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Across the Hills and Into the Blue: The Magical and the Mundane in Hope Mirrlees' *Lud-in-the-Mist*

In Hope Mirrlees' *Lud-in-the-Mist*, the wise old servant Hempie admits to her shocked master, Nathaniel Chanticleer, that, contrary to fashionable Luddite opinion, she doesn't much mind living next door to the wild and dangerous fairies: "They're mischievous creatures, I daresay, and best left alone. But though we can't always pick and choose our neighbours, neighbourliness is a virtue all the same. For my part, I'd never have chosen the Fairies for my neighbours--but they were chosen for me. And we must just make the best of them." In *Lud-in-the-Mist*, Mirrlees presents a world where the boundaries between the magical and the mundane are more fluid and the two places coexist uncomfortably, representing (seemingly) opposed values and ethics: Law and Delusion. In setting up these two ideologically opposed but geographically close places, Mirrlees evokes the traditional notion that the fairies and fairyland were always lurking nearby and just underneath the mundane world. This paper proposes to examine the ways in which Mirrlees works in this tradition: examining, contrasting, and ultimately reconciling the magical with the mundane. Comparisons and contrast will be made to other works which invoke these motifs, both ones which anticipate Mirrlees (ex. traditional British and Celtic folk beliefs, tales, and ballads), those which were roughly contemporary (ex. Tolkien's hobbit books and Smith of Wootton Major, Dunsany's *The King of Elfland's Daughter*), and those which follow her in both time and influence (Clarke's *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell*, Gaiman's *Stardust*).

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