Louisa John-Krol

Fated intervention: Gracing, musing and the wishing well

Abstract:

Fairy visitation has inspired Australia's fairy-tale revival, through an abiding belief in Muses or Graces. This essay explores the plurality, plasticity and fecundity of classical iconography, through interpretations of fairies, and avouches that fairy tales cannot do without them. A fairy tale may entail rewards, vindications, riddles or quests, and may end happily, yet one of its most distinctive, vital ingredients is fated intervention. That is what ignites the magic. This paper explores this aspect of traditional fairy tales through a literary-historical discussion of the Fates, Graces and Muses, through intercultural, cross-era fertilisation, alongside the paradox of destiny and luck in wish fulfilment. In doing so, I'll call upon my artistic experience and reading.

Biographical note:

Louisa John-Krol has released ethereal music on indie labels, published, performed at international fairy festivals and worked in education and storytelling. With a B.A. and Dip.Ed. from University of Melbourne, she revels in fairy salons and societies, currently serving as the President of the Australian Fairy Tale Society.

Keywords:

Creative writing – Fairy tales – Fate – Grace – Muse

‘A Hundred Lucky Days ... A Thousand Several Ways’

libretto for Purcell’s *The Fairy Queen*

Faerie visitation, or fated intervention, underpins Australia’s fairy-tale revival. This fortuity entails an encounter that changes everything, being ordained, yet elusive. Who are the life-changing powers standing behind us? Whether arriving of their own accord, or by conjuring or chance, their favour seems whimsical, as with deities in The Iliad. This ephemerality – intrinsic to fairy nature – helps it evade ideology. Admittedly, it might be just one of many narratives to make sense of our lives, but it seems a particularly enduring, captivating one.

The Faerie is a realm of caprice. Its manifestations vary: from cooking with a magic kettle to dining with a werewolf; from passing a crone on a remote lane to discourse with a crow; from pricking one’s finger at a spinning wheel to freeing a bottled genie; from staying at an inn haunted by Chinese warlords to catching a Cornish seamerrow; from conjuring a demon who spins hay into gold to espying a firebird in a Tsar’s orange tree. This quiddity is mysterious. As Terri Windling suggests, it might not take the recognisable form of a fairy, yet enchants nonetheless (1992: 1). What we do with it may shape our futures, and the fate of fairy tales themselves.

Fairy or Faerie comes from the French Fée or Fay (Fey in English), a derivation of the Latin Fatae or classical Fates. Fatae (plural of Fatum) began to replace the old English elf during the Tudor period, from late fifteenth to early seventeenth centuries[1]. Spenser and Shakespeare popularised the change, although fairy had appeared in the fourteenth century Middle English Orphic Romance *Sir Orfeo*, based on the Greek myth of Orpheus (Laskaya & Salisbury 1995). Elizabethans attributed wings to fairies, possibly to associate them with angels amid the prevalent witch-phobia. This image spread with Shakespeare’s *A midsummer night’s dream* and Spencer’s *Faerie Queen*. As Suzanne Magnanini notes, the birth of the literary fairy tale with writers such as Straparola, Basile and d’Aulnoy, coincided with a belief in magic permeating civil life including ‘courts, academies, churches, and public squares’ (2008: 4). Fairies transcend class, intervening in human affairs and presiding over the arts; poets have evoked the Muse for inspiration, as surely as farmers have called upon the Good Folk or Hill People to assist in harvesting, milking or spinning. Fairies retained their capricious, potentially malevolent nature, yet could bestow fortune. We know from Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy that the Muse of History was Clio in the late seventeenth century. d’Aulnoy coined the term ‘contes des fees’, which was translated into English as ‘fairy tale’, around 1697, peppering her stories with fairies and metamorphic transformations, as in ‘The white cat’ and ‘The bluebird’. Later, Borges argued that the Latin Fatum relates to Faery folk (1974: 60). Magic-realists are influential in our fairy circles; it is often through them that Greco-Roman mythology imbues our expression.

Faeries have been associated with Muses, as in Milton’s Sisters of the Sacred Well, The Lady of the Lake and Well Women, hence Wishing Well and well-wishing: wish you well. The Greek word mosis (muse) means ‘desire, wish’. Malory applies Fay to

enchantresses, such as Morgan le Fay. Celia Catlett Anderson avers that in the Grimms' collection, Mother Holle 'has an overt connection with the goddess Holda' (1986: 228), who, as hag, rewards a stepdaughter who must sit by a well and spin until her fingers bleed: linking witch, well and spinning. Citing Elisabeth Gitter, Anderson analyses why these implements are potent symbols of 'exclusively female power to weave the family web' (1986: 231), and addresses subtle shifts: 'Teutonic tradition domesticates the Greek mythology in which spindle and scissors are personified, and the three fates, Clotho who spun, Lachesis who measured, and Atropos who cut the thread of life, set the term of human destiny' (1986: 226). Fates in Greek mythology are known as the Moirai, and in Roman mythology as the Parcae: Nona the spinner, Decima the measurer, and Morta the cutter, as Amelia Starling notes (2017: para. 4). Fate is often a trio, as in 'The prince and the three Fates' (Lang, 2010: 178-187), or Grimms' 'The three spinners'. Cavendish writes that 'Faeries are nature spirits' and that 'Water fae may be present in wells' (2010: 7)[2]. In 'Crocodile Tears', the French town of Nîmes has a fountain and well-guardian Nemausus, known as the god of the source, along with Mother Holle (Byatt 1999), who has her own fairy tale 'Mother Holle' in *The red fairy book* (2008: 315). In 'The pagoda tree' of China (O'Brien 1990: 153), bird-sisters embroider silk: Australasian Spinners.

Fates are Spinners, Well Women, Wyrd Women (as Macbeth encounters), Norns of Norse mythology, Muses, or Graces. In the aforementioned Sir Orfeo, dealing with fairy enchantment calls for affinity with 'art, eloquence, poetry, music, and rhetoric' (Laskaya & Salisbury 1995). We speak of being graced with a presence or having presence: 'If ye will with Mab find grace' (Briggs 1977: 101). By 'grace', one might infer ethereality, though Queen Mab (goddess Maeve) was the Fairies' Midwife, presiding over childbirth. Fates and childbirth are connected, as in the Sudice of Slavic mythology, who determine when a baby experiences misfortune, happiness and death. People still leave offerings for the Sudice. Such influence haunts Australian Fairy Tale Society's longest e-zine issue, 'Sleeping Beauty' (2017), which included a preview of Kate Forsyth's Beauty in Thorns. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Mab inspires carnal desire through dreams or fantasies. Evidently, grace need not imply probity. Rather, Fairy is a generic term for supernatural creatures 'neither in God's nor the devil's service' (White 1985: 7), a view Briggs shares:

> 'In fairy-lore there are two main … usages, the first is the narrow ... word to express one species ... of a middle nature between man and angel as ... described in the seventeenth century ... the second is the more general extension, to cover that whole area of the supernatural ... not claimed by angels, devils or ghosts'. (1978: Preface)

Fey visitors are not necessarily rescuers. They might help us for their own advantage. Rumplestiltskin turns hay into gold to take a baby. Andersen's hag in 'The tinderbox' embroils a soldier in retrieving treasure. A genie often grants wishes as bribes for freedom. Will o' the Wisp – Willy Wisp, Will o' the Wykes, Wee Willie Winkie – are all names for Ignis Fatuus or mischievous Jack o'Lantern, Pinket, Puck, Spunkie, Hinky Punk, Friar Rush, Corpse Candle, Hobble-Lantern or Jenny Burnt Tail. In Shropshire, Will the Smith led a life of such wickedness, 'The most the Devil would do ... was to

give him a piece of burning pit coal ... with which he flickers over boggy ground to allure poor wanderers to their death' (Briggs 1977: 231). Anyone may face gobbling by ghouls, beheading by sultans, or drowning by kelpies. Charity or fortitude might be laudable, as in Wilde's tale 'The happy prince', but fairies are not necessarily interested in punishment or reward, unless via spite, as with Perrault's fairy. Virtue may be a veneer. In 'The souls in purgatory' by Cecilia Böhl de Faber, assiduousness earns supernatural intervention, yet a twist cancels toil: 'Take your needles and thread and throw them down the well' (2003: 261). Is the heroine escaping labour, or forgoing economic independence to preserve beauty? That it's her husband who bids her do so underpins this ambiguity. Does she outsmart the Fates, or are they in on it?

'Bluebeard' is similarly stratified. It isn't just about courage, curiosity, or a key. Granted, many versions carry morality, but the most vivid I've heard pinpoint resourcefulness, exemplified by hiding a severed finger in a handkerchief to reveal at a feast. Moreover, as Christine Jones suggests, this heroine talks herself out of difficulty (2013: 22) Acuity augments the key. Fortune favours not only the brave, but those who keep their wits. As Marilyn Jurich contends, Bluebeard's wife is the trickster heroine outsmarting a cruel, complacent system, incorporating 'elements of ghost and witch' (1986: 278). Here is Lady Luck, like the Scandinavian trickster Loki, Africa's Anansi, or Mulla Nazrudin. In Greco-Roman heritage it is not only Hermes or Mercury who both guide and deceive; there's also clever Penelope, who promises to wed Odysseus's rivals when her loom is ready, then repeatedly pulls it apart.

Marina Warner regards the Faery realm as a secondary world, placing fairy tales in that parallel space: 'Fairylands are zones of enchantment' (2014: 5): fée magic is fated magic, having originated from fatum, and the pivotal point is its overlap with our world: bordered yet borderless, hidden in plain sight. We may surmise from the aphorism 'Choices are the hinges of destiny' (attributed to both the Greek philosopher Pythagoras and American poet Edwin Markham), that this interlocution calls us to partake, perhaps in surreptitious or unexpected ways. Whether one meets a soothsayer, as in 'The sea-maiden' in Jacobs' *Celtic fairy tales* (1994), or some other catalyst, such encounters are often crepuscular, most active in shadow. Fairies operate in twilight, like those who maul Duncan the Fiddler on the Isle of Man. So Jack o'Lantern/Jack in the Green (Puck Robin/ Robin Goodfellow) burns on All Hallows Eve.

From the 1890s to 1920s, in the fin de siècle period encompassing Australia's Federation in 1901, through newspapers, books, and pantomimes, fairy tales were a medium through which Australians hustled identity. Books by Olga Ernst, May Gibbs, Peg Maltby, Pixie O'Harris, and others, celebrated playful, diminutive fairies. Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario examines how Australian fairy figures crept from an uncanny Never Never towards colonial condescension, anthropomorphic marsupials and now, fantastical urban landscapes of Shaun Tan (2011).

Exploring Australasian context warrants respect for custodianship of Indigenous lore in Australia, with sensitivities around appropriation. At its worst, universalism is presumptuous, subjecting everyone to its definitions; at its best, it embraces commonalities, as at RAW Garden, where African-Australian Mariam Issa opens her backyard to the public. There, we swap stories while practicing the age-old art of

'breaking bread'. The yarns, ballads and ditties of my Welsh-Scottish-English parents were of Robin Hood and Camelot, evoking forests like Sherwood or The Ashgrove. From these, I ingested Animism. Nevertheless, playing alone in the Australian bushland, I felt another ancient power: that of eucalyptus trees. I loved their rough bark, scent and taste after rain. I wrote songs for them, conjuring names that, to my childish sensibility, transcended race and creed; neither Celtic nor Aboriginal, they were tree spirits. Here, our cultures intermingle. Use of the plural possessive pronoun is not a conflation, just a respectful suggestion that whether supernatural beings are fairies, genies or dryads, notwithstanding profound differences, they may enchant. The tales we tell ourselves bear witness to this, in how we perceive fate, in unexamined lingo, notions of fame and fortune, best wishes and good luck. In such phrases and habits, the Fatae abide.

Our zeitgeist is itself haunted, like Zusak's Death in *The Book Thief*, an Australian novel set in Nazi Germany. If it is possible to haunt a ghost, then perhaps it is also possible for Fates to be fated. The spirit of our age has unfinished business with the Women of the Well. The son of a Ku Klux Klansman became America's president in 2016. That same year, neo-medieval folk band Faun reached Number Three in German music charts. When I dined with its founder, Oliver Sa Tyr, during the Faerieworlds festival (Oregon, 2009) at which we'd performed, we waxed enthusiasm for Rilke's poetry. Our hosts were Imaginosis and Woodland musicians, who recently lost a friend in a neo-Nazi hate crime. Their myth-rock tribe includes Norwegian Wardruna, creators of the soundtrack for the television series Vikings[3]. In this circle, cosmopolitanism vies with ancestral pride. All employ incantation. A facet of fatum is utterance, 'that which has been spoken' (Warner 2014: 5). Speech is an agent of change for fairies, perhaps because so many stories about them stem from an era of oral storytelling. Whether via a curse, talking beast, or ghost, rituals are performative and transformative: 'the spell-binding effect of stories told aloud, the enchantment power of chants' (Bennett 2001: 6); the word enchant is related to the French verb 'to sing' chanter, 'to surround with song or incantation ... to carry away on a sonorous stream' (Bennett 2001: 6). It may involve recital or spelling aloud (note: spell). Characters unwittingly condemn themselves to horrible deaths, as when the false bride in 'The goose girl' recommends a method of torture, unaware it's for her; the king proclaims, 'Thou hast spoken thy own doom ... as though hast said, so it shall be done' (Grimm 1973: 13). Utterance thrives in oral storytelling.

Australia's fairy-tale revival has entailed two main successive waves, one in the last decade of the twentieth century, the other over the past seven years, from around 2010. In the 1990s, Melbourne spawned Wonderwings, the world's first fairy shop, pioneering retail as a portal to fairy storytelling, prompting copy-cat venues around Australasia. The most enduring of such stores, outliving Wonderwings, is Myths & Legends in Gisborne. Its proprietor Dee Waight worked at Wonderwings; we co-hosted a reunion in 2015 with Wonderwings founder Anne Atkins[4].

A resurgence this century brought The Monash Fairy Tale Salon, Australian Fairy Tale Society, and Golden Owl Events, hosting Midsummer Faerie Rades in Treasury/ Fitzroy Gardens, where Wonderwings had held picnics twenty years earlier. The sculptor of its fairy tree, Ola Cohn, received a recent commemoration via republication

of The Fairies' Tree. Although excruciatingly racist, denigrating Aboriginal dance and dwellings, it nevertheless encapsulates communality in a park, as Lindsay's Finglebury Flying-fox is 'measured in a public place' (2004: 90), and Outhwaite's Blossom hears a fairy in Kensington Gardens (1991: 4)[5]. From Flapper to Flower Power, egalitarian whimsy swirled, but the 1980s ushered in glam-greed, such that an Australian record executive advised me: 'Drop the unicorns and mermaids. Sing about politics, sex or war.' Folk taverns such as The Green Man closed; the recession descended. Wonderwings fairies would become known as 'the gloom breakers' in general parlance.

Australian Fairy Tale Society co-founder Reilly McCarron[6] attended Wonderwings Fairy Shop, visiting from New South Wales. Her desire to delve into deceptively simple folk stories was sparked during her teens, when her father's partner took her to our storytelling event for adults. She wrote:

> In a delightful little room at the back of a Melbourne fairy shop we sat on toadstools, drank champagne, and listened to a real life fairy tell early versions of popular tales which were once meant for adults. The tale I recall best from that enchanted afternoon is The Frog King, in which the princess is so disgusted by the revolting creature demanding to sleep on her soft pillow, she picks it up and throws it against the wall, at which point it turns into a handsome prince. It turns out kissing the frog was an American invention. As a pensive teenager, interested only in finding deep and authentic meaning in a shallow society filled with hypocrisy ... discovering that older, wiser, darker versions of fairy tales existed was like stumbling upon hidden treasure. (2013: para. 5)

As such, Australia's current fairy-tale revival is a resurgence of the 1990s Wonderwings wave, from one generation to the next[7], paralleling The Royal Melbourne Show's hiring of fairy storytellers from the late 1990s onward. By the mid-1990s I was 'fairying' at Moomba, Children's Book Week/Botanical Gardens and various National Trust homesteads. By century's turn I'd signed to a German, then French, fairy record label, and featured in magazines such as Elegy and Khimaira. In 2009 I met UK illustrator Brian Froud, whose co-author Alan Lee designed sets for Jackson's films of *The Lord of the Rings*. Fairy-tale movies and series abound, as do fairy-tale websites/blogs such as Sur La Lune, Doc in Boots and Once Upon a Blog. Festivals Faerieworlds (USA) and 3 Wishes Fairy Festival (UK) attract tens of thousands, and the Frouds are regular guests[8].

The founding of the Australian Fairy Tale Society, Monash Fairy Tale Salon, Cohn's book reprint, and Midsummer Faerie Rade, happened concurrently. Australian salons and societies are generally welcoming, intersectional and interdisciplinary. The Midsummer Faerie Rade, for example, is a free public event. Cohn's fairy tree, her book's subject, is accessible in a park. Anne Atkins (Wonderwings) told me she'd 'let children touch the art'. There is no hands-off policy. No 'break and buy' rule. This Well Women Welcome (well come) is a far cry from prevailing eighteenth- and nineteen-century portrayals of women, such as the queen in Grimms' Rumpelstiltskin as 'a maternal figure wholly divorced from the commercial or civil sphere ... neither spinner nor spinster' (Schmiesing 2011: 300).

Australasian storytelling, literature and academia overlap. Kate Forsyth and Sophie Masson[9] are award-winning, highly qualified, widely published writers, who all write or respin fairy tales. This year the Australian Fairy Tale Society chose a Singaporean-Australian, Durgah Devi Palanisamy, to deliver the keynote address. Other Australasian fairy-tale spinners include Danielle Wood, Angela Slatter, Kim Wilkins, Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario, Isobella Carmody, Nike Sulway, Carmel Bird and Juliet Marillier (from New Zealand). Many are Australian Fairy Tale Society members, and/or cited in *The Oxford Companion To Fairy Tales*. Forsyth's *Beauty in thorns* explores the nineteenth century's Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which, like our own movement, began with a mutual thematic focus. Masson quotes a Baroque libretto in her Sleeping Beauty re-spin, demonstrating the influence of Fatae: 'Here the Deities approve, / The gods of music and of love, / All the talents they have lent you, / All the blessings they have sent you' (2001: 3). Other Australian manifestations of classical muses are Testoni's podcast The Singing Bones, Adgemis' storybook Melpomene and Andonis (2016), and McCuskey's photographic book *Luxville Dolls* (2016).

'Do you believe in fairies?'

I came to associate that question with eyes glowing in hope, or a glint of greed. 'Do wishes come true?' Desperation, too, for magic to rescue families from ruin, cure sickness, attract romance. A desperation that permeated every context: fairy shops, fairgrounds, libraries, parks, homesteads, schools. Often preoccupations with power or prestige eclipsed other aspects of fairy tales, prompting misconceptions around transformation. The reversal of fortune, from rags to riches, in 'Cinderella,' of which there are over 300 versions including the best-known versions by Perrault (1697) and the Grimms (1812), was really a return to her previous social position. She'd been charmed into poverty, not wealth. Her fairy godmother merely set the overturned tables straight. Comparable ascents occur in 'The water of life', 'Puss in boots', 'Rumpelstiltskin' and 'The goose girl'. In an Australian re-spin of 'The girl with no hands' a king suffers in a curse, with 'his kingly garb ... ragged and dirty; he looks like a beggar' (Slatter 2010: 193).

Are Australian fairies about fortune? Guardians of grace and inspiration? Or eco-custodians? With tranquility it is possible to evoke kinship with nature, expressed as elementals. Under these conditions, I met people who regarded the fairy tale as a repository of wisdom and wit distilled through the ages, notwithstanding how seldom good sense leaps from nurseries to boardrooms. Some festivals are boisterous hubbubs of loud speakers and blaring screens, yet magic is afoot. At The Royal Melbourne Show, between 1998 and 2002, the government employed me as a fairy storyteller. I improvised with banjo-playing stilt walkers, walking sunflowers, puppeteers, clowns and Shetland pony equinoids, whose plaits floated upward with helium balloons. In carnie quarters, a statue-man peeled a mandarin, pushing slices between silver lips. His stage paint, like my garland, signalled Otherness, a cue for shoppers to pause, listen, watch, wonder; a chance to change a frown to a smile, a heavy heart to a hopeful spirit. Costumes permitted us to cross boundaries, move through liminal spaces: take a pensioner's hand on a ramp. Nurse a stranger's child. Steal an ice cream. Tap a passer-by on the shoulder, whispering a nursery rhyme or ditty. We were paid to be interlopers, sweet transgressors, whirlers of whimsy. At our best, we channelled the fey, playing

with intervention, a possibility that magic hides behind corners, catches us unawares, sports with time, space, illusion, and yet also, paradoxically, guides us. For while we never pretended to prompt any choices, we did sometimes spark a question, lift an eyebrow, cause a langourous delay, nudge a mood, or stir a dust-eddy of mayhem and mischief. We were hurly burlies, wyrd weavers, on Joycean carnival, carnival days.

Fairy tales reflect and reveal how societies evolve, clash or coalesce. Beyond the appeal of memorable characters or antique illustration, there is analysis of psychological, literary, or other meanings. Contention flares as to whether fairy tales stem from orality or literacy. Powerful operations in these stories pivot on gender, symbolism, or disruption, attracting scholarly discussion. Kathryn Hoffmann claims that 'Mothers are the matriarchy threatening from within', while '[f]airies are the matriarchy threatening from without' (1997: 288). Ann Schmiesing analyses the addition of names to Rumpelstiltskin in the second edition (1819) of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* under Wilhelm Grimms' editing; noting that expansion of incorrect guesses, including Rippenbiest (respiratory illness) or Hammelswade (castrated ram), reflect changing values or preoccupations, such as fear of deformity or disease, with naming hinting at diagnosis. Shifting value from flax to gold illuminates changing socio-economic conditions of Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic Europe. The material of spinning is itself subject to Fate.

'This is *Mab* the Mistriss *Fairy*, / That doth nightly rob the Dairy, / And can hurt, or help the cherning, / (As she please) without discerning' wrote Jonson in 1603 (cited in Holloway, para. 15, italics in original), echoing Mercutio's words on Queen Mab in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: 'Oh, then I see Queen Mab hath been with you. She is the fairies' midwife ... Her wagon-spokes made of long spinners' legs ... she gallops night by night through lovers' brains' (1980: 109-112), after which Mercutio lists some legacies of Mab's visitations, from blistered lips and 'sluttish hairs', to soldiers' dreams of cutting throats. When Grimms' Mother Holle tests and rewards a stepdaughter's spinning, it's unclear whether the craft empowers or entraps. As Celia Anderson notes, referring to various tales in the Grimms' collection including 'The Three Spinners', 'Rumpelstiltskin', 'The Twelve Huntsmen' and 'The Spindle, the Shuttle and the Needle': 'On the one hand, the implements, spindle, shuttle, scissors, and needle, were a means of livelihood and a symbol of female authority; on the other hand, they represent the housebound, limited range of female power' (1986: 231). Anderson notes the paradox that sewing is used both to cast and to break a spell in the Grimms' 'The Six Swans' (1986: 226). Here magic is neither good nor evil, but both.

Australian performances often toy with riddles, taradiddles and trials. Helping a miller's daughter spin hay into gold, Rumpelstiltskin becomes a fortune-changer. He displaces the female spinner (Athena, Mother Holle). Being male, he may seem to cut ties with the Fates, yet if craft trumps gender (emancipating, not enslaving), he joins the Fatae well enough. After all, he is all about supernatural intervention, twirling the Wheel of Fate. At Wonderwings, heroines tended to be lucky or canny, rather than virtuous. It's possible that Australia's larrikin spirit held sway. Or we sensed that magic was amoral, needing no polemic angle. We were employed as artists, not missionaries. In a sense we were spinners. Prescriptive ideology? Not interested. Dogma? No thanks. Richard Flanagan's comment on writing applies to all arts; it 'exists beyond morality and

politics ... most enduring when, like a bird, or a beach, or a criminal bilby, it is completely irresponsible' (2016: 20-21). Echoing the cheerfulness of Outhwaite and Gibbs' fairies, we darted barefoot with stars on feet, across eucalyptus-strewn floors, pinching and kissing each other, sprinkling glitter, glee and repartee. Adult sessions were burlesque 'schwank' (Bottigheimer 1993: 263). Bonhomie graced mortality with poignancy. As Muses, comedy and tragedy are siblings.

Wonderwings storytellers have striven to put the fey back into fairy tales. We're chasing something that hides in peripheral vision, dwells in dawn or dusk. It is feline, fée-lion: the fairy lion of lineage, our lion-age. Accusations of escapism persist, yet fairies can draw us more deeply into life. When protagonists enter a magical place, they are often engulfed in fog. It is into a puff of smoke, that many a djinn/ sorcerer vanishes. Mist represents that which is uncharted, opaque. As Dunsany pointed out (Plunkett 1974: 22-23), fog is more likely to sink a ship than a gale, because it creeps unawares, soundlessly upon the sailor. Polemic is rigid. Poetry is fluid. The arrow pierces mist, but mist embraces the arrow. The arrow flies straight. Mist is a shapeshifter. An arrow cannot linger. What is missed… mist? The Netherworld? Alam Al Mithal (Arabic Sufi for The Land of Nonwhere)? Dante's Limbo? Celtic Isles of the Blest (Mag Mell, Tir Nan Og, Tire Nam Beo, Tir Tirn Aill, Tir Tairngire)? Elysium Fields? Arrows must maintain their momentum, or fall. Mist can withdraw or regather. As Shakespeare implies, the soul craves it, for 'We are such stuff As dreams are made on; and our little life Is rounded with a sleep' (1984c: 104).

As Moore wrote, 'without soulful fantasy all is profane … a world reduced to serve as fodder for our pragmatic intentions' (1940: 44). Rilke's elegies and sonnets sought to immortalise flowers and fruit through revelatory naming. Masson notes the 'eruption of the uncanny into ordinary life' (2016: para. 18), linking the novel Picnic at Hanging Rock to a Pied Piper motif of spiriting away the young, who vanish into a mountain. She writes of a 'liminal, ambiguous ... potent presence only thinly veiled by the everyday world' (2016: para. 22). Milosz expounds: 'internal space is … more real than the material one governed by time' (1985: 144). In this space, hidden under mist, lie bones and seeds of fairy tales.

Fey perception, honed through art, enchants life. Arcane symbols and attire of classical Muses imbue fairy illustrations with garlands, diaphanous gowns, staves/ wands, or dancing rings. d'Aulnoy's heroine's head in 'The white cat' is 'encircled with flowers'; she wears 'gown of light white gauze' (2008: para. 92). According to Delahoyde and Hughes (2017), Calliope the Fair Voiced presides over epic poetry and eloquence, holding a writing tablet/ book. Clio, The Proclaimer, holds the scroll of history. Erato, The Lovely, celebrates poetry and mimicry, with her lyre and crown of roses. Euterpe, Giver of Pleasure, is Muse of Music, inventor of the flute. Melpomene, The Songstress, is Muse of Tragedy, with mask, garland, cypress crown, or cothurnes (tragedians' boots), club or sword. Polyhymnia, She of Hymns, often veiled, represents sacred poetry and religious dance. Terpsichore, The Whirler, mother to Sirens, heralds dance. Thalia, The Flourishing, fosters comedy and idyllic poetry, with comic mask, ivy crown and shepherd's staff. Urania guides astronomy, holds a globe, foretells the future and wears a cloak embroidered with stars. The number and assignation of Muses is inconsistent--lyric poetry is attributed to Terpsichore or Euterpe – yet these figures

abide with the Arts as daughters of Mnemosyne, Goddess of Memory, converging with fairies. Outhwaite's *Blossom* (1991) boasts a Pool of Memory and a coven of amiable witches. The Well Women are ever near.

The Black Death in mid-fourteenth century Europe was widely represented as a black-gowned woman luring men across a ford. Over half of Europe's population perished from this pestilence. During the Witch Trials between 1500 and 1800, accusations of witchcraft threatened vulnerable women, particularly spinsters or widows. In the seventeenth century came d'Aulnoy's witches, such as the ancient hag in 'The island of happiness' (1989: 300). Particularly terrifying is 'The horned women' by Lady Francesca Speranza Wilde. In this fairy tale, twelve witches enter a woman's home to card wool; the first with one horn, the next with two, and so on until the twelfth. The host blows them back to Slieve-namon, though they utter curses on the Spirit of the Well, who had wished their ruin. Fear of Viking invasion perhaps permeates this tale (evoking Norns), though horns could refer to medieval headdresses, or fertility. Stories worldwide tell of nymphs or sirens whose voices bring madness. Trickery triumphs in Calvino's tale 'The three crones' (1980), who lure a king into marrying one, after which three fairies restore her youth. Both Harries and Warner explore archetypes of female avatars/ storytellers such as Mother Goose, Mother Bunch and Scheherazade, who use eloquence and wits to direct events.

Encounters might involve dangerous beauty:

> I met a lady in the meads,
>
> Full beautiful – a Faery's child,
>
> Her hair was long, her foot was light,
>
> And her eyes were wild.
>
> (Keats 1966: 276)

Conversely, there are helpful hags. They may be stubborn, with an unconventional streak, like Glinda, a retired eccentric, whose lock of 'rebelliously dyed magenta' hair signals refusal to conform (Do Rozario 2015: para. 4). Or Wise Women/ World Women, as Maria Tatar suggests (2012). In China, a tall woman in a white silk dress appears on a ship's prow, delivering passengers to safety, and an isolated crone saves villagers (O'Brien 1990).

The Fatae touch Bürger's 'Lenore' of 1774: 'No kiss for her, the fated' (1909), and Okri's abiku: 'seduced by ... wonderful events', who 'went through life with beautiful and fated eyes ... half of our beings always in the spirit world' (1993: 4). Okri's vivid Nigerian magic-realism is supernaturalism par excellence. What wishes fly from one continent or age to another? Who are our Spinners here, now? Australian fairy tales are intercultural. Marian Lissant, a Wonderwings fairy, is the grandchild of Australian pantomime actor Arthur Lissant, who adapted Japanese fairy tales for the stage. I've told 'Wing Lo the butterfly princess' and a tale about a Chinese boy who befriends a dragon, of which my puppet is from Bendigo's Chinese procession, rooted in the Gold Rush that attracted a large Chinese population.

Wish-granting exemplifies fairy tales' plasticity, through persistence of wands, from d'Aulnoy's 'The white cat' to the three wand-wielding matrons of Disney's Sleeping Beauty (1959). Analysing the formulation, granting or association of wishes, Bottigheimer demonstrates how fairy tales reveal 'fundamental shifts in underlying belief systems' (1993: 264). Is a wish bestowed or self-formulated? Acquisitive or transformative? According to a Buddhist aphorism, Fate punishes by granting wishes. Storytelling doyen Nell Bell warned us never to promise that wishes come true. Nonetheless, symbols such as the star or wand attest to fairy tales' adaptability and pliability, and have influenced Australian expression.

A linguistic relative of Faerie/Fatae is Fame, the lure of our age. As d'Agata contends, 'you can trace the etymology of fame back to famish to the Latin word for hunger. Fames. A thirst', also 'to speak' (2003: 147). Let us say that Latin Fama = F-A-M-E = Fame Me or Fate Me = transformation through fame. It is plausible that the pairing of Fame and Fortune in popular lingo speaks to an intrinsic association between Fame and Fatum. Wilson suggests people 'only grow to their seemingly correct tremendous size when constantly watered with compliments; souls become bright and shiny from an abundance of love and recognition' (2000); cult of celebrity is a 'virus' or 'death-star'. While choices or traits shape fate, magical intervention is often involved. An otherworldly force may cross anyone's path: 'Good luck befriend thee, son; for, at thy birth, / The Faiery Ladies daunc't', wrote Milton (Ritson 1875: 31), echoing a Fairy's words: 'Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck, / You do their work, and they shall have good luck' (Shakespeare 1984a: 29). A luckdragon is the mascot of Ende's novel *The Neverending Story* (1979). In *The crimson fairy book*, Lang included 'Lucky luck', in which Three Sisters embody the Fates (2013: 8-15). In 'Catherine and her destiny', in *The pink fairy book*, Fortune asks a maiden to choose between happy youth or happy old age (2007: 155). We ask a lot of Lady Luck; we've learned to see her as bountiful, since greeting her as the Tooth Fairy who replaces our chompers with glittering coins. Fame, like destiny, seems ordained yet fragile, as this prince bemoans: 'it is all up with my fame and fortune' (d'Aulnoy 2008: para. 23). In a subsequent retelling he berates himself: 'Have I actually forgotten the very thing I left home to do?' (1964: 166).

Wish-fulfilment haunts not only the nursery but the romance novel, magazine, screen and casino. It found a globetrotting host in the New Age movement; mirror-gazing while repeating 'I love you', which is reminiscent of Snow White's Stepmother chanting 'Mirror, mirror' as she compulsively demands reaffirmations of her beauty. Tinkering with destiny invokes Tinkerbell, from Barrie's Peter Pan; through magic we tweak, just a little. A blurb beckons: 'Come shopping with the fairies of Silverbell Street ... where anything can be yours, just by wishing' (Gardner 2004).

Stars play into the fate-luck dance. In the North American Algonquin Indian version of Cinderella, the prince is divine, invisible, sky-born and, like Urania, wears a star-embroidered cloak (Shah 1979). The heroine, proving she sees him, sheds her cinder-scars. Her eyes are 'now like stars' (1979: 154). She heralds disguise or hidden treasure, as in Perrault's 'Bearskin', or Lang's 'Donkey skin' (2015). Yeats wrote of a woman who entered 'the Land of Faery ... where stars walk upon a mountaintop' (1912: 166). In 'Liang Yu Ching's Punishment', the Jade Emperor's weaving girls wear star crowns,

emitting ‘a revolving heavenly galaxy’; this tale features Star Fairy T’ai Pei (O’Brien 1990: 86). Across many cultures, the stars of the Pleiades are female. Greeks called them the daughters of Atlas and Pleione. Morales notes this celestial trend in portraits of society ladies by photographer Madame Yevonde for her exhibition The Goddesses, inspired by an eighteenth-century tradition of portraying women as Greek goddesses, and by an Olympian Ball in 1935, whose attendees dressed as deities, nymphs, satyrs and Muses, including Thalia and Clio. Among them were ‘glitterati’, ‘it-girls’, and ‘stars’ (2010: 55-56). Saint-Exupéry gave his chaperon the lines: ‘In one of the stars I shall be living’ (1945: 85). Many fairy tales and their re-spins, such as Pumphrey’s ‘The Giant with the three Golden Hairs’, open with a child being ‘born under a lucky star’ (1957: 17). In 2015, Niki Na Meadhra told this tale by Toolangi forest: the last refuge of the fairy possum, our State’s emblem.

Koehler explores how female fairy-tale authors subversively warn of the dangers of fairy magic as code for patriarchal ideals, like bestowing ephemeral beauty or wealth upon women, rather than developing substance (2015). She cites Jarvis’s analysis of the Grimms’ tale ‘Die rosenwolke’, equating spinning with ‘passing on of wisdom from generation to generation’ (Koehler 2015: 139). In such readings, fate seems less supernatural than socio-political, deeming women marriageable (beautiful, sweet, diligent) or doomed (ugly, spiteful, lazy). Yet the faerie are, classically, creative. Mnemosyne, Goddess of Memory, is Mother of Muses: Australia’s fairy-tale revival is appropriately matriarchal. Memory tricks are mnemonics. Memes/mnems may go viral, or simply madden us; but if the Fatae hold us in their graces, all bodes well.

Who spins our yarns? Weaves our looms? Waves our wands? What are we, Australians, Australasians, world citizens, here to do or be? The Fates inspire us, as surely as our lives spin on the fate of fairy tales.

Notes

1. Etymological sources include Warner, Briggs and Borges. Other spellings of Fée/Fay/Fey are Fae, Fai, Faerie or Faery, e.g. Australian Rachael Hammond’s web-gallery Fantastical Fae Art.
2. A seamstress who identifies as a witch gave me *The book of faery magic* by two Australians. It includes a spiel by Juliet Marillier (Cavendish & Conneeley 2010: 176-177), a druidic writer from New Zealand, now living in Perth.
3. Such influences as Lorena McKennitt (setting music to the poetry of Keats and Tennyson, composing for the mini-series *The Mists of Avalon* and *The Burning Times*) inspired Woodland; other bands are explicitly pagan (The Moors), or esoteric (Stoa, Daemonia Nymphe). Through collaborating with these musicians I discovered Paradox Ethereal, a Greek nexus of Medieval-Baroque-Romantic Pre-Raphaelite Arts.
4. For Wonderwings history (with scanned press articles) see http://victorianfairytalering.blogspot.com.au/2015/09/wonderwings-fairy-reunion-2015.html
5. Our gatherings foster intercultural inclusiveness. Victoria’s inaugural Fairy Tale Ring, in 2014, included Indigenous storytelling by Cindy-Lee Harper, a descendant of the Pyemarriner people of north-eastern Tasmania.
6. Reilly McCarron co-founded (with Jo Henwood) the Australian Fairy Tale Society as a folklore register. According to Reilly, William Thoms coined the term folk-lore in 1846 to refer to ‘manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, etc.’ (McCarron

2011). With most Australians living in coastal cities, and Australasia undergoing rapid urbanisation, folklore is no longer relegated to country folk ballads.

7. Storyteller Nell Bell died in 2016 in her 90s. Wonderwings' Anne Atkins is now in her 70s. I am 51, and was in my 20s when Reilly encountered us. Our ages provide intergenerational markers.
8. In 2009, I met the Frouds at the Belgian festival, Trolls & Légendes, where they screened 'Muse', featuring our music: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahBe3Znj8lY
9. Kate Forsyth's PhD focused on the history of the Rapunzel tale, and on her own contemporary retelling. Sophie Masson is undertaking postgraduate study and, in 2015, launched her Snow White retelling, *Hunters's moon*, at the annual AFTS conference. The Victorian Writer ran with my pitch of a fairy-tale edition Dec 2015-Jan 2016.

Works cited

Adgemis, Phillippa 2016 *Melpomene and Andonis* Port Melbourne: Blasck Publishing

Anderson, Celia Catlett 1986 'Spindle, shuttle, and scissors: Ambiguous power in the Grimm Brothers' tales' *Children's Literature in Education* 17, 4: 226-232

Bennett, Jane 2001 *The Enchantment of Modern Life – Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* Princeton: Princeton University Press

Borges, Jorge Luis 1974 *The book of imaginary beings* Middlesex: Books

Bottigheimer, Ruth B 1993 'Luckless, witless, and filthy-footed: A sociocultural study and publishing history analysis of the lazy boy' *The Journal of American Folklore* 106, 421: 259-284

Briggs, Katharine 1977 *A dictionary of fairies: hobgoblins, brownies, bogies and other supernatural creatures* Suffolk: Penguin Books

Briggs, Katharine 1978 *An encyclopedia of fairies: hobgoblins, brownies, bogies and other supernatural creatures* Suffolk: Pantheon Books

Bürger, August Gottfried 2011 'Lenore', Alfred Ayers (trans) in Calvin Thomas (ed) *An Anthology of German Literature* Kindle Edition, Boston: DC Heath

Byatt, AS 1999 *Elementals* Sydney: Vintage

Cavendish, Lucy & Serene Conneeley 2010 *The book of faery magic* Newtown: Blessed Bee

Calvino, Italo 1980 *Italian folktales* George Martin (trans) London: Penguin Books

d'Agata, John 2003 *Halls of fame* Minneapolis: Graywolf Press

d'Aulnoy, Marie-Catherine 1989 'The island of happiness' *Beauties, beasts and enchantment: Classic French fairy tales* Jack Zipes (ed, trans) New York: American Library, 299-308

d'Aulnoy, Marie-Catherine 2008 'The white cat' Macdonell and Lee (trans) at http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/authors/aulnoy/1892/whitecat.html (accessed 16 August 2017)

Delahoyde, Michael & Jolyon Hughes 2017 'The Muses', Washington State University, at https://public.wsu.edu/~delahoyd/mythology/muses.html (accessed 8 April 2017)

De Faber, Cecilia Böhl 2003 'The souls in purgatory' Robert M Fedorchek (trans) *Marvels & Tales* 17, 2: 258-261

Do Rozario, Rebecca-Anne 2011 'Australia's fairy tales illustrated in print: Instances of indigeneity, colonization, and suburbanization' *Marvels & Tales* 25, 1: 13-32

Do Rozario, Rebecca-Anne 2015 'The death of Glinda the good witch' *Aurealis* 77, Smashwords edition

Douglas, Barbara 1964 'The white cat' *Favourite French fairy tales, Retold from the French of Perrault, Madame d'Aulnoy and Madame Leprince De Beaumont* London: Harrap & Co

Plunkett, Edward JMD (Lord Dunsany) 1974 *Fifty-one tales* Hollywood: Newcastle Publishing

Ende, Michael 1979 *The neverending story* London: Penguin Books

Ernst, Olga 1904 *Fairy tales from the land of the wattle* Melbourne: McCarron, Bird & Co.

Flanagan, Richard 2016 'Does writing matter?' *The Monthly* (October), 20-21

Froud, Brian and Alan Lee 1978 *Faeries* London: Rufus Publications

Froud, Brian and Terry Jones 1986 *The goblins of labyrinth* New York: Owl Books

Gardner, Sally 2004 *Fairy shopping* London: Orion Publishing

Grimm, J & W 1973 *Grimm's fairy tales* Lucy and Walter Crane (trans) New York: Crown Publishers

Harries, Elizabeth 2001 *Twice upon a time: Women writers and the history of the fairy tale* Princeton: Princeton University Press

Harris, Rosemary 1974 *The lotus and the grail – legends from east to west* London: Faber and Faber

Hoffmann, Kathryn A 1997 'Matriarchal desires and labyrinths of the marvelous: Fairy tales by old regime women' in *Tradition and subversion, women writers in pre-revolutionary France – Strategies of emancipation* Colette H. Winn & Donna Kuizenga (eds) New York: Garland, 281-297

Holloway, Clark J, ed 2003 *A particular entertainment of the queen and prince their highness at Althrope* (commonly known as *The entertainment at Althrope* or *The satyr*) by Ben Jonson, at http://hollowaypages.com/jonson1692queen.htm (accessed 1 August 2017)

Jacobs, Joseph 1994 *Celtic fairy tales* London: Senate

Jones, Christine A 2013 'Thoughts on 'Heroinism' in French fairy tales' *Marvels & Tales* 27, 1: 15-33

Jurich, Marilyn 1986 'She shall overcome: Overtures to the Trickster heroine' *Women's Studies International Forum* 9, 3: 273-279

Keats, John 1966 *The selected poetry of Keats* New York: Signet Classics

Koehler, Julie 2015 'Kind girls, evil sisters, and wise women: Coded gender discourse in literary fairy tales by German women in the 19th century', dissertation, Wayne State University, Detroit

Lang, Andrew 2007 'Catherine and her destiny' *The pink fairy book* London: Folio Society, 155-160

Lang, Andrew 2008 'Mother Holle' *The red fairy book* London: Folio Society, 315-318

Lang, Andrew 2010 'The prince and the three Fates' *The brown fairy book* London: Folio Society, 178-187

Lang, Andrew 2011 'Lucky luck' *The crimson fairy book* London: Folio Society, 8-15

Lang, Andrew 2015 'Donkey skin' *The grey fairy book* ebook edition, University of Adelaide Library, University of Adelaide, at https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/l/lang/andrew/l26gf/chapter1.html (accessed 1 August 2017)

Laskaya, Anne and Eve Salisbury, Eve 1995 The Middle English Breton Lays, Middle English Text Series, Medieval Institute Publications, Kalamazoo, Michigan, at http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/laskaya-and-salisbury-middle-english-breton-lays (accessed 1 August 2017)

Lindsay, Norman 2004 *The magic pudding* New York: Angus & Robertson/HarperCollins

Magnanini, Suzanne 2008 *Fairy-tale science: Monstrous generation in the tales of Straparola and Basile* Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Malory, Thomas 2009 *Le morte d'Arthur/ Morte Darthur: A modern English translation* Anderon: Parlor Press

Maltby, Peg 1944 *Peg's fairy book* Melbourne: Murfett

Masson, Sophie 2016 'Fairy tale transformation: The pied piper theme in Australian fiction' *M/C Journal* 19, 4 at http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/1116 (accessed 1 August 2017)

Masson, Sophie, 2001 *Clementine* London: Hodder Children's Books

McCarrron, Reilly 2011 *X7003 Advanced issues in folklore and folklife: Course notes* Perth: Curtin University

McCarron, Reilly 2013 'The elusive Australian fairy tale' *Griffith Review* 42 (Once upon a time in Oz), at https://griffithreview.com/articles/8954/ (accessed 1 August 2017)

Milosz, Czeslaw 1985 *The land of Ulro* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux

Morales, Helen 2010 *Classical mythology: A brief insight* New York: Sterling Publishing

O'Brien, Joanne 1990 *Chinese myths & legends* London: Arrow Books

Okri, Ben 1991 *The famished road* New York: Random House

Outhwaite, Ida Rentoul 1991 *Blossom* London: Angus & Robertson

Pumphrey, George H 1957 'The giant and the three golden hairs' in *The children's book of folk-tales* London: George G Harrap & Co, 17-24

Ritson, Joseph 1875 *Fairy tales, legends and romances illustrating Shakespeare and other early English writers* London: Ballantyne & Co.

Saint-Exupéry, Antoine De 1974 *The little prince* London: Pan Books

Schmiesing, Ann 2011 'Naming the helper: Maternal concerns and the queen's incorrect guesses in the Grimms' "Rumpelstiltskin"' *Marvels & Tales* 25, 2: 298-315

Shakespeare, William 1984 *A midsummer night's dream* Suffolk: Methuen

Shakespeare, William 1984 *Romeo and Juliet* Suffolk: Methuen

Shakespeare, William 1984 *The tempest* Suffolk: Methuen

Shah, Idries Sayed 1979 *World tales* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

Slatter, Angela 2010 *The girl with no hands and other tales* Greenwood: Ticonderoga Publications

Starling, Amelia 2017 'Sleeping Beauty and the Fates of mythology', Centre for Myth Studies, University of Esssex, at https://essexmyth.wordpress.com/2017/05/29/sleeping-beauty-and-the-fates-of-mythology/ (accessed 1 January 2017)

Tatar, Maria 2012 *The annotated Brothers Grimm: The bicentennial edition* New York: WW Norton & Co

The Dark Crystal 1982, motion picture, Henson Associates and ITC Entertainment, Distributed by Universal Pictures, starring the voices of Stephen Garlick, Lisa Maxwell and Billie Whitelaw, et al.

Warner, Marina 2014 *Once upon a time: A short history of fairy tale* Oxford: Oxford University Press

White, Carolyn 1985 *A history of Irish fairies* Dublin: The Mercier Press

Wilde, Oscar 1973 *The happy prince and other stories* Suffolk: Penguin Books

Wilde, Lady Francesca Speranza 2006 *Legends, charms and superstitions of Ireland* New York: Dover Celtic and Irish Books

Wilson, Cintra 2000 *A massive swelling: Celebrity re-examined as a grotesque crippling disease* [eBook] Wilberforce Codex

Windling, Terri 1992 *Briar Rose* New York: Jane Yolen, Tom Doherty Associates

Yeats, William Butler 1912 *Poems* London: T. Fisher Unwin