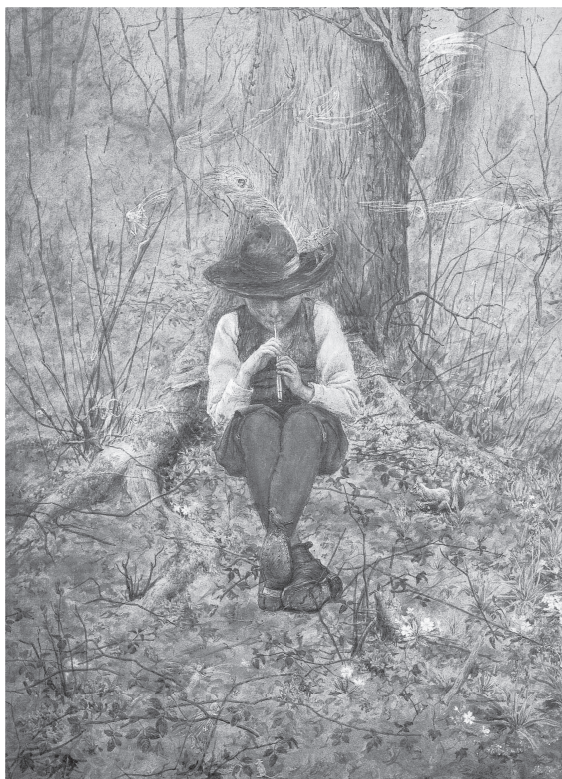


Plate 7  
Estella Canziani,  
'The Piper of Dreams' (1914)

beside him as if listening to the tune of his pipe. On closer look, transparent, winged, and insect-like fairies are found flying above and around him. These ‘little things living unseen in the woodland’ seem more like X-rays of dragonflies or gnats than the fairies in the Victorian fairy paintings, which looked much more flesh and blood. This ethereal depiction of fairies is derived from the sylphs of Paracelsus, and was pervasive in Theosophical explanations of fairies which regarded them as ‘elementals’, ‘sub-human Nature-Spirits of pygmy stature’ (Silver, 38-39). The Theosophist Gardner explains that fairies are nature spirits, ‘all using bodies of a subtler material than the physical’ (Gardner, 46). Fairies are not normally found taking ‘human or any other definite form’ (46) but the nature spirit will occasionally ‘change its shape into that of a diminutive human being, not necessarily then visible to ordinary sight but quite near to the range of visibility’ (47). Thus, the barely visible insect-like fairies of *The Piper of Dreams* seem to exhibit considerable affinity with the Theosophical vision of fairies.

The reproductions of *The Piper of Dreams* were immensely popular (more than 250,000 were sold in the first year), becoming ‘a sort of talisman for the troops in the trenches’ (Wood, 185; Maas, 153). It is far from certain, however, that the popularity of the painting was due to the escapism that fairies supposedly extended. For example, it is said that a wounded soldier named Tommy ‘observed of Canziani’s fairies, “Don’t you think she made them gnats rather large?”’ (Wood, 185). It may well have been that the soldiers in the trenches, probably including Tolkien, found consolation in the notion of a past idyllic homeland that the picture evokes: a boy piping in the wood in early spring, which fairies, though hardly visible, still inhabited as they had done in distant childhood days in England.

## **(ii) Tom Bombadil**

In *The Book of Lost Tales*, Tolkien distinguishes the Eldar, the Elves of his mythology, who are ‘of the world’, from nature spirits, a ‘great host who are the sprites of trees and woods, of dale and forest and mountain-side, or those that sing amid the grass at morning and chant among the standing corn at eve’. It is noteworthy that Tolkien associates these nature spirits with the familiar fairies of British folklore such as ‘brownies, fays, pixies, leprawns’. He further expounds that ‘they were born before the world and are older than its oldest, and are not of it, but laugh at it much, for had they not somewhat to do with its making, so that it is for the most part a play for them’ (*BLT, I, 66*). This may be of help in solving the enigma

concerning the identity of Tom Bombadil in *The Lord of the Rings*, who is considered by many readers, who are not aware of the considerable extent to which nature-spirit elements that forms the basis of Tolkien's Faërie, as 'an odd or indeed discordant ingredient' (*Letters*, 192)<sup>7</sup>.

Tom appears singing 'hey do! merry do! ring a dong dillo!' and hopping and dancing, like a merry spirit in folklore, although unlike traditional folklore fairies he is 'too large and heavy for a hobbit, if not quite tall enough for one of the Big People', revealing the fact that Tolkien's conception of folklore fairies was not necessarily constrained by traditional views (*The Lord of the Rings*, hereafter *LotR*, 116-17). According to his spouse, Goldberry, daughter of the River, who is a nature spirit *par excellence*, he is 'the Master of wood, water, and hill' (122); and Tom himself declares that 'Tom was here before the river and the trees; Tom remembers the first raindrop and the first acorn' (129). Tom is here reminiscent of the fairies in folklore, which are often described as ancient; a fairy changeling discloses his identity by confessing his great age (Grimm, 469). Most notably, the Ring does not affect him in any way. He plays with the Ring while laughing as if it were a toy and when he puts it on his finger he does not disappear. He also plays with the Ring like a conjurer, again laughing, spinning it in the air, making it disappear and reappear. When Frodo puts on the Ring and disappears, Tom sees him and says, 'Tom Bombadil's not as blind as that yet' (130-31). Although Tom's laughing and playful attitude towards the Ring accords with the nature spirits that Tolkien had described in *The Book of Lost Tales*, we can detect his profound wisdom when he tells Frodo to take off his gold ring as his hand is more fair without it (131). In this respect, Tom is both similar to and different from Gardner's nature spirits whose nature 'must be regarded as irresponsible, living seemingly a gladsome, joyous and untroubled life' (Gardner, 47). Perhaps he is then best explained as a character who emerges from the substrata of Tolkien's fairy realm; his wisdom, on the other hand, may be considered as reflecting Tolkien's merging of the concept of nature spirits with the Maiar, as examined in the next section.

### **(iii) 'Sylphs', 'nature spirits/fairies' and the Elves**

It should be noted that in *The Coming of the Valar and the Building of Valinor*, the Paracelsian term 'sylph' is used for the 'lesser Vali [=Valar]', that is, the lesser or minor 'angelic' spirits that are later called the 'Maiar'. Tolkien called the sylphs of the airs the

Mánir and those of the winds the Súruili respectively (*BLT I*, 65-66). These ‘sylphs’ that later evolved into the Maiar seem to be distinct from the Nermir [fays of the meads or field-spirits], the Tavari [fays of the woods or dale-spirits], the Nandini [fays of the valleys] and the Orossi [fays of the mountains], who are listed adjacent to familiar ‘fairies’ in folklore, namely, ‘brownies, fays, pixies, leprawns’ (66). Tolkien states that the latter group, the ‘fays’ of nature as well as ‘brownies, fays, pixies, leprawns’, ‘had not somewhat to do with’ the making of the world (66).

Interestingly, Tinfang the piper is called a ‘leprawn’ in the earliest version of *Timfang Warble*, written in 1914, and is called a ‘fay’ in the early glossary of the Gnomish speech (*BLT I*, 108). On the other hand, the Tinfang who features in *The Chaining of Melkor* is called a ‘quaint spirit’ that is ‘neither wholly of the Valar nor of the Eldar’, but is ‘half a fay of the woods and dells, one of the great companies of Palúrien [Yavanna], and half a Gnome or a Shoreland Piper’ (94).

As mentioned above, in *The Book of Lost Tales* Tolkien seems to differentiate the ‘lesser Vali’ from the nature spirits and so-called ‘fairies’: the sylphs are the ‘lesser Vali’ who joined the Valar in their music which created the world, whereas the nature spirits and so-called ‘fairies’ were not involved in the making of the world. However, in Manuscript B of *On Fairy-Stories*, Tolkien changes his position, explaining that a ‘tree-fairy (or a dryad)’, one of the ‘spirits or daemons’, did in fact aid in the process of creation ‘as “agent” in the making effective of the divine Tree-idea or some part of it’ (*OFS*, 255). In a letter written much later in 1957 (*Letters*, 259) Tolkien states that some lesser spirits, i.e., some of the Maiar, ‘might have been interested only in some subsidiary matter (such as trees or birds)’, implying that in a sense the nature of the Maiar overlaps that of nature spirits.

As noted above, from the viewpoint of their relationship to the world, the nature spirits/‘fairies’ and the Elves of his mythology are clearly contrasted in *The Book of Lost Tales*: the former are ‘born before the world and are older than its oldest, and not of it’, whereas the latter are ‘of the world and love it with a great and burning love, and are wistful in all their happiness for that reason’ (*BLT I*, 60). In Manuscript B of *On Fairy-Stories*, however, the fate of the nature spirits (here Tolkien takes a tree-fairy/dryad as an example) is described in a nearly identical way as that of the Elves: ‘immortal while the world (and trees) last — never to escape, until the End ... What fate awaits him beyond the Confines of the

World, we cannot know. It is likely that the Fairy does not know himself. It is possible that nothing awaits him — outside the World and the Cycle of Story and of Time (*OFS*, 255).

It can be perceived from these examples that the distinction among the Valar, the Mair, the Eldar, the elementals of Paracelsus, and the traditional ‘fairies’ of folklore and literature was neither clear-cut nor fixed, overlapping and mingling with each other;<sup>8</sup> while at the same time it is true to state that the Eldar and the ‘angelic spirits’ of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* have been denuded of any association with elements which might evoke the tiny fluttering fairies of Victorian and Edwardian eras.

## V A By-product of the Cottingley fairies?

The frivolous elves of Rivendell in *The Hobbit* who sang ‘tra-la-la-lally’ may represent the last remnant of the Victorian and Edwardian fairies, whose very frivolousness, combined with nostalgic sentimentality for happiness lost, apparently attracted young Tolkien, as can be seen from his early poems such as ‘Goblin Feet’ and those featuring Tinfang Warble. Tolkien, however, claims that as a child he never liked the ‘long line of flower fairies and fluttering sprites with antennae’ descended from Michael Drayton (*OFS*, 28-29; in Manuscript B, 210). To be fair, Tolkien never depicted diminutive fairies with butterfly wings or antennae himself, but he asserted that he came to ‘fervently dislike’ all that the ‘unhappy little thing [‘The Goblin Feet’]’ represented, ‘so soon after’ (*BLT* I, 32). In other words, he developed his strong distaste soon after 1915/1916 when he composed the ‘Goblin Feet’ and Tinfang Warble poems. Considering Tolkien’s hypothetical objections regarding the Cottingley fairy photographs as examined above, it does not seem too far-fetched to assume that Tolkien’s dislike for the stereotypical flower-and-butterfly fairies was accelerated by the publication of the Cottingley photographs in 1920, 1921 (in the *Strand Magazine*), and in 1922 (in Doyle’s *The Coming of Fairies*).

In Appendix F in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien explains that the word *Elves*, used to translate both *Quendi* and *Eldar*, ‘has been diminished, and to many it may now suggest fancies either pretty or silly, as unlike to the Quendi of old as are butterflies to the falcon — not that any of the Quendi ever possessed wings of the body, as unnatural to them as to Men’ (*LotR*, 1111). In light of the above, the lofty Elves of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The*

*Silmarillion*, may be considered a by-product of the Cottingley fairy photographs, the most notorious ‘lies’ ever told of fairies.

## Notes

---

- 1 Cf. Silver (1999), 186-89; Owen. 73-74; Bown (1966), 66-67; Purkiss, 288-89.
- 2 Bown (1996, 75-77; 1999, 192-94) suggests the possible influence of the poem ‘Fairies’ by Rose Fyleman, published in the same year as the girls took the fairy photographs. ‘Fairies’ begins with the line ‘There are fairies at the bottom of our garden!’ and ends with ‘The Queen — now can you guess who that could be / (she’s a little girl all day, but at night she steals away) / Well — it’s me!’. The poem was first published in *Punch*, to which Elsie’s parents subscribed.
- 3 For Tolkien ‘Art ...[is] the operative link between Imagination and the final result, Sub-creation’, meaning that Imagination combines with Art to produce ‘Sub-creative Art’.
- 4 The poem, beginning with words ‘Éarendel sprang from the Ocean’s cup /In the gloom of the mid-world’s rim’ is known to be inspired by the word *earendel* found in Cynewulf’s Old English poem *Crist*. It has been pointed out more recently that the poem was also modelled on ‘Arethusa’ by Percy Bysshe Shelly which begins ‘Arethusa arose/ From her couch of snows /In the Acroceraunian mountains’ (Garth, 2014).
- 5 The *Kenya Lexicon* contains entries which betray Tolkien’s earlier taste for flower fairies (Fimi, 33-34).
- 6 On the theme of the departure of fairies, see Silver, 185-210, and for its reflections in Tolkien’s earlier works, see Fimi, 38-39.
- 7 Cf. Scull and Hammond 2005, 139 and 2014, 7-11.
- 8 Cf. Fimi, 45-50; Rateliff, 59, 119-121.

## References

---

- Bown, Nicola, *Fairies in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- Carpenter, Humphrey, *J. R. R. Tolkien: A biography* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977).
- , *The Inklings: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and their friends* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978).
- Cooper, Joe, *The Case of Cottingley Fairies* (1990; London: Simon & Schuster, 1997).
- Doyle, Arthur Conan, *The Coming of the Fairies* (1922; London: Pavilion Books, 1997).

- Fimi, Dimitra, *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History: From Fairies to Hobbits* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
- Fyleman, Rose, *Fairies and Chimneys* (London: Methuen, 1918).
- Gardner, Edward L., *Fairies: The Cottingley Photographs and their Sequel* (London: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1945; revised edition 1966).
- Garth, John, *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth* (London: HarperCollins, 2003).
- \_\_\_\_\_, “‘The road from adaptation to invention’: How Tolkien Came to the Brink of Middle-earth in 1914”, *Tolkien Studies* XI (2014), 1-45.
- Grimm, Jacob, *Teutonic Mythology*, translated from the fourth edition by James Steven Stallybrass (London: G. Bell, 1883).
- Lewis, C. S., *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (1943; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2014).
- Maas, Jeremy, Trimpe, Pamela White, Gere, Charlotte, and others, *Victorian Fairy Painting*, ed. by Jane Martineau (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1997).
- Machen, Arthur, *The Angels of Mons: The Bowmen and Other Legends of the War*, 1915. Kindle edition.
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Dog and Duck*, Vintage Classics, 1924. Kindle edition.
- Owen, Alex, “‘Borderland Forms’: Arthur Conan Doyle, Albion’s Daughters, and the Politics of the Cottingley Fairies”, *History Workshop Journal* 38 (Spring 1994), 48-85.
- Purkiss, Diane, *At the Bottom of the Garden: A Dark History of Fairies, Hobgoblins, and Other Troublesome Things* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).
- Rateliff, John D., *The History of The Hobbit*, One-volume edition (London: HarperCollins, 2011).
- Sanderson, S. F., ‘The Cottingley Fairy Photographs: A Re-Appraisal of the Evidence’, *Folklore* 84 (Summer 1973), 89-103.
- Scull, Christina and Hammond, Wayne G., *The J. R. R. Tolkien Companion & Guide, Chronology* (London: HarperCollins, 2006).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Lord of the Rings: A Reader’s Companion* (London: HarperCollins, 2005).
- \_\_\_\_\_, eds., J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Adventure of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from The Red Book* ((London: HarperCollins, 2014).
- Silver, Carol, ‘On the Origin of Fairies: Victorians, Romantics, and Folk Belief’, *Browning Institute Studies* 14, *The Victorian Threshold* (1986), 141-56.
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- Smith, Paul, ‘The Cottingley Fairies: The End of a Legend’, in Peter Narváez ed., *The Good People: New Folklore Essays* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997), pp.



371-405.

- Tolkien, J. R. R., *The Book of Lost Tales Part I*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Book of Lost Tales Part II*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Father Christmas Letters*, ed. by Baillie Tolkien (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, ed. by Humphrey Carpenter (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Lord of the Rings*, one volume edition (London: HarperCollins, 2002).
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Mythopoeia', in *Tree and Leaf: including the poem Mythopoeia* (1988; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), pp. 97-101.
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Tolkien On Fairy-stories: Expanded Edition, with Commentary and Notes*, ed. by Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson (London: HarperCollins, 2008).
- Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Welsh Triads*, ed. by Rachel Bromwich, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, second edition, 1978).
- Wood, Christopher, *Fairies in Victorian Art* (Old Martlesham: Antique Collector's Club, 2000).
- Wynne, Catherine, 'Arthur Conan Doyle and Psychic Photographs', *History of Photography* 20:4 (1998), 385-92.
- Yeats, W. B., *The Poems*, ed. by Richard J. Finneran (New York: Scribner, second edition, 1997).

I owe special thanks to Professor Nicholas Henck of Keio University for proofreading this manuscript.