

# Faeries

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**Faerie** : from the Latin term for "fate" (*fata*), faeries (or fairies) are a "host of supernatural beings and spirits who occupy a limbo between earth and heaven" (Guiley). This is in recognition of the skill faeries had in predicting and even controlling human destiny. Faeries could be either good or evil creatures, and at various points in history have been confused with witches and demons

**Fay** or **fey** is the archaic term for faerie meaning bewitched or enchanted. This word derives from 'Fays' meaning Fates, and thought to be a broken form of Fatae. 'Fay-erie' was first a state of enchantment or glamour, and was only later used for the fays who wielded those powers of illusion. The state of enchantment is **fayerie**, which became *fairy* and *faerie*.

## Other terms :

**Fair Folk** is a welsh name, often used in litterature and in scandinavian myths.

**Good Neighbours** is from Scotland. It had its origin in a desire to give no unnecessary offense. The `folk' might be listening, and were pleased when people spoke well of them, and angry when spoken of slightly. The same feeling made the Irish Celt call them `honest folk' (*Daoine Coire*) or `good people' (*Daoine Matha*).

**The Green Children** was used in medieval litterature and versions of it is often used in modern Fantasy litterature. This theme has many variations like Greenies, Greencoaties and others.

**The Old People** refers as Faerie lived on earthlong before Mankind.

**The Silent People** (the people of peace, the still folk, or silently-moving people) comes from the Irish and Scottish Gaelic, the *sith* people. The name *sith* refers to `peace' or silence of Airy motion, as contrasted with the stir and noise accompanying the movements and actions of men. The Fairies come and go with noiseless steps, and their thefts or abductions are done silently and unawares to men.

**Elf (ves)** means also faerie and derived from the word *alfar* from the Nordic and Teutonic languages which is associated with mountains and water. This clearly illustrates the close relationship between faeries and the earth.

More generally, Faerie applies to four kind of entities :

- **Enchanters and enchantresses** with supernatural powers.
- Certain **monsters and demons** having a connection with fairies and/or having some of the characteristics of fairies. See the origin of Fairies
- **Nature fairies:** Faeries were believed to be some of the spirits which populate all places and objects on Earth. The nature fairies are mermaids, water-spirits, tree-spirits and such.
- **Faerie people (mainly the subject of this section)** or the true Fairy, or Elfin race. The Fairies, according to the Scoto-Celtic belief, are a race of beings, the counterparts of mankind in person, occupations, and pleasures, but unsubstantial and unreal, ordinarily invisible, noiseless in their motions, and having their dwellings underground, in hills and green mounds of rock or earth. They are addicted to visiting the haunts of men, sometimes to give assistance, but more frequently to take away the benefit of their goods

and labours, and sometimes even their persons. They may not be present in any company, though mortals do not see them. Their interference is never productive of good in the end, and may prove destructive. Men cannot therefore be sufficiently on their guard against them.

## **Faeries across history and cultures**

The antiquity of the belief is shown by its being found among all branches of the Celtic and Teutonic families, and in countries which haven't had, within historical times, any communication with each other. If it be no entirely of Celtic origin, there can be no doubt that among the Celtic races it acquired an importance and influence accorded to it nowhere else. Of all the beings, with which fear or fancy peopled the supernatural, the Fairies were the most intimately associated with men's daily life.

Throughout most of these former celtic nations : Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Brittany and Germany, the Fairies have become things of the past. A common belief is that they existed once, though they are not now seen. There are others to whom the elves have still a real existence, and who are careful to take precautions against them. It would be difficult to find a person who knows the whole Fairy creed, but the tales of one district are never contradictory of those of another and are still present even if they sometimes remain as a confused jumbling of all superstitions.

## **Description of Fairies**

Faeries are often portrayed in Western children's stories as tiny, winged, and good hearted. However, this description varies widely from worldwide folk traditions in which beliefs concerning hidden races sharing the earth with us have resided for most of human history.

Within different regions different descriptions of faeries grew, all were more or less human in form although sometimes taller or shorter, but never bearing wings. Much of their behaviour was much like humans as well; they had governments, societies, marriages, children, and war. They were often mortal and therefore, could be killed. However, unlike humanity, they had supernatural powers, which made them, at best, unpredictable and at worst, dangerous. Few people sought out the company of faeries and most went out of the way to avoid it.

## **The size of faeries**

The difference in size ascribed to the race has strangely greatly varied according to time and local customs. At one time the elves are small enough to creep through keyholes, and a single potato is as much as one of them can carry; at another they resemble mankind, with whom they form alliances, and to whom they hire themselves as servants; while some are even said to be above the size of mortals, giants, in whose lap mortal women are mere infants. The same peculiarity exists in Teutonic belief. At times the elf is a dwarfish being that enters through keyholes and window-slits; at other times a great tall man. In Scandinavia, the Troll may appear in one tale as a Giant greater than two men and in another as a small dwarf..