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# Fairy tourism: Negotiating the production of fantasy geographies and magical storyscapes

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## Abstract

This research brings an original anthropological approach to the understanding of how the tourism industry negotiates the construction of elusive, magical geographies. Fairy tourism or ‘fairy hunting’ has been acknowledged since the nineteenth century, but is largely overlooked in tourism literature, despite increasing exposure to fairy motifs through multi-media platforms, including films, gaming, and literature. This study examines fairy festivals using a theoretical framework based on the novel concept of ‘liminal affective technologies,’ (LATs), that are designed to enhance transformative potentiality. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis method is used to analyse how fairy festival producers generate approximations of Fairyland. To create fairyscapes, their organisers devise LATs, such as situating the events in places that are bucolic, mystical and connected to local folklore, and staging workshops, music, and activities like wish-making, using fairy-themed motifs, to reinforce the magical narrative. Yet several festival producers ‘tone down’ the troublesome or Pagan elements of the fairyscape, explaining the surreality of their events to visitors as dreamscapes.

Keywords: fairy tourism; storyscapes; magical geographies; liminality; magical tourism; literary tourism

## Introduction

Since the release of Peter Jackson’s *Lord of the Rings* films, the desire to travel to magical lands and encounter mythic beings in magical geographies has grown exponentially with each new fantasy screen release (Buchmann, Moore, & Fisher, 2010; Hennig, 2002; Lovell, 2022; Lovell & Thurgill, 2021). Recent big-budget TV fantasy genre programmes, for example, *The Witcher* and *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power*, (the latter received 25 million viewers for the first episode (Echebiri, 2023)) have familiarised new mass audiences with fairies and the particular settings associated with them. Fairy tourism or ‘fairy hunting’ has been acknowledged as a pursuit since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Keene, 2015), but in tourism literature, explorations of fairy-based spaces are overlooked, barring a few exceptions. Hemme (2005) explores the behaviours at tourist sites associated with fairy *tales* rather than fairies as characters. Ironside & Massie (2020) focus on the relationship between landscape, folklore and tourism at the Fairy Glen in Scotland. This paper addresses the resultant gap in our knowledge by examining the construction of places associated with fairy tourism.

A foundational concept of tourism geography is that people travel in order to escape their ‘everyday’ lives and pursue idealised fantasies of places (MacCannell, 1973). Yet fairy tourists have an additional challenge. Some hope that they may have an encounter, exchange or communion with magical entities. This desire is termed ‘magical thinking’ (Taylor & Acic, 2021, p.21). But fairies are elusive and referred to as *huldufólk* or ‘hidden people’ in Icelandic and Faroese folklore. They have the agency to either reveal themselves or to withdraw to a different dimensional plane, which is sometimes referred to as: *faerie*; the home of the fae; or, according to novelist Philip Pullman (drawing on 17th-century sources), a ‘secret commonwealth’ (Keene 2015; Lovell, 2023). The elusiveness of fairies can be further explained by Hanegraff (2003), who posits that a key attribute of magic is that ‘the dissipation of mystery in this world is compensated for by a separate magical world of the reified imagination, where the everyday rules of science and rationality do not apply’ (p.270). For consistency, this otherworld will be referred to as *fairyland* in this study. The present of fairies in this otherworld and their absence in this world only accentuates a transmedia-fuelled demand for fairy-themed

visitor attractions that include fairy forts, fairy mounds, elf rocks, fairy circles, fairy fields, mediatised fairy sites, affectively atmospheric places associated with fairy mythologies, fantasy film locations, cosplay events and fairy festivals. This paper focuses on the emplacement of fairyland using fairy festivals as a case study.

While fairies may initially seem to be a whimsical research topic, fantasy and renaissance festivals are large-scale events that are both established (The 3 Wishes Fairy Festival in Cornwall is in its 17<sup>th</sup> year) and fast-growing. The Maryland Renaissance Festival, attracts up to 300,000 visitors and Elfia in the Netherlands has an estimated 27,000 visitors per year (Elfia, n.d.; Maryland Renaissance Festival, n.d). Beyond these economic indicators, narratives focused on fairies access symbolic, archetypal motifs rooted deep in the human subconscious and have a psychological significance which belies their seemingly lightweight subject-matter (Bettelheim, 1976; Dundes, 1965). This study consequently critically examines the production of the narrative, or 'storyscape' dimensions of fairy festivals through which motifs are induced (Chronis, 2012; Chronis, Arnould & Hampton, 2012).

In addition, according to recent literature, tourists interested in fantasy narratives treat certain gathering-places as sacred (Buchmann, et al., 2010; Lovell and Thurgill, 2021). sacralisation behaviours have led some researchers to use an anthropological lens to examine fairies and their settings (Evans-Wentz, 1911; Gaffin; 2012). Anthropological theory encompasses the concept of liminality, or inbetweenness, which could be argued to be a critical attribute of fairy festivals that approximate otherworlds. While Ironside and Massie (2020) briefly mention the liminal and transformatory qualities of the Fairy Glen in Scotland, we are still missing a deeper analysis of the liminal qualities of storyscapes. Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to bring a fresh anthropological approach to the study of fairy festivals as storyscapes by examining their liminal qualities. The study achieves this by using a theoretical framework that is based on the concept of 'liminal affectivity,' a theory which addresses both the imaginative 'potentiality' and physical 'actuality' of fantasy geographies (Greco and Stenner, 2017). Addition research objectives include: 1) how fairy festival organisers understand fairyland, a place that is in some ways 'beyond' apprehension because it exists in the collective imagination; 2) how fairy festival producers use liminally affective technologies to produce storyscapes.

## **Magical storyscapes**

In order to understand how fairyland is produced by the tourism industry, it is first necessary to appreciate that the idea of fairyland emerges from the collective imagination. Fairyland is a 'cultural imaginary,' or a socially constructed narrative that is 'invested with collective values' (Chronis, 2012, p.265). Cultural imaginaries are crucially dynamic or emergent, they reflect the values of each age and are continuously appropriated and adapted from previous iterations (Barthes, 1957 [1972]; Chronis, 2012, p.1810). Cultural imaginaries can be co-produced in the form of 'storyscapes' or 'consumption spaces with narratives as the focal object' (Chronis et al., 2012, p. 266). These narratives provide schemata that allow people to make sense of the world (Chronis, 2012). The power of the imagination to co-construct storyscapes is utilised by the tourism industry to enrich visitor experiences. For example, Lovell and Griffin (2022) have described how light installation designers use fairy tale narratives to deepen the psychological significance of visitor encounters with atmosphere and Chronis et al. (2012) applied storyscapes to the co-creation of heritage interpretation at the site of the Battle of Gettysburg. The repetition of storyscapes by the tourism industry then reinforces and extends the cultural imaginary surrounding specific narratives and ideologies.

The storyscapes focused on fairies, or rather, fairyscapes, differ from the historic examples cited by Chronis et al. (2012) because they draw inspiration from folklore and are therefore more amorphous and fluid. Instead, they are magical storyscapes (magi-scapes). For example, the fairy forts in Ireland (abandoned prehistoric forts), or stone circles, were first

mythologised because their origin could not be explained by society and their fairy myths persisted inter-generationally as the storyscape endured (Larrington, 2015). Folkloric narratives can be broken down into their building blocks of character, action, props, and setting motifs, which Thompson (1977, p. 415) defined motifs as ‘the smallest element in a tale having a power to persist in tradition’ (p. 415). Thompson has argued that many forms of folklore are locally specific, but it is important to note that many motifs share cross-cultural familiarity and fairy character motifs appear as elves; pixies; hidden folk; small, flying green folk; wee folk; fair folk; seelie and unseelie; Sili; Sidhe, Anjana, Korrigan (Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Basque, Breton). The action motifs associated with fairies include wish-granting, mischievousness, kidnapping, and blinding, the latter qualities particularly evident in nineteenth-century fairy tales (Bettelheim, 1976). these motifs help to fill in the missing fragments of imaginary places.

Yet arguably, the most significant trope informing fairy-oriented tourism imaginaries is rooted in their inseparability from natural, bucolic locations (Evans-Wentz, 1994). Long-standing collective imaginaries focus on natural settings and genii locorum or guardian spirits of place, for example the Ancient Roman Religio Romano beliefs associating guardian Naiads with rivers, springs and lakes and Dryads with forests and trees. In the compendium of Norse mythology, *The Poetic Edda*, fairies are described as the álfar, or the Ljósálfar (‘Light Elves’) who dwell in Álfheimr and are associated with nature (Faulkes, 1995). Green otherworlds appeared frequently in Medieval literature and Shakespeare famously depicted fairies in his play *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* as inextricably intertwined with nature and, more specifically forests (Siewers, 2014). Tolkien reinforced the trope in his mystical Elven Woodland Realms settings and, as Hemme (2005) observes, forests contain strong romantic folk associations and are viewed by fairy-tale tourists as places infused with spirits. Gaffin (2012) describes fairy settings as a naturalistic theatre, consisting of forests, meadows, gardens, water bodies, caves, and mountains in which the fairy-hunting takes place. Lastly, recent fairy stories depict these beings as extinct, persecuted or driven from a world that has been poisoned by industrialisation (*The Witcher*, *The Power of the Rings*) indicating meta-narratives centred on ecological urgency. All of these character, action (and particularly) setting motifs feed deeply meaningful subconscious archetypes, prompting the co-production of fairyscapes.

## **Producing Fairyscapes**

The potential of storyscapes to transform tourist experiences arises from the collective imagination (Chronis et al., 2012). In the context of film tourism tours, Reijnders (2011) conceptualised the term ‘places of imagination’ as ‘material reference points like objects or places, which for certain groups within society serve as material-symbolic references to a common imaginary world’ (p. 14). However, there are limited numbers of specifically demarked magical storyscape sites in which tourists can explore their lived imaginations and they therefore tend to heavily invest emotionally in such places, leading to heightened expectations (Lovell & Thurgill, 2021). Tourists are so keen to visit the otherworlds of their imaginations that an unfounded rumour that the historic street, the shambles, in York, is the inspiration for the Harry Potter wizarding street Diagon alley has led to a magi-heritage (magical heritage) storyscape that encompasses several wizardry shops and a potions shop (Lovell & Thurgill, 2021). The consumption of otherworldly, fantasy-genre spaces preoccupies transmedia tourism studies (Lovell, 2023). However, the tale of the producer of magical storyscapes is often less well-delineated, despite Baudrillard’s (1981) emphasis on Disneyland (the default magical storyscape) as a third-order simulacra that originates in the imagination of its designers (imagineers). So this paper fully acknowledges that storyscapes are co-created, but chooses to focus on the less well-explored perspective of their organisers, the magical storytellers.

While they concern imagination and fantasy, none of the above studies examine how the producers of storyscapes negotiate the liminality that Ironside and Massie (2020) mention is critical to folkloric experiences at the Fairy Glen. A liminal space is ambiguous, ‘betwixt and

between,' and offers an opportunity for ritualistic meaning-making, transformation and alternative understandings of reality and the suspension of social mores (Turner, 1969). It is relevant to this study because, as mentioned in the introduction, fairies exist in a hidden realm, fairyland, therefore fairyscapes are neither the actual world nor of fairyland but they offer visitors a sense of betweenness, where realms can mix.

The producers of liminal spaces such as fairyscapes are required to mark the space with boundaries, or thresholds that make visitors aware they are crossing over into a 'between' space where they may alter their behaviour and beliefs (Turner, 1969). To cross a threshold can be transformative because habitual behaviours are often interrupted and suspended (Meyer & Land, 2003; van Gennep, 1990). Recent anthropological literature has also examined states of 'liminal affectivity,' a phenomenon that occurs 'when potentiality is at a maximum and actuality at a minimum' (Greco and Stenner (2017, p.27). The concept of enhanced potentiality and reduced actuality epitomises the magical atmosphere that fairy festival producers aspire to co-produce. Stenner and Greco (2018) have also listed 'liminal affective technologies,' (LATs) that can evoke mood, such as storytelling, music, painting, dance, and films. Using the example of literature (relevant to our study of fairy festivals as storyscapes), Stenner (2020) proposes that these technologies involve either ritual or theatre to summon 'subjective, affective experience in order to occasion transformations' (p.33). The difference between the two categories is that 'ritual is a technology for turning affectivity into sacred experience, whilst theatre is a technology for turning affectivity into aesthetic experience' (p 34). This study applies the novel concept of liminal affective technologies to storyscapes in order to enquire how its producers 'summon' fairyland.

## **Methods**

### ***Research context, design, data collection and analysis***

As organisers, participants and naturalistic observers, tourism producers serve as the eyes and ears of the space, offering a highly informed view (Lovell & Griffin, 2022). Fairy festival organisers are, as Larkin, Shaw and Flowers (2019) describe, 'a reasonably homogenous group who share a certain contextual perspective on a given experience (p.194). Fairy festival organisers are a select few and a purposive sample method was used to select the participants, who have each been immersed in the fantasy community for decades and can knowledgeably articulate its evolution and practices. Five of the participants have also developed the following substantial events that they manage from scratch and attended other events. The festivals include Fantasy Forest Festival at Sudeley Castle, Cheltenham; the 3 Wishes Fairy Festival (in its 17<sup>th</sup> year) at Mount Edgcumbe Country Park, Torpoint, Cornwall; Glow Arts Midwinter Night's Dream Trail at Cobtree Manor Park in Maidstone; Enchanted Leonardslee in Sussex; the Legendary Llangollen Faery Festival in Wales; the New York Faerie Festival; and the Maryland Renaissance Festival.

Addressing the liminality of fairyscapes necessarily involves negotiating the ambiguous. As Stark (2003, p.115) points out, magic can seem vague in comparison with science and does not tend to explain its mechanisms. Therefore, a qualitative methodological approach has been chosen to examine the notion of magical beings and narratives. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006) closely aligns with the study research aim, by identifying how the fairy festival producers who generate approximations of fairyland conceptualize their own imaginary lifeworlds. IPA unravels the understanding of the subjects, their sense-making and their imaginations, which are, after all, the source of festival liminal affective technologies. IPA is specifically designed for small sample sizes of three to five participants and the eight participants, who were contacted more than once to probe more deeply.

Data collection took place in two parts. First, by interviewing fairy and fantasy festival organisers, festival artisan product developers, and also fairy trail organisers. Second, one of the authors attended several of the events as a naturalistic observer (observing place as a participant to absorb the experience), keeping a photographic diary of the process. Many of the interviewees live in different countries, including the United States, Ireland and the Netherlands, and the interviews were therefore carried out online, lasting between an hour and an hour and a half. While online interviews are not ideal, two of the participants threaded wreaths and made items for festivals, so these meetings offered affective, non-verbal glimpses into the emic behaviours of liminal fairy worlds (Lo Iacono, Symonds, & Brown, 2016). The topic guide used during the interviews underpinned the research question of how fairyland is created by tourism providers, focusing on place, atmosphere and experience. Participants were asked to describe why they created the festival or event, how its location was chosen, and to describe their own magical moments and the event atmosphere. These individuals are not simply story-builders, but they are also *storytellers* and a basic, open questions led to larger explanations, with little prompting required (Chronis *et al.* 2012).

As an approach, IPA enables more intuitive explorations into how research participants understand their own deeply-held beliefs, and experience the intangible, mystical manifestations of the atmosphere at fairy festivals (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). IPA is a reflexive methodology, acknowledging the connection that researchers have with data in a 'double hermeneutic' process (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006, p.107). Like the producers, the researchers acknowledge their hermeneutic centrality as fantasy fans, yet some research participants are also of what Gaffin terms the 'fairy faith' while the researchers have a different phenomenological orientation. They generously shared their sensitive beliefs and examples of magical thinking with outsiders. Their comments prompted the researchers to circle back to the idea that magic essentially defies science, it is necessarily a liminal, fugitive area of research.

The data were analysed inductively, and separately, by the researchers, to add to the rigour of the findings. Steps outlined by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) were followed by first reading and re-reading each interview, noting emergent themes until cumulative patterns could be detected. Returning to the research question, three substantive superordinate themes surfaced related to place: 1) Understanding how producers understand the liminal qualities of the fairyscape: 2) how producers establish the storyscape narrative and 3) how the liminally affective technologies used motifs to reiterate the festival narrative (see table 1). Finally, the analysis reveals patterns of beliefs and perceptions on the part of festival producers, conveying the experiential states behind the construction of thresholds.

## **Findings and discussion**

The findings are structured in three sections that are designed to analyse how the producers of fairyscapes understand affective liminality and magical thinking, how they set the scene of the storyscape, and lastly, how they strengthen the narrative space with LATs.

### ***The liminality of the fairyscape***

*Betwixt and between.* Before we examine the liminally affective technologies, it is important to establish how event producers understand liminality. A reminder that fairyscapes are betwixt and between, encompassing the spatial actuality and potentiality of liminal affectivity discussed earlier. Fairy festival producers describe the festivals as 'crossover, 'between,' 'away,' and 'beyond,' suggesting their awareness of the liminality. For example, the following comment was made by Garland: 'The fairy festival lands become a realm between fairy and mortal where you can mingle.' The use of the word 'mingle' is ambiguous; Peaseblossom intimated that visitors may encounter fairies at festivals but would not apprehend them. 'We say they are there all the time, they are just invisible, in a different dimension.' A

different producer used a similar phraseology: 'The thing is, the fairies are already there in another dimension in the same place.' Yet in contrast, another organiser remarked that: 'You are literally going to fairyland for three days.' Entering fairy festivals also means passing through thresholds which Garland described as: 'portals to otherness.' These differing interpretations of fairyland suggest that on balance, event organisers share the understanding that liminality (and magical space) must only be vaguely defined to enhance its potentiality.

*Magical thinking.* Fairyscapes are bounded by magical thinking, which is the concept that an exchange or communion with magical entities is possible (Taylor & Acic, 2021, p. 21). For example, some of the producers of these festivals drew their inspiration from either dreams about fairies or fairy gifts of flashes of insight. Onsite, the magical thinking infuses the atmosphere. 'At some point at every single festival that we did there, you could see storms and lightning, but we would almost be protected in this dome.' 'We all looked up and there was this double rainbow. It did feel like fairy magic.' As Garland indicated: 'Perhaps people have an experience that they can't explain. There is a momentariness.' Building on the idea of magical liminality of the fairyscape, two of the research participants commented that it is challenging for the audience to re-cross to a non-magical world after the event has ended. 'It's really hard to get people to leave the festival at the end. Nobody wants to go.' The organisers have also been immersed in affective liminality and highlight it as a sticky state. 'It is hard to come back to reality afterwards. I remember coming back and having to go to a supermarket and it is the weirdest thing. I'm like, oh, my gosh, this is reality. It's not fairy reality, that's for sure. It's completely different. People are looking at you because you've got this kind of different glow about you.' Yet the liminality of fairyscapes is impermanent and thresholds to the world outside the fairyscape must eventually be recrossed.

*Discussion* Organisers consider the liminality of fairyscapes, debating whether: fairies are present in the fairyscape, but in 'another dimension;' or if the festival is a betwixt and between space, where 'realms could mingle;' or if they are otherworlds where 'you are literally going to Fairyland;' or 'fairy reality.' These findings all suggest that fairyscapes shift between alternate realities, are constantly remade, and are open to possibilities. Also, that the magical thinking which draws visitors to fairyscapes adds a further, mystical dimension to the event. The comments could be argued to indicate the presence of intangible, liminally affective motifs in addition to the usual tropes of wings, wands, and green spaces associated with fairies (see table 1).

### ***Storyscape scene-setting***

*Mythologising the storyscape.* Situating these ambiguous, shifting spaces may seem like a paradoxical endeavour but producers make an effort to establish where the liminal narrative is set ("whereness"). They do so through storytelling, which emerges from the findings as an over-arching, theatrical liminal affective technology, bounding the storyscape and informing the overall otherworldly fairyscape narrative at all levels, acting as connective media. One research participant referred to the festival technologies as 'storylines,' underpinning what Chronis *et al.* (2012) would term their own role as 'story-builders.' For example, story scene-setting informs the choice of festival locations. Some festival managers choose sites because they are the 'source' or 'spiritual home' of magical encounters rooted in local myths, thus indicating visitors' desire for greater proximity to otherworldliness. As Larrington (2015) observes, mythology draws visitors to places and, in these cases, it also enhances the origin story of the event, thickening the festival emplacement, as the following examples illustrate:

'The reason I hold the faery festival at Llangollen is because of St Collen, the Abbott at Glastonbury in the 8th century. He insulted Gwyn Ap Nudd (King of the Fairies) who invites him to a banquet and of course you know you must never eat or drink in fairyland. And St Collen flung holy water over them and they all vanished as did the

wonderful banqueting hall. So that's how he defeated the fairies. So that's why Llangollen is the spiritual home for the Faery Festival.'

'We selected Leonslee because there are legends of the last English dragon killed by Florissant, a French knight hermit living in Leonardslee Forest. An Iguanodon skeleton was found here and that translated into a dragon. It's the crossover place between fantasy and reality.'

By associating their festivals with folklore, producers cultivate an envelope of site mythos that enhances the potentiality of affective liminality and reinforces the narrative through symbolic, psychologically powerful suggestions. As Buchmann et al. (2010) state 'it seemed that for most of our film tourists, it was the merging of both reality and myths that made for the most fulfilling, and authentic, experience' (p. 244). By situating the festival within the aura of local place myths, fairy folklore is also revived, reimagined, adapted, appropriated, and perpetuated in a new, festival iteration, deepening the intangible cultural heritage of both site and Fairyland (Barthes, 1957 [1972]).

Broader national myths drawn from Celtic traditions, and symbols (such as runes) are emphasised by producers to further historicise and mythologise the liminality of the storyscape. That some events are staged on Celtic land is a feature accentuated in their marketing and onsite signage. In addition to this mystic 'whereness,' all producers also play with the 'whenness' of festivals by locating them at important times in the Celtic calendar, like Midsummer or May Day, and also staging rituals at liminal times of day, such as noon, evening and night-time. However, Celtic LATs are carefully chosen to touch on the Druid traditions but to not overtly invoke Paganism. Several festival producers made similar observations to the following statement: 'Pagans may attend and their bands perform, but we are trying to retain the mainstream feel of the festival. We don't use the P word (pagan) too much. Instead, we say you will be exposed to the 'decorative fringe' of society.' All are welcome, yet the fairyscape reflects the safer values of the mainstream cultural imaginary.

*Storybook settings.* The use of storybook natural environments also reinforces the fairyscape by implying liminal proximity to the spirits of place. As a participant commented, 'Obviously, when you're connecting with fairies, it's about the land because that's what they are. Guardians of the land.' So, fairy festivals are often positioned within topographic features suggestive of the 'green otherworlds' and 'naturalistic theatre' of fairies (Evans-Wentz, 1994; Siewers, 2014). As a participant remarked: 'Stoutwood was the mother of fairy festivals and came out of nature. The land was extremely beautiful and evocative, with a babbling brook and mythic forest.' Woodland (the setting trope of Tolkien's High Elf realms and other fairy iterations) is such a prevalent motif that the forest is present at all festivals, reinforcing Hemme's (2005) conclusions about forests as romantic folk emblems. Lakes, brooks and waterscapes are other fairy-setting motifs featured across the festivals. Yet the observations by research participants run deeper, touching on the involvement of ancient genii locorum, indicating that fairies are still archetypally perceived as liminal beings, connecting humans with nature.

The storybook settings create opportunities for magical thinking. They increase the potentiality of exchange or communion with the spirits of place. Oberon chose Sudeley Castle not only for its significance as a motif but also the intangible, affective qualities of its grounds: 'The peacefulness and tranquillity which comes upon you when you enter these grounds, that's really amazing. It was just, you were away. I knew it was the location to be.' Puck also mused on the liminally affective qualities of the woodland landscape. 'It genuinely had a feeling. It wasn't even 'should I be feeling something? You know, so many people, even the stewards, would say 'I love this area'. You just do *feel* something. The connection we all have to nature and that everything's connected to everything and that is beautiful and magical.' Elrond expressed a similar view: 'The fairies are us trying to bring alive the natural world, as animism.



Plants as human beings are a complete construct that goes down the ages. The spirits of the forest and so on.’ At the heart of these statements is a reference to animism; spirits of the land evoking inner states from tranquillity, to eco-awareness, to what they described as ‘fairy doors’ and ‘fairy tingles.’ It is also worth noting that fairy storyscapes differ from those of other folkloric character motifs. For example, the warlike Orcs have a ‘boot camp,’ providing evidence that the LATS drawn from motifs are inextricable from transmedia depictions of fairies.

*Discussion.* The scene-setting of fairyscapes is encapsulated in the psychologically powerful suggestions of site mythos. Some sites are selected because they are linked to legends about fairy kings, knights and monsters. In addition, the Celtic territories including Wales and Cornwall emplace the festivals. This supports Buchmann *et al*’s (2010) findings on *Lord of the Rings* tourism in New Zealand, where tourists correlate Middle Earth and New Zealand mythologies, viewing them as complementary ‘in the same way that the cultural heritage of Greece is to modern Greece’ (p.243). In addition, the temporal emplacement of festivals within liminal dates and times significant to Celtic calendars adds another, timeless dimension to the storyscape. The motifs of locations, including lakes, woodlands and castles, reinforce the connection of fairies to bucolic, idealised, nature myths and links to the semiotic meanings of fairies, such as healing. These choices are interwoven with animism. For example, the landscapes denote connections to fairyland by exuding affective moods, such as tranquillity, or rainbows designed to evoke inner affective states within visitors, bounding the sites with magical thinking.

### ***Liminal affective technologies***

*Props.* Some liminal affective technologies involve staging or props that strengthen the narrative space and are designed to ‘summon’ magical worlds (Meyer and Land, 2003). For example, organisers create arches and access points that indicate worlds within worlds, as Elrond details: ‘We suggest that this arch is the audience entering the otherworld, a winter garden that’s dormant, obviously asleep, but also waking up at night, coming alive. Secretly.’ In addition to arches, magical mandalas or props include wooden dragons. Also, a throne for a Sugarplum Fairy character, made using twigs, fronds and other green matter, designed to make the chair appear to grow organically out of the woodland (see Figure 2, Fairy Throne, courtesy of the author). Puck invited an art collective to build small tepees to ‘capture’ the magic (see Figure 1, Tepees, photograph courtesy of author). ‘We wanted to feel like there are fairies or things happening within these little spaces. And children were going: “Mommy. Mommy. He’s there. Fairies in there.” And we don’t need to think. It’s done. It’s worked. The magic is captured.’ So the staging can co-induce immediate, spontaneous magical recognition responses. The props are often circular too, referencing fairy circles. At one point, Peaseblossom built a stone circle to mirror a wooden henge already on the land. In North America, stone circles are regularly constructed at festivals. As Garland stated: ‘In the US the stone circles move.’ The temporary nature of these technologies does not seem to alter their liminal affectiveness as thresholds that summon fairies, because once built, as Garland added: ‘things creep in.’

*Ritual.* Rituals are designed by event producers to evoke transformation. Ritualistic ceremonies are threaded through these events. For example, a procession, Evenmarch, during the New York Fairy Festival, takes place at sunset. Peaseblossom also describes the ‘opening circle’ that initiates the 3 Wishes Festival:

‘I call it the fairy ring and everybody who is there on the site, who feels drawn, meets at noon on midsummer. There is drumming, and I’ll hold that space and get everybody to go down on their knees to the land and put their hands on the soil. And connect with the land and also to give it love, that it can radiate it out into the surrounding area. And, perhaps honouring the four directions and the element of air, the ether.’

The notable phrase in this quotation is the concept of ‘holding that space.’ This implies that the connection to fairyland is temporarily held open by the circle-making ritual. The workshops interspersed throughout the event itineraries also contribute to the embodiment of the narrative through ritualistic activities, such as wand-making, perfume-making from flowers, mask-making, wreath-making, foraging and the magic of trees workshops. The wreathes and masks adorning participants are given ceremonial power and meaning through both their making and their assuming.

Wish-granting is a significant ritual that features at most of the festivals. It is founded on the notion of magical thinking seeking the granting of rewards from a ‘sympathetic magic, or the notion that association with an outstanding entity can result in the transfer of some energy or ‘essence’ (Taylor & Acic, 2021, p.21). The festival producers all explained that they are reproducing the Celtic magical tradition of a ‘Cloutie Tree,’ hung with clouties (rags or ribbons in the past, post-its or paper in the present) that are inscribed with wishes. For example, Mustardseed uses a ‘wishing line’ on which visitors hang paper inscribed with wishes for the fairies to ‘bring true’:

‘And the number of wishes that are just funny is great. But the ones that absolutely touch your heart you would not believe. A couple wishing for a child were desperate and had many rounds of IVF and nothing worked. And they put a wish on the wishing line and came the next year with their baby, conceived at the Fairy Fest.’

Fantasy Forest has attached wishing pockets (in which paper wishes are placed) to a wicker creature, such as a wolf, which is then ritually burned in a ceremony that is opened with the words: ‘We dream with our eyes open’ The liminal space is narrativized by the organiser as a dream, summoned from a place between reality and the subconscious, where personal and collective transformations can take place.

*Theatre.* Theatre turns affectivity into aesthetic experience (Stenner, 2020) and what is communicated most strongly by the research participants is their reframing of the fairyscape as a dream. The idea of festival-as-dream is strikingly overt. three of the festivals explicitly wove the plot and performers of the Shakespeare play, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, into the staging and theming of the space (see Figure 3). The choice of this specific play as both featuring fairies and as a dream also underlines the esoteric qualities of festivals that are designed to connect realms. Peaseblossom observed: ‘you’d be wandering through the woodland, and you would stumble across titania or Oberon. If you’re a passerby, you’re now in that performance, but it’s all real because you’re literally not expecting it’. Music is another essential transformative, theatrical lat, providing the soundtrack to the storyscapes. Celtic folk is used in all festivals to underline the folkloric atmosphere.

In order to cater to different audiences, Fantasy Forest staged two simultaneous performances of the Pagan band, Dolman, and a full orchestra playing the score from the *Lord of the Rings* films, the music still a seminal influence and escapist cue today. as Oberon commented: ‘at one point you could hear them both, but move a little further away and you were in a completely different world.’ Not simply one, but overlapping alternate realities within the fairyscape, which visitors could move between, infusing the narrative space with auditory motifs.

*Discussion.* The third theme examines how liminal affective technologies are used to strengthen fairyscape narratives. it identifies how fairyscape props, rituals, and theatre include the laying of hands to the ground, the pouring of libations, burning wishes, and the making of magical mandalas (see table 1). All of these elements serve to create material and intangible representations of fairies that actualise the potentiality of fairyscapes and enhance their

proximity to otherworldly entities. It is notable how, with the interpretative breadth and intertextuality suggested by transmedia portrayals of fairies, the organisers trace a magical path through time to the spirits or guardians of place of the ancient world. Fairy festivals are associated with ‘purifying and redemptive’ (Hennig, 2002) rituals, distinguishing them from some other fantasy character motifs (the warring Orcs have a Boot camp at Fantasy Forest Festival). Building on this last point, these findings reinforce Gaffin’s (2012) experience that ‘faerie presence’ causes a ‘mild high.’ The fairyscape is safe and family-friendly and must, as one participant described, therefore ‘take the Pagan edge off.’ liminal affective rituals organised by producers enable visitors to encounter Wicca traditions in more subtle, less ‘capital-P-pagan’.

It is important to note that a prevalent narrative used by the organisers of fairy-scapes is to reframe the festivals as dreams in order to soften the surreality of visitor encounters. as Mustardseed reasoned: ‘Fairy tales are about lost time and abduction. You go to sleep on a faery mound and wake years later.’ The phrase ‘waking up’ to reality communicates the sense of loss, interruption, and suspension characteristic of recrossing thresholds out of liminal spaces (Meyer & land, 2003). Yet the comment about abduction in the analysis reveals that these events are not entirely sanitised of their disruptive influences, the edginess is implicit, for example in the instructions for magical thinking activities, such as wish-making. As Peaseblossom remarked: ‘it’s really important to educate people because when you make a wish in Fairyland, it’s going to be quite potent. so always stipulate that it is for the highest good of all, and always do it with pure intentions. always.’ The state of ‘mildness’ referred to in the earlier paragraph contrasts with the unsaid message in those instructions: so it can be deduced that hidden currents of the potentiality of the unknown also inform and unbalance the storyscape.

## Conclusion

This study makes an original contribution to our understanding of fantasy tourism geographies by examining the production of magical storyscapes. the literature identifies a clear, growing niche of fairy tourism, then moves on to establish that these beings exist in another dimension and are elusive, enhancing their status as the objects of tourist desire. Fairy festivals act as material and metaphysical manifestations of these beings and are a new iteration and adaptation of fairy-focused intangible cultural heritage. The study adds to our knowledge by extending the definition of storyscapes into the domain of affective liminality in the form of fairyscapes. The uncertainty of magical narratives distinguishes fairyscapes from storyscapes centred on historical themes and anchored in factual details, which allows them to be more clearly pinpointed in space and time.

The study also brings a fresh, anthropological understanding to our knowledge of storyscapes. event organisers are aware of liminal aspects and view themselves as ‘holding open’ an in-between space which they co-infuse with potentiality. the liminal affective technologies (for example, wish-making) also reinforce on-site magical think- ing to the extent that a rainbow is sent from another dimension and visitors are reluctant to leave the narrative space. By applying novel LAT theory to storyscapes, the study illuminates how festival producers actualise the idea of Fairyland through storytelling, music, activity workshops, performances, and props.

In addition, the research expands on extant literature by examining the site-specific choices involved in the construction of magical storyscapes. Organisers select locations to complement narrative space, such as staging fairyscapes in forests, castle grounds, or choosing sites associated with local folklore, to further mythologise the landscape and add to its mystical dimensions. it is also striking that the ancient animistic motif of fairies as the mythic guardian spirits of nature persists and is perpetuated at fairy festivals today, further connecting these places intrinsically to the landscape. For example, some producers also imply that spirits also co-construct the fairyscape. Each of these LATs are interwoven with fairy motifs that reinforce

the narrative space with psychological depth and familiarity. The storyscape topography is constructed through motif-rich magical props including arches, henges, thrones, stone circles, dragons, unicorns, wreaths, wings, and wands, designed to inscribe and reinscribe the narrative space with symbolism. Fairy action motifs are interwoven through performative workshops on topics such as wreath, wand, and mask-making. Other activities tap into sacrilising healing and purifying rituals like wish-casting and circle-making. In addition, this study has also identified new atmospheric setting fairy motifs beyond the traditional tropes and encapsulate liminality.

However, the findings indicate that these fairyscapes tend to soften their more challenging Celtic, Pagan, and Wicca elements. Avoidance of the disruptive connotations of fairies (kidnapping, mischief) may dilute the psychological power of the traditional folklore from which the narrative has been drawn, with implications for the future potency of these enduring motifs. In addition, animistic associations with nature are not overtly activated by organisers to promote radical ecological ideologies, but notions such as respect for the land are, instead, implicitly communicated. Festival producers also explain any sensations of surreality or disruption that visitors may encounter, by framing the fairyscape as a suspended, waking dream-state. These conclusions suggest these festival storyscapes are reimagining the fairy cultural imaginary in an inclusive, safer, milder form, which merits further research.

The study has several limitations. its scope is the production of fairyscapes, not their consumption. But these events are co-produced and visitors are also magical story-builders. Future investigations could dive deeper into the more disquieting elements, by asking about visitor perceptions of the fairyscape, their unsettling onsite experiences, and the fleeting moments that cannot be explained. Furthermore, the folkloric fairy world is traditionally one that humans are reluctant to enter and edgier fairy tourism sites exist, for example, like fairy forts, into which, as one participant commented, visitors step 'at their peril.' Prospective research on fantasy spaces could investigate more dangerous storyscapes, through which 'things creep in.' lastly, we acknowledge another limitation of our study, which covers participants and events that are heavily influenced by Western European fantasy, mythology, and transmedia. Future studies transcending cultural, racial, and geographical barriers on non-Western interpretations of fairies and events can shed new light on the interconnections between LATs, folklore, mythology, and fantasy anime.

In conclusion, it may be helpful to conceptualise magical storyscapes as resembling the Japanese art of Kintsugi (piecing fragments of pottery together with gold). Fairy festivals link some of the missing aspects of imagined places together with a glittering awareness that draws attention to their constructed nature, beautifully flawed because Fairyland remains perpetually elsewhere, shimmering forever out of reach:

'Stoutwood took place on May Day. this caused problems because of the rain. One year it was heavy and a little girl was jumping up and down in a puddle as all these people with their umbrellas tramped past her. she was drenched and chanting "I do, I do, I do believe in fairies!" and it spread. everyone started chanting with her in the rain. "I do, I do, I do believe in fairies."'

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