FAERIE MAGAZINE

Celebrating the Extraordinary

ISSUE NO.
36
AUTUMN 2016

the **VINTAGE & VICTORIANA** *issue*

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Letter From the Editor

Autumn 2016

Almost every issue of *Faerie Magazine* dips into the past in some way, to other places and times that shimmer alluringly from history books, from 16th century frost fairs to Arthurian ruins. But we find ourselves frequently looking to the Victorians for inspiration—from the sumptuous visions of the Pre-Raphaelites to the fern manias and orangeries and Wardian cases, the gorgeous obsession with tiny gossamer-winged creatures teeming in fields and forests, ready to whisk us away.

It seemed only right to devote an issue to the Victorian age—the beautiful, magical bits of it, the literature, culture, and art. The fancy tea parties; the inimitable Oscar Wilde; the Brontë sisters and their wild, massive imaginations; the séances and spiritualism and magic; the wistful scents of crushed flowers; the herb-filled apothecaries; the paintings that seem to open feverishly into other worlds. It was stylist and *Faerie* regular Tricia Saroya who first suggested the idea of this special issue, which seems obvious now, as we sat drinking tea in her fairy-lit cabin after a long day of shooting. "I love that the Victorians were so hugely into science yet still believed in magic," she said. And she imagined an ornate, decadent, multicolored *Alice in Wonderland* tea party in the middle of the woods, which led to our cover spread.

The Victorians looked to fairyland as one way of coping with the dizzying, all-too-real changes surrounding them, forcing them into the modern world. One could say that we, too, are living in strange times, and that it makes sense that we crave the simple pleasures of days past. The forest. The glittering wings. The fantasy of the Victorians themselves.

Hopefully these pages offer some respite.

Carolyn Turgeon

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FAERIE magazine

VOLUME 36 | *Autumn 2016*

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ISSN: 1554-9267, recorded with the U.S. Library of Congress.
Faerie Magazine is published in the United States of America.

Table of Contents

Autumn 2016

ISSUE 36 | *Autumn*

Whorled Wonders

MARBLEIZED OBJECTS FOR THE HOME

by LAREN STOVER

Open an antiquarian book and there's a good chance you'll find marbleized end papers, hypnotically patterned swirls of colors created by floating pigments on water that has been thickened with cellulose—one early recipe included seaweed—upon which you lay a sheet of paper.

The history of marbling has been called misty and obscure, and early names for the art sound nearly mystical. It was known as *suminagashi*, or "ink floating," in 12th century Japan (it replaced earlier hand-colored marbled effects in Ming Dynasty China) and *ebru*, or "cloud art," in 15th century Persia.

The technique traveled to the West along the Silk Road (it still flourishes in Venice and Florence—it's hard to resist picking up a marbled journal and a dip pen in an Italian *paperie*) as Europeans in the middle of the 16th and 17th centuries picked up the exotic papers in Turkey, Persia, and other parts of the Near East. The mystery surrounding how it was made was part of its arcane charm. Even scientists and natural historians pondered how paper could be made to look like marble. According to Richard J. Wolfe in his illustrated book *Marbled Paper: Its History, Techniques, and Patterns*, "the process seemed to possess mystical, almost magical qualities that placed it within the realm of alchemy and this aroused their curiosity."

Marbled papers were widely used in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries by bookbinders. (That sheen or finish you see was often achieved by buffing with beeswax.) Not surprisingly, the patterns had names. The French curl or Snail pattern, introduced around 1660, was used in Britain until the end of the 19th century. A fine-combed pattern called Nonpareil was popular throughout the Victorian period, along with variations called Bouquet, Peacock, Serpentine, and Dahlia. A book was a treasured object, and many early 19th century authors from Ouida (pen name of Marie Louise de la Ramée) to Jane Austen to Lord Byron had books with marbled covers.

The art was once a secret, which nearly led to its extinction. But now you can DIY and create patterns using combs, rakes, and feathers (please use only those you find in nature to be sure they are fairy friendly and cruelty free). Galen Berry, one of the best-known contemporary marblers in America, has made an art of naming his patterns, which include Bird Wing, Whale Tail, Frog Foot, Fantasy Moiré, and, most fanciful of all, Dragons in the Sky.

Until the middle of the 19th century, the enchanting paper was also used decoratively as wall coverings, trunk and musical instrument case linings, box coverings, and of course, writing journals. Indeed, marbling seems to make any object more magical. Happily, the marbling mystique endures and swirls of mesmerizing patterns ornament everything from teapots to candleholders.

Opposite page:
Handmade glazed terra-cotta plate. Astier De Villatte collaboration with John Derian: johnderian.com

This page, clockwise from top:
La Prouveresse Diptique candle. A scent evoking fig and cypress trees, aromatic herbs and crunchy leaves. Matte porcelain pot crafted by hand using the terre mêlée *technique:* diptyqueparis.com

La Redouté Diptique candle. Cinnamon, clove, and orange floating on a warm breeze over a bed of roses, cedar, and amber. Matte porcelain pot crafted by hand using the terre mêlée *technique:* diptyqueparis.com

Marbled storage boxes finished with metallic gold mixed into the pigment for the slightest shimmer: Patch: patchnyc.com

Handmade glazed terra-cotta mug Astier De Villatte collaboration with John Derian: johnderian.com

Large and small handmade glazed terra-cotta teapots with marbleized appliqués sourced from antique papers: Astier De Villatte collaboration with John Derian: johnderian.com

Antique Regency-style marbleized porcelain teapot: one of a kind from Bergdorf Goodman, Decorative Home

ON OUR COVER

Victorian Faerie TEA PARTY

It was stylist Tricia Saroya who suggested a "Vintage & Victoriana" issue of *Faerie Magazine*, while shooting our spring 2016 cover with Kristina Anapau at Saroya's gorgeous ranch just north of Santa Barbara. Her love of all things vintage—and Victorian in particular—runs deep. "I love that the Victorians were so hugely into science yet still believed in magic," she says. "I have an image in my mind of an old parlor in rich, deep burgundy velvet and wood, stuffed full of gold-embossed leather books, a terrarium with exotic ferns and other specimens, a table set beautifully for tea, and very proper dapper men in their tweed suits and elegant ladies in lace all having lively and terribly educated discussions about—fairies!"

This aesthetic has influenced the "more is more" attitude she brings to all her projects. For this cover, she wanted "layers and layers of decadent beauty spilling forth, lush details that make you want to climb into a scene and roll around in it."

So the idea came to do a vintage fairy shoot and to tell a story of fairies emerging from the forest and happening upon an outdoor boudoir filled with elaborate, detailed frocks hanging from the trees and glittering accessories scattered about the grass. Then they would dress for a decadent tea, something wild and *Alice in Wonderland*–ish. Saroya imagined twig-and-lace wings on the fairies and pale, nearly sheer dresses, and then more formal attire for the tea, which would feature a table crammed with brightly colored desserts and candies and fruit, flower teas and juices—and plenty of vibrant blooms. As those familiar with Saroya's work know, she's all about placing elegant and glamorous vignettes in a natural setting: candelabra and moss, good china spread out under hanging trees with chandeliers in the branches. "I love the unexpected combination," she says. And for the table she wanted "the utmost in decadence, layers of color, and beautiful touches."

Humans might long for the fairy world, with all its shimmer and magic, but these fairies might delight in being human for one day, decked out in flowing gowns and brocade waistcoats, sampling human fare.

Designer Kambriel came onboard and flew out for the shoot, creating all the looks from scratch. She also brought boxes of accessories, including a one-of-a-kind necklace with an antique French silver Art Nouveau centerpiece and heirloom fin de siècle glass pearls, and an ethereal Art Nouveau headdress covered in iridescent sequins in a variety of shades, grandly proportioned organza roses, and side-draping tassels embellished with hand-blown antique Bohemian amethyst glass teardrops. She brought boxes overflowing with feathers and crystals and flowers and fabric to add to the overall sumptuousness.

Sonalii Castillo, whose photography was featured in the Anapau shoot, agreed to model, and as a fairy enthusiast, she could barely contain her excitement when Saroya placed the wings on her, transforming her for the next few hours. Editor Grace Nuth suggested Andrew Burger as a male fairy, and when a third model fell through at the last minute, Kambriel's friend Tanya Bjork, who had just come along to help, stepped in and, it turned out, had the perfect fae look. The three quickly became a little family, frolicking through the woods and the flowers as the sunlight streamed down through the trees. Who doesn't love to play dress up and take a trip to fairyland?

Photographer: **STEVE PARKE** *Styling:* **TRICIA SAROYA** *Clothing Designer:* **KAMBRIEL**

Models: **Sonalii Castillo, Andrew Burger, Tanya Bjork**

Hair & Makeup: **Ann Beckette**

Victorian Faerie Fashions
BY KAMBRIEL

We asked Kambriel about the clothing she made for the project—and for fashion tips for those of us who plan to attend a Victorian fairy tea party ourselves (or just look like we might!).

Faerie Magazine: So tell us about the clothes you created for this shoot.
Kambriel: I wanted the clothing to transition from something very natural and diaphanous into something richly luxurious. I wanted to give the fairies a change of pace, where they could shed their more minimal garb and try something a bit more formal than they might otherwise wear to frolic in. After all, a decadently magical tea party was awaiting them!

FM: What Victorian details do you especially love to incorporate into your work?
K: For Victorians, more is more. No detail is overlooked, from the glisten of a sparkling carved jet or metal filigree button to a fine lace embellishment. The opportunity is never lost to add a little extra special touch to the finishing of a piece. Silhouettes are always emphasized, and there's an unexpected pairing of modesty and drama which results in something both timeless and enchanting.

FM: What explains the appeal of vintage Victoriana, do you think?
K: There is something so appealing about the depth of sentimentality in Victoriana. A particular choice of flowers, colors, a shiny or matte finish, the flutter or wave of a fan—everything carries its own special meaning and significance. There's a language that goes far beyond words. And there's a charm to how Victorians can combine subtlety and extravagance in such an elegantly beautiful way.

FM: How would you dress for a Victorian tea party?
K: I'd wear a long iridescent silk brocade jacket or high-collared capelet, along with yards of delicate lace ruffles and elaborate embroidery that's been accented with sparkling French jet beads in the shapes of crescent moons and stars—especially if it were for a midnight tea! I'd top my outfit off with a jaunty confection of a hat decorated with an abundance of rare night-blooming flowers created from hand-dyed velvet, surrounded by a cloud of diaphanous silk tulle veiling.

FM: How did you approach dressing the fairies?
K: I wanted their clothing and accessories to be beautiful and glamorous, but in a way that still feels very organic and connected with their natural surroundings. It's a blending of the wild and the refined ... much like the fairies themselves at the tea party. Try as they may to be proper, their inner whimsy and mischief can't help but come through!

FM: Do you have any advice for someone trying to achieve a vintage fairy look?
K: Listen to your inner magpie tendencies. Reach for what attracts you and don't be afraid to blend it all together. Soft textures, shimmering shades, pieces from around the world, spanning oceans and centuries, cobweb-fine laces and delicate, heirloom details—all in abundance! Don't worry too much about how they'll go together. If you combine what you really love and are naturally drawn to, a kind of magic happens where everything begins to meld in an alchemical way that ultimately can lead to a style and aesthetic that's uniquely your own.

To dress our woodland fairies, Kambriel conjured a tunic-length Shadowen blouse with dramatically flared sleeves and extra full lower flounce, made from sheer floral lace mesh in a deep ivory shade; an empire-waisted, mid-length gothic nightdress with an off-the-shoulder neckline and gently flared sleeves made from an iridescent rose-gold softly pleated cotton; and a loosely fitting white Byron shirt with fully draped and gathered sleeves and an open-collar neckline, along with deep wine crushed-velvet leggings and a vintage French filigree and crystal belt. For the male fairy, she also made a high-collar, ivy jacquard Borgia shirt and decadent peacock silk brocade waistcoat in shades of black and teal accented with silver filigree buttons, topped off with an antique Edwardian silk charmeuse top hat.

For the tea party attire, she came up with a black moiré frock coat with curved lower hem and standing collar, accented with a black lace ascot and purple cuffs made from a double layer of embroidered organza; a medea gown in black moiré with off-the-shoulder cobweb mesh sleeves and a center panel framed in black soutache of gleaming golden green European silk brocade delicately woven with a design of sweet birds hidden among the leaves; and a forest fairy dress with a bodice created from a multitude of embroidered organza leaves in shimmering shades of copper and violet and bias waterfall flounces along the lower hem.

Visit Kambriel online at kambriel.com.

CREATE A *Victorian Faerie Tea Party* BY TRICIA SAROYA

Saroya shares some tips for setting up your own outdoor tea party to enchant all your friends (and passing fairies).

Any slightly overgrown or super green natural setting is great. Your backyard will do just fine, especially if you're under a lovely tree, or maybe in the ivy patch, or in a field or orchard, or by a stream—the more wild the better.

I know that many people are nervous about using color or too many details. It can get overwhelming sometimes. A great tool is to stay within a specific color palette. Go to the hardware store and get some paint chips and play around with combinations until you find one you love. Or if you already have a lovely tea set that you would like to use, then take your color cue from it. As long as you stay within a particular color story you can keep adding details until there's no more room on the table! Think also of using lots of texture as well, to keeps things interesting.

I love to add several layers of fabric, with each one showing. For this shoot I just tossed them on the table, swirling them around in a very haphazard way. You can also have a more tailored look with different sizes, each one showing beneath the other. Think layers of petticoats on a wild-west madam.

For the table setting I used a vintage tea set from my grandmother and added in old silver and found bits from thrift stores. As long as you're working in a particular color story, you really can use almost anything. Think in layers: I love to stack dishes one upon the other.

For flowers, again I used a lot of live plants, like petunias and hydrangeas, in addition to the cut flowers, and I stayed within my color palette. I got these from the local farmers market and then popped them in the garden after the shoot. This will give you a lot of bang for your buck as well as volume and height. Having different height levels is also a way to keep your table interesting. I combine flowers and fruit in one container, but keep in mind that the fruit will make your flowers' life span shorter, and the flowers will make your fruit ripen faster. I used several of my vintage teacups and creamers as containers for the flowers, as well as tall cake platters. I love to have the effect of containers spilling forth their abundance right onto the table. I'll even put clusters of flowers and fruit just on the table without a container, or tip one over so it looks like the contents have spilled out. It looks so much more abundant that way—like a magical feast literally overflowing with flowers, fruit, and goodies!

For the food, I wanted the most beautiful desserts and candy I could find and picked up everything from the grocery store. Anything sugar frosted gives you a wonderful magical effect. For the drink, fruit juices or flower teas are beautiful. For grownups, champagne is lovely, especially with raspberries flowing in the bubbles. Any glass ringed with colored sugar looks extra festive.

This shoot would have another kind of magic at night with colorful jewel-tone candles and lanterns everywhere and twinkle lights strung in the trees.

No matter how much or how little you add to your table, creating a luscious setting out in nature will have a magic and beautiful ambiance that you and your guests won't soon forget! Enjoy!

See more of Tricia Saroya's design at triciasaroya.com.

Three traditional favorite

Victorian RECIPES

It was Anna, the seventh Duchess of Bedford, who introduced the custom of afternoon tea to mid-19th century England after finding herself in need of nourishment during the long stretch between breakfast and dinner. She requested trays of tea and bread and butter and cake be brought to her around 4 p.m.—and began inviting her fashionable (and hungry) friends to the mini meals. Afternoon tea became all the rage, and by the 1880s highborn ladies would gussy up for these delicious drawing-room affairs.

On these pages, blogger Sara Ghedina, a.k.a. One Girl in the Kitchen, offers three delectable dishes to serve at your own tea party. Use these as starting points—a great tea party should offer a ton of beautiful and decadent variety. If you're lucky, you might even attract a thirsty fairy or two to the bash.

Recipes and photos by Sara Ghedina
(a.k.a. One Girl in the Kitchen)

HONEY GINGER SCONES

More traditional scones might have currants or raisins, which you can easily swap for the ginger in this recipe if you prefer. (You can also substitute cinnamon for the ginger powder.) But this is a lovely, spicy variation, great for the holidays as well as for your tea party. You can freeze these, too, and heat them up in the oven for a mini tea on your lonesome.

VICTORIAN APPLESAUCE CAKE

This fragrant, spice-filled cake will make your kitchen smell like autumn. The cake itself is soft and light—perfect for a glamorous afternoon tea. Ghedina even suggests baking it in individual cakes or a muffin pan for sweet variety—reducing the baking times, of course!

PUMPERNICKEL CUCUMBER TEA SANDWICHES

You can serve all kinds of little sandwiches at your tea, but what is more classic than cucumber? Ghedina changes it up with pumpernickel, which gives extra denseness and flavor, but recommends cutting it thin to retain that sweet tea-party daintiness.

HONEY GINGER SCONES

for 10–12 scones

3½ cups all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking soda
1 tablespoon baking powder
pinch of salt
¾ teaspoon ground ginger
¼ cup sugar
½ cup honey
1 stick butter, cold
1 cup crystallized ginger
¾ cup heavy cream
¾ cup buttermilk

Topping
¼ cup sugar
⅛ teaspoon ground ginger

Preheat the oven to 375˚F.

Sift the flour, baking soda, and baking powder into a large mixing bowl. Add salt, ground ginger, and sugar and stir well.

Cut the butter into cubes, add it to the bowl, and using a pastry cutter work it with the flour mixture until it is reduced to very small pieces. Chop the crystallized ginger and add it to the bowl along with the cream, honey, and buttermilk.

Mix briefly just until the ingredients come together—don't overwork them.

Shape the dough into balls of about 2¼ inches in diameter and place them on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.

For the topping, mix together the rest of the sugar and ground ginger and sprinkle on top of the scones.

Bake for about 25 minutes until the scones are golden brown. Transfer them to a wire rack to cool.

VICTORIAN APPLESAUCE CAKE

for a 9-inch Bundt cake pan

2½ cups all-purpose flour
¼ teaspoon baking powder
1½ teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground cloves
½ teaspoon allspice
pinch of salt
1 stick butter, room temperature
1½ cup sugar
2 eggs
½ cup heavy cream
1½ cup applesauce
1 cup chopped walnuts
1 cup raisins
powdered sugar for dusting

Preheat the oven to 350˚F. Butter and flour the Bundt pan and set aside.

Mix the flour with baking powder, baking soda, spices, and salt. Stir well and set aside.

In a large bowl, beat the butter with the sugar, add the eggs, heavy cream, and applesauce, and mix well. Add walnuts and raisins, and mix gently until smooth.

Pour the batter in the prepared pan and bake the cake for about one hour.

Let it cool off for 10 minutes, then remove it from the pan and let it cool completely on a rack.

Generously dust the surface with powdered sugar before serving.

PUMPERNICKEL CUCUMBER TEA SANDWICHES

(for 6–8 people)

1 8-ounce package cream cheese
4 tablespoons sour cream
2 cucumbers
1 small loaf fresh pumpernickel bread
salt, pepper, fresh dill

Peel the cucumbers and cut them into thin slices, put them in a colander, sprinkle very lightly with salt, and leave for 20 minutes.

Rinse and pat them dry with kitchen paper. Set aside.

In a small bowl mix softened cream cheese with sour cream, add salt, pepper, and minced dill to taste.

Slice the bread and cut each slice in half. Arrange them on a serving dish, spread each slice with a thin layer of cream cheese mixture, top with few cucumber slices and more dill, and serve.

When she's not at farmers markets, or stirring yet another jam, or photographing an artichoke, Sara Ghedina a.k.a. One Girl in the Kitchen, might be running in Golden Gate Park or in warrior pose. Find out more at facebook.com/onegirlinthekitchen.

Find Lisa's hood pattern on page 96.

Photography by Jennifer Ilene
Model: Riz Lacerna
Stylist: Well Dressed Lady
Fox: Fox & Family Exotics & Pet Services

Faerie Knitting

with ALICE HOFFMAN and LISA HOFFMAN

INVISIBLE

A fairy tale by Alice Hoffman

She was only a niece, not a daughter, and therefore considered worthless. She was hardworking, and in another family she would have been thought of as a treasure. But not here. She lived in the cellar, wore the same dress, ate alone at the table in the kitchen. She did what she could, knitting, sewing, making herself useful, but none of this mattered to her uncle, who spent good money on her food and board. He might have tossed her into the streets, but she was beautiful, which made him think she might be worth something one day.

That day finally came one autumn. She was told she was going to the market in the next town, but in fact, she was the one being sold. The cart kept on through the woods, past the town, past anything she had ever known before. The world was orange and gold and red. She marveled at the great beauty of her surroundings. At last they came to a fence that ringed a wicked land. There was dark magic here, and no birds flew in the trees. A walled tower rose into the sky. The stones were the color of blood.

Where is this place? she asked the driver.

Your husband's house, he said.

It was an arranged marriage. The uncle would have his gold, the husband would have his bride, and she would have no say in the matter. She was taken into the tower over a path of red stones that cried when she tread on them. Everything was enchanted, but she saw that there was misery in this place. She lowered her eyes as she was introduced to her husband-to-be. He was very old. He had already had three wives who had displeased him, but he was delighted with her long black hair, her dark eyes, her youth. She was just what he wanted. She insisted it was a mistake, impossible, but no, there was no error. She was the bride-to-be. He had the contract with her uncle in hand.

She was given a room where her wedding dress had been hung in the closet and her wedding shoes were beside the bed. The dress was red and the shoes were crimson. She could tell they had been worn by her predecessors. She thought about escaping, but the windows were locked and the latch on the door could not be moved. When her dinner was brought up she questioned the housemaid about the man of the house.

A terrible man, the housemaid said. *A hunter.*

What does he hunt? the bride-to-be asked.

The housemaid was old enough to be the girl's mother. She had a kind heart. Out of pity she took the bride-to-be to a great hall. There were the pelts of bears and wolves. In a cage, a fox was chained and starved.

The poor thing, the girl said. *Tell the man who is to be my husband I want it as my pet. Otherwise I will starve myself as he has starved the fox.*

The fox was brought to her room that evening. She fed him bread and milk, and that night he slept at her feet.

In the morning, the housemaid came with breakfast. *You must run away,* she said. *He is a hunter of women as well. He has destroyed everyone who has ever said no to him. What do you think happened to his other wives? Where do you think the members of his family who opposed him are today? I am one of them, his sister, and look what I have become.*

The girl shook her head. If she tried to flee, she would be spied by his watchmen.

Not if you're invisible, the housemaid said.

Not possible.

Impossible things are possible here. That is the danger of the place. And the wonder of it as well.

The housemaid brought leaves from the trees in the woods and a pair of knitting needles. *No one will see you if you are a tree*.

The wedding was the next day, so the girl knit all through the night. When she was done she had made a hood the color of the elms and the oaks in the forest. The housemaid showed her a secret door. She kissed the housemaid's cheek, then she and the fox left the tower.

The girl might have lost her way a thousand times if it hadn't been for her companion. They were soon followed by watchmen, but when the sun rose, she slipped on the hood she'd knitted. In an instant she disappeared, invisible to their eyes. She might as well have been a branch of leaves moving in the wind.

At last they came to the wall that kept the dark magic contained. The fox scrambled over and the girl followed. Once they were on the other side she took off her hood and the fox could see her as the woman she was, just as she could see him as the handsome man he was, the nephew of the hunter who was once her groom-to-be, but soon enough became nothing more than a memory as she and the housemaid's son walked away from the past.

Alice Hoffman is the New York Times *best-selling author of over twenty books for adults, children, and young adults, including* Practical Magic, The Dovekeepers, Nightbird, *and* The Museum of Extraordinary Things. *Her latest novel,* The Marriage of Opposites, *was published by Simon & Schuster. Her new novel,* Faithful, *will be available in November. Find out more at alicehoffman.com.*

THE ECCENTRICITIES OF GENTLEMEN

EPHEMERA AND APOCRYPHA FROM THE NOTES OF TIMOTHY SCHAFFERT, ESQ.

OSCAR COSPLAY

Wilde's fashion savvy and the American West

Picture Oscar Wilde, the granddaddy of grand dandies, in the American West at its wildest. It's 1882, and he's yet to write the works that would establish his literary legacy—the classic fairy tales; the plays; the iconic, late Victorian queer sci-fi fantasy portrait of moral decay, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *Patience* parodied Wilde's perspectives on art and décor, his fashion sense, and his haircut (or lack thereof). But a producer of *Patience* worried that not enough Americans knew Wilde well enough to appreciate the lampoon. So he sent in the clown himself, arranging for Wilde's lecture tour of American cities, from New York to San Francisco, designed to provide a forum for Wilde to pontificate on beauty and aesthetics and to simply hold himself up to scrutiny. Though Wilde deeply believed the principles he preached, he recognized the value in his peculiarity. It's often been noted that Oscar Wilde was Oscar Wilde's greatest character.

ILLY TITTLES

Though he gave over a hundred lectures in the U.S. and Canada that year, his jaunt to Omaha seemed to most tickle the world's imagination. In the immediate aftermath of his appearance on the stage of Boyd's Opera House, *Judy, or the London Serio-Comic Journal* published a cartoon of Wilde standing wild-haired at a flower-shaped podium, beneath the headline "A Poet in the Wilderness." The accompanying satirical poem identifies Omaha as a "horrid place" and a "savage city." Here's a sample:

Waving sunflower and lily—
He calls all the houses "illy"
Decorated and designed.
For of taste they've not a tittle;
They may chew and they may whittle,
But they're all born colour-blind.

Wilde arrived in Omaha just as it was investing in "grading, sewering, and paving," according to a local memoirist, Edward Morearty. Corruption in city contracts for these upgrades led to a labor strike, which led to riots. The state militia marched into town just days before Wilde's arrival, and the accidental death by bayonet of an innocent man led to 5,000 laborers taking to the streets to denounce Mayor Boyd (of Boyd's Opera House, where Wilde would lecture). Morearty writes, "The governor placed the city under martial law, ordering the closing of all saloons and permitting no one on the streets, without cause, after eight o'clock."

SILK AND RIBBON

So the precious Wilde was a breath of fresh air in his black velvet jacket and "leather gaiters faced with yellow cloth," according to the *Omaha Weekly Herald*. The paper also noted that "a maroon silk scarf is tied at his throat and a hand-kerchief of like color and material peeps from the breast pocket of his jacket."

The *Omaha Bee*, a competing paper, was more critical of his attire, claiming that Wilde "is anything but good looking and in his fur collared overcoat, slouched white hat, gray velvet coat and light gray pants and a faded red ribbon at his throat, he looked like a travel-stained tourist."

In the weeks before Wilde's visit, the people of Omaha adopted his persona. A men's gathering called a "beer" (as opposed to a women's "coffee") featured comical costumes, including this one, reported in the *Bee*: "Mr. VanKuran was dressed as Oscar Wilde, and with his long hair and elegantly aesthetic costume, and carrying a large lily in his hand, he was unquestionably the belle of the ball." The Masque Social of the "Belle Lettres Club" included an Oscar Wilde (by Mr. Chester Davis) among its costumes of French Peasant Girl, Mephistopheles, Father Time, Marie Antoinette, and Old Woman Searching for Her Husband.

Meanwhile, the *Columbus Journal* reported that Wilde "is put in here to show people how mean a man looks with his little brother's pants on." And in reference to a local businessman named Dick Wilde, there was this news tidbit: "Oscar Wilde is coming to Omaha. Dick Wilde is already here. Oscar parts his hair in the middle, but Dick curls it to the center."

Such articles on Wilde ran among advertisements for champagne-flavor plug tobacco, Hostetter's celebrated stomach bitters, and cures for scrofula, syphilis, and blood disease.

WILDE AMBITION

His appearance at Boyd's Opera House attracted a crowd of 1,000 by some reports; others put it closer to 1,700. A reporter for the *Omaha Weekly Herald* visited Wilde afterward and asked him about his future. Wilde was quoted as saying, "Well, I'm a very ambitious young man. I want to do everything in the world. I cannot conceive of anything that I do not want to do. I want to write a great deal more poetry. I want to study painting more than I've been able to. I want to write a great many more plays, and I want to make this artistic movement the basis for a new civilization."

The *Omaha Bee* portrayed a simpler-minded Wilde. A reporter caught up with him on his way out of town. Wilde was said to have asked the reporter whether he could expect to see wild animals on the journey. The reporter promised jackrabbits, antelope, grizzly bears, buffalo, and Rocky Mountain lions.

"How unutterably lovely," said the poet. "Is it really so? That will be too beautiful."

LAVENDER

Upon the publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde came to be known less for aestheticism than for decadence. But he had his defenders in Omaha, most notably the columnist Elia Peattie. In a piece about a summer resort in Iowa, Peattie writes, "Mr. and Mrs. Swobe are here. Mrs. Swobe comes under the ban of Oscar Wilde, according to a memorable paragraph in his recent brilliant novel, 'The Picture of Dorian Gray.' He says, 'never trust a woman who wears pink ribbons or lavender.' Otherwise Mrs. Swobe is above reproach, but the damning fact of lavender ribbons can be quoted against her."

After his imprisonment in 1895, following a trial that examined and exposed his homosexuality, Omaha's papers traced his decline and the revision of his place in the popular consciousness. His gay manner that had so amused the world before had become dangerous, destructive, and immoral now that it was associated with his illegal acts.

"Oscar Wilde is no longer the imposing figure that he was when he represented the incarnation of aestheticism run mad," wrote the *Bee*. "He is careless, almost slovenly, in his attire, and his large frame is generally attired in rusty black garments that are spotted here and there with grease."

A month later the paper ran an article, by "special telegram" from Wyoming, on the suicide of Corporal Henry of the army, citing Wilde's new influence on the people of the Midwest. "Henry's comrades accused him of being an Oscar Wilde," the *Bee* says. "The accusation preyed upon him until he decided to end his existence."

The day after Wilde's own death, in 1900, the *World-Herald* published a reminiscence on the front page. A reporter reflected on Wilde's long-ago visit to Omaha, devoting much attention to the author's style. "He wore at all times pinned to his breast a huge sunflower and all of his disciples followed his example," he writes. The article concludes with this new detail from Wilde's visit to Omaha: We're told that he pulled several flasks from a leather bag as he sat among his followers, "flasks not of liquor but of perfume of many colors. While engaged in conversation, he would sniff at the different perfumes, wetting his forehead and his handkerchief with their fragrances, and enjoying their subtle effect with every manifestation of delight."

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The Fairies and Young Miss Constance

A story by GRACE NUTH

Walking up to his home was like meandering into a fairy tale. I told him as much the moment I met him. His response was a wry smile. "I had forgotten what it was like to see this place for the first time."

I myself had just had the experience, riding a rented bike from a small Devon village down increasingly narrow and rugged hedgerowed streets, over a bridge that certainly harbored a troll in its shadows, to a beautiful, Tudor-style house half-hidden behind a high stone wall. If the home's charm took my breath away, the gardens surrounding the structure left me light-headed with glee. From the moment I pushed open the carved wooden gate with the words "Pixie Cottage" painted on a nameplate, I could smell the floral symphony of a hundred types of flowers reaching toward the sky and diffusing their perfume. The vivid blooms were framed by the dark borders of a wild and ancient forest that grew behind the house, ending abruptly only a few yards from the back door. All of my senses were overwhelmed, my heart thudding with the electric energy that accompanies a moment of wonder.

But I was there on business. One doesn't receive an inquiry about a potential writing residency in rural England every day. Especially if one only had a single simple published volume on what the academic world would (and did) call a "frivolous" subject to one's name.

I knocked, admiring the knocker set at the center of the heavy oak front door, curiously wrought of what appeared to be gold. Noting the shape of the knocker, a beautifully rendered sprite with wings outspread, I started to wonder if the home's resident and I shared a common interest, despite our clearly differing fortunes. The house itself was singular, not only in its age and charm, but also its size. It was neither a sprawling country manor home nor a comfortable centuries-old farm cottage, but instead fell somewhere in between.

He opened the door with an infectious smile that only a wizened old man somewhere east of seventy can give. Bernard, his name was. I loved the way the British pronounce it, not like the saintly dog, but with a growl at the end, "Burr-nurrd." It sounded of burrs and briars, hedges and wilds. The name suited my host perfectly. After introductions were made, the first words out of his mouth were the most ubiquitous of British life: "I've put the kettle on. Fancy some tea?" I nodded quickly as he hung my jacket over a peg on the wall of the slate-floored entry hall. And then I walked into the front room and saw them all for the first time.

Crowding the room, on every surface imaginable, were tiny buildings. The room itself was spacious, vaulted with rugged oak beams that served as a reminder of how old the house must be. But even the lofty ceilings didn't distract from the hypnotic sight of the minuscule marvels. Words fall short here, even for a writer, because to call them buildings was entirely inadequate. They were Lilliputian works of wonder. Spiraling turrets topped one quirky manor, while another featured a front façade covered in balconies with tiny branched railings. Each home was entirely unique, completely fantastical, and seemed to shimmer with its own inner light. There must have been hundreds of them in just this room alone. Stone and wood pedestals of varying heights were clustered around every wall, displaying dozens of buildings. And where there weren't houses, there were plants. Sometimes the plants were displayed on the pedestals, with tiny houses tucked in among the leaves.

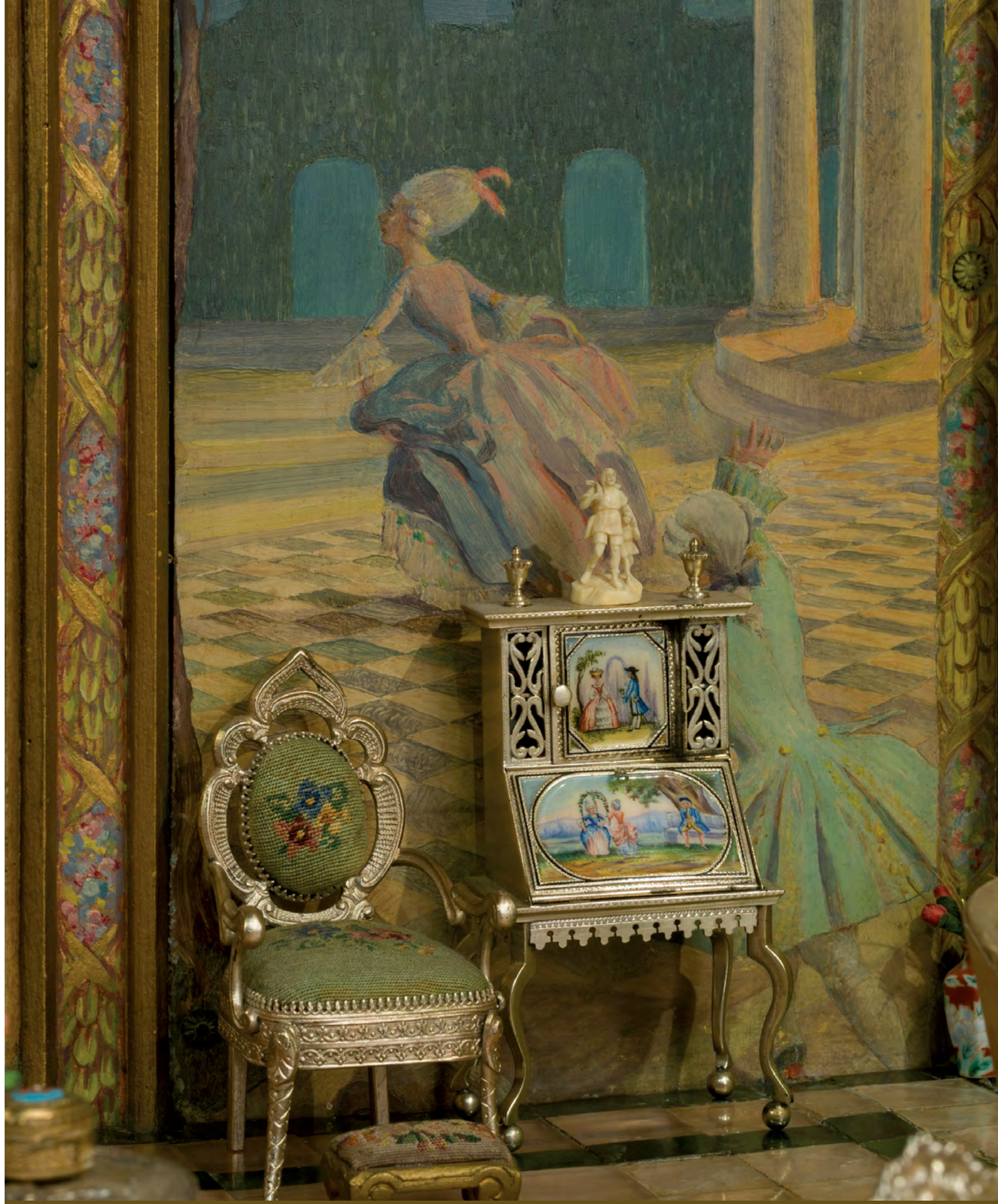
But most overwhelming was the atmosphere. There was an expectant quiet to the air, the sort of collectively held breath that occurs before an explosion of emotional energy. As my eyes shifted around the room, shimmering lights darted around the periphery of my vision. Small shapes made of warm sunlight seemed to cavort until I tried to glance at them directly. It was a completely disconcerting, utterly enchanting, slightly intimidating experience.

Bernard remained in the room, despite his offer of tea. He looked closely at my reaction to the unusual sight before me but didn't say a word. After a moment or two, I realized I needed to breathe and sighed deeply.

"I don't know what to say, sir." (Call me Bernard.) "Bernard … I'm utterly overwhelmed. I've truly never seen anything so magical in my life."

He responded with another of his toothy grins and nodded as if I had passed some unknown test. "And few have, my girl. And few have. Let me get that tea. Feel free to settle on the couch or chairs. And if you wish, there's an eyeglass on the coffee table you can use to look more closely at the houses. I don't think they will mind." With that curious final statement, he puttered away through another doorway into what I presumed was the kitchen.

I set my bag down on the comfortably worn brocade sofa at the center of the room. Reaching for the magnifying glass, I sat on the edge of the stuffed seat and leaned over to see one of the tiny houses atop the pedestal closest to me. When I peered carefully into one small window, no larger than an American penny, I gasped out loud and nearly dropped the heavy glass



All Fairy Castle photos appear courtesy of the Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago.

I held. It was a dizzying experience, looking into the bedroom beyond that window. For all appearances, it was just as if I were glancing into the lit and uncurtained window of a city house while on an evening stroll. Every detail was just as clearly visible, every piece of furniture as intricately wrought. The view through the glass made the cleverest of dollhouses seem like the clumsy fumblings of giants.

Bernard came back into the room with a tray, teacups and pot under its knitted cozy, sugar bowl and milk pitcher. I set the magnifying glass back down on the table, and we both went about the mechanics of preparing our tea. He looked at me sidelong, but neither of us said a word about the houses that surrounded us.

Finally, as we both settled back into the cushions of our seats, me on the couch and he on a leather chair that curled around him like it had known his shape for decades, he took a sip of tea, cleared his throat, and began.

"When I was a little boy, my grandmother, Constance, loved me the best. Of course she never said so outright, but she used to give me tiny little paintings, no bigger than a postage stamp. When I looked at them with an eyeglass, I could see small birds cavorting in among a berry vine, or a hungry fox hiding behind a rock for a rabbit to pass by. I was endlessly charmed by these tiny works of art, and would crawl into my grandmother's lap, asking her to tell me about each one. She always had a story for each minuscule artwork that stretched on endlessly in every direction—so much of a tale from so small a thing. When I wondered at this, she would smile at me and say, 'The small things, dear Bernard. Those are always important. Never forget.'

"This is her home," he said, gesturing around the room. "One day when I was in my late twenties, she brought me here, and before I went to bed one night, she sat down on the edge of my bed and handed me a pile of leather-bound books. 'These are my journals,' she explained in a voice that shook, whether from age or nerves or both I could not tell. 'I need you to read them. Read the pages I've marked for you, and tomorrow we will talk about what must be done.'"

Bernard shook his head. "I think she was wise to share with me this way. The stories I read about in these pages were so surreal, I think they required a visit to the land of dreams to sort through them all in my head."

Slowly standing, Bernard came over to my chair and extended a hand with the pile of well-worn leather journals. "I want you to take these with you tonight," he said. "Read the marked pages as you get ready for sleep, mull over what you read, and come see me in the morning."

We sat and talked for a little while longer, exchanging pleasantries and small talk, and then I rose to leave. As I walked out the door, the books tucked under my arm, Bernard called after me.

"Oh, and one more thing … please keep in mind that her stories are true. All of them."

I was surprised to discover I felt nervous to leave the house.

Despite the strange feeling of being watched when I was there, I was even sadder to leave the place behind.

8 September 1900

Today was my tenth birthday! Papa took the day off work at the bank to take me to the Museum of Natural History in London. I could not believe all the wonders I saw! I was a bit surprised not to see anything about fairies in the museum, but Mama said that this is because they belong to a different kind of truth. She laughs at me sometimes, in that nice way mothers can, because I am always so interested in little things we do not see, the invisible people and the objects and creatures so tiny that we may never even notice them. I like to look closely at things … it made a guard at the museum today yell at me when I pressed my face too close to the glass. Papa took me out for an ice cream afterward, so the day was still wonderful. Maybe for my birthday I will see a fairy.

12 April 1902

I used a small pea pod, toothpicks, and a scrap of fabric today to make a fairy sailboat. I have seen my friends from the village make them before, but I wanted mine to be extra special. I used a penknife to cut little notches from the toothpick in a decorative pattern, and painted designs on the side of the boat that were so tiny, I almost went cross-eyed by the time I was done. Nothing makes me happier than making something minuscule with so many details. I think the fairies like them too … today I left the small boat on the offering rock in the meadow. It is a flat-topped stone covered in moss where I know they like to play. When I went back after supper, the boat was gone, and a circle of tiny bluebells was in its place.

21 June 1908

Tonight is Midsummer, the night when the veil between the worlds is thinnest, and the fey folk can roam freely among mortals. I understand their

Young Miss Constance

Grace Nuth

desire to run free: In just a few months, I am turning eighteen, and Mama tells me I will have to finally start dressing in corsets and pinning up my hair. I've been a feral thing for far too long, she says. At least I have this final Midsummer of freedom.

21 June 1908 (later)

You will not believe … I cannot even begin to … I am having trouble even finishing a sentence or knowing where to start. This afternoon, I lay out in the meadow, writing in your pages, journal, and rolling around in the sweet grasses. I came upon a fairy ring of mushrooms, and today being Midsummer Eve, I jumped into the middle, as I have done so many times before, shouting out, "I know you are there, Good Folk!" I do it now more out of habit than hope for a reply, but this time I received one. A small voice whispered, "Young Miss Constance?" from a nearby bush. Startled, I stumbled out of the mushroom ring, clumsily taking several steps before regaining my balance. Half-hidden in the shadows of the shrub, I saw a queer little creature, a sort of cross between a frog and an aardvark. "My lady," he continued. "I have been sent to take you to the ruler of this forest. He wishes to speak with you."

I had heard of pinching yourself to make sure you are not in a dream, but up until now I have never seen anything so wondrous to have need to try it. I emphatically squeezed my arm tight between two fingers, exclaiming with pain when I confirmed my wakeful state.

"It would be best, dear lady, if I bring you to him undamaged?" the small creature timidly requested. Unable to utter a single word, I simply nodded. "Please bend down to me," he said. Taking a dented tin from his pocket with the words "Flake Cut Tobacco" on the label, he opened the lid and scooped out a mud-like texture onto his fingers. "Close your eyes," he instructed, and I obeyed. The substance was cool and tingly on my eyelids, and when I opened my eyes again, the world seemed to shimmer a thousand colors.

He led me into the woods, and I could hardly pay attention to my footing, the world was full of such wonders. But none compared to the Fairy Court, and the Sidhe King of the Forest.

I am still trying to understand the full import of what the King told me. Apparently, the human world's inventions of industry and transportation, gears and steam, fascinate some of his fey court just as much as magic and spells can hypnotize a human. The tiniest of the fairies, the pixies, seem to be the most enchanted, and some of them have grown sick with a desire to live among humans, learning of their ways and inventions and objects. Thus far, the King has kept them from fulfilling their desires, but they have been watching me, seeing all the little things I have made with sticks and stones and leaf and paint, and he has concocted a plan.

8 September 1908

I made my best home for a pixie yet. The skill magically given to me by the King of the Forest may aid my efforts, but I still cannot help but be proud of the work I do. Mama has begun to worry about me, hearing me whisper to myself (she thinks) in my room as I make these intricate small houses. She has no idea I am talking to each pixie who visits, detailing what he or she wants from an abode. But even mama grows silent with awe when she sees the result. I honestly do not entirely know how I do it … I picture each small building in my mind, and go into a sort of a trance. I feel my hands working, my lower back sometimes aches with fatigue as I bend over a small corner of a house for hours on end, but I do not quite return to myself until each pixie is pleased with his wee home, and bestows on me a small kiss to my forehead.

The King of the Forest told me that I must not tell anyone to whom I give a pixie home what really lives inside. However, he said that it is of utmost importance that I choose among the best and kindest and brightest families to own one. Apparently the pixie folk are not only delicate physically, but also emotionally: They are vulnerable to the personalities of those around them. A pixie who has been around a malicious person for too long can turn dark and malicious himself. I have to act not only as fey architect, but also as matchmaker, pairing each pixie personality with the friends and acquaintances in Edwinstowe that I feel best match. It is a great and terrible responsibility, but one I accept with joy.

22 December 1910

I am a victim of my own successes. There is a problem with creating something with a touch of fairy magic and intricate detail that seems impossible to stem from mortal hands. People start to pay attention. Rich people. People who want to own anything that is awe-inspiring or out of the ordinary, and think that they can pay whatever is necessary to obtain it. I have had gentry and rich elite from London and even further abroad sending me wild gifts and unsolicited banknotes accompanying letters begging me for my work. That is all they think it is: my craft. It is so much more. I must be careful.

12 August 1911

I am now Mrs. Richard Edmund Acton. One of those rich sons of an old family, he arrived on my doorstep in Edwinstowe to see my work for himself, and to learn what he could of my process. But this rich son did not bring me gold or jewels. Instead, he brought strange small branches of pale and ebony wood from exotic trees, suggesting that he wanted to bring something that I could use in my art. The next day, he brought me flowers from a nearby meadow, and in return, he left with my heart instead of a fairy cottage.

8 September 1913

Richard and James are the lights of my life. Every afternoon, Richard kisses me goodbye and I kiss dear little James on his wide and innocent forehead as I walk out to my studio behind our Devon house. Sitting in a small outbuilding in the middle of a garden grown both by nature and by the flower fey, I work on creating more houses. I may have moved my own home, but the pixies still come to me for theirs. I listen to their needs and dreams, and make them what I hope will make them happy. The popularity of my work continues to grow. I finally had to take on an assistant to help sort through the many requests I am receiving. I tried to explain to her how crucially important it is to research each person asking to purchase a house I've created. I hope she understands. She must. I must believe she understands.

3 May 1916

Richard is gone. Oh god, he's dead. What good is fairy magic if it cannot keep my own husband from being killed in this terrible war? I do not even

know how to tell James what has happened. He is still so young to have lost his father. I try to make more houses, but they all fall apart. The world is touched with darkness.

19 December 1917

War continues to rage both on the Continent and in my heart. Yesterday, I received a letter from a prominent family in Kent. I was shocked with the venom and vehemence of the letter. My tiny houses are cursed, the letter accused. The gentleman writing had bought a fairy home of my making from a family I remember from Edwinstowe who lost two sons in the war. I had not even considered the fact that some families to whom I gave my houses might find themselves in financial straits and in need of the money they could obtain by selling my creations. The writer of this letter tells me that his family has been plagued with mischief and mayhem ever since he brought this fairy house into his home. I cannot tell for sure, but I fear the worst based on the cruelty and anger of his letter.

6 February 1918

I have just returned from a visit to my parents in Edwinstowe. James enjoyed the time with his grandparents, but had no idea of the true purpose of my visit. I went to see the King of the Wood again, to tell him of our difficulty. More angry letters have begun to arrive. When I go to visit the owners of my work, they look at me expectantly, as if I could rid the place of this horrible infestation of bad luck that seems to burden them so greatly. But the pixies are not prepared to leave their malicious merrymaking. I do not have the knowledge or the magic to cure them or to take them away. I need help. The King promised he would send me aid.

A few days after we returned to our home in Devon, there was a quiet knock on my studio door. A small creature, looking like a half-frog and half-aardvark, waved at me expectantly. "Hello, young Miss Constance, remember me?" He bowed courteously, and I exploded into frantic giggles, wiping tears from my eyes. I did indeed remember him, the creature who first wiped mud on my eyes and gave me Fairy Sight when I was not even quite yet eighteen. "I am to be your helper. I may not look like much, but the Sidhe King trusts me, and I have my ways and my magic. I will help you remove these wayward pixies. We will bring them here, and see what might be done to help them."

I must believe this strange creature is right and we can do something to help. I feel to blame for this whole disaster. I remember every pixie who came to me with a heart full of nothing but curiosity and a desire to learn and explore. To think of such a happy heart corrupted by cruel humanity, because I did not protect them … I must try to fix what I have done.

30 May 1930

I have not written anything here in such a very long time. Much has transpired in the intervening years. My diminutive fairy companion has helped me so much, and together, we have returned many of the pixies to a calm and gentle state. My beloved home here in Devon is now really more like a village, for there are many pixies who still desire to live close to humans and don't want to give up the homes they love so much. I am their human now, and they help me as much as I help them. Having to act as a healing and gentle influence for them has helped me to face my own turmoil. I have in turn become a better mother to dear James, now eighteen years old and away to university. I am beginning to feel that it would be best to try to take back, or at least look in on, as many of the homes I have created as I can. But there are still so many unaccounted for. I had records, of course, of all the homes I created, but not all of the houses stayed in the protection of those families I had chosen. And what little aid I gained from my records was lost about five years ago when an especially virulent and violent pixie I had brought in for rehabilitation set fire to my studio, destroying everything inside, records included. I find now that I must rely on solely my memory and the letters I receive, along with any news stories I might read (and I scour every newspaper I can find) of odd goings-on in order to find the remaining lost fairy explorers of our ever so sad human world.

21 June 1960
Dear Bernard,

I have given you these journals as a precursor to a question, the most important and burdensome question I must ask of you. You have been such a dear light to me, and I hate to ask more, but I am growing older, and I feel my time here is short. I need to make sure that the pixies will be looked after … that someone will continue to search for those who remain lost. You recall as a child your grandmama's strange and quirky collection of tiny homes you were never allowed to touch when you would come and visit. Now you know their true meaning, and why I held them so dear.

I see the magic in you, dear boy. I see the light of wonder, even now that you are almost thirty years old. You are a man, but you still believe, don't you? I must have faith that you still believe. And now I must ask of you … will you care for my dearest friends? Will you provide a kind home for these pixies who have brought me such joy and companionship?

It remains, of course, entirely up to you. I love you, my dear Bernard.

Your Grandmama

"Of course I said yes, you know," Bernard said to me in greeting as soon as he answered my knock on his cottage door the next day. I stroked the gold wings of the knocker lovingly this time. Bernard smiled at my wide-eyed and wondering expression as I handed the stack of leather-bound diaries back to him. He led me inside to the same couch and chairs as yesterday, practically having to hold the tea he made in my grasp for me as I gaped, slack-jawed, at the hundreds of small buildings.

"Just a few months later, I received a phone call. My grandmother had disappeared, they said. No one ever found her, but she had left a letter leaving me her house. The local community, who loved their eccentric neighbor, mourned her passing. But I've always suspected that instead of passing away, she instead passed *through* … into the Realms of Faerie, where time runs differently and she could live forever young.

"A week after Constance left, I heard a rap on the back door. A wee little creature half-frog and half-aardvark introduced himself and reached for a rusted tin of chewing tobacco, asking me to bend down and close my eyes.

"And so it has continued, all these years. As technology advanced, so did the methods for searching for the remaining fairy homes. Some I found in museum collections and couldn't buy for any amount of money, even when I explained I was the grandson of the artist, who had left a request to return all of her work. When I visited the museums, I was allowed to examine the houses, and I always checked on the inhabitants. Most of them were quite happy with their situation, enjoying the wide variety of people who came to gawk at their houses on a daily basis. They would gawk right back, entertained, and sometimes a child or even an adult with fairy sight would gasp in delight and awe to see faces at the tiny windows. I was able to rest easy knowing that at least these fairies were satisfied with their lot.

"And so," concluded Bernard, leaning back in his worn chair, "here we are today. Our little community has grown tight-knit bonds. Some of the families get along better than others, but they trust me and Gold Leaf to sort it out." He saw the confusion on my face and explained, "Oh, I never did find out the hobgoblin's name, so I started calling him by the tobacco brand on his tin. He said that suited him just fine."

"Pardon me, Bernard … this is an incredible story, but I don't see where I fit in to the tale," I ventured, taking my first sip of the now cold tea in my hands.

"Ahh. You see, young lady, I never did marry, nor did I have any children. I'm afraid I'm the only relative our Young Miss Constance has left. And I'm growing old. It's sadly inevitable for us mortal humans, much as we care to deny it for as long as we can. One day, while perusing the internet for my usual searches, I stumbled across a short interview you did regarding your little book. A lovely volume. I believe it was on the subject of Fairy Faith in today's world?"

I blushed and nodded as he continued.

"It's not the only book on the topic, nor indeed the first one I've read, but something about your voice gave me pause. I sensed a feeling … a yearning I used to see in my grandmother's eyes. It came across on the page, and made me believe that you weren't just writing from a scholarly point of view but a personal one. I may have been wrong to consider it, but I knew I had to give it a try. As you well know from my story, the small things, my dear, they are always important. Your little book, my little houses."

I stared at the swirling patterns the loose leaves made in my tea saucer, doing some internal navel-gazing as my head spun as wildly as the tendrils of tea.

"Do you? Do you believe in them? Do you care?" I couldn't tell if his voice had actually spoken, or if it was my thoughts spiraling in endless questions. Slowly, quietly, up from the deep center of the thoughts circling my head, I could feel an anchor, a rooted answer giving me strength. Yes.

As I continued to stare into the cup, I could still feel that pause in the air around us, still see the flitting lights shimmer at the corners of my vision. I knew now what the sense of frightened anticipation had been when I had first entered the room yesterday.

Ever since I was a little girl, I had believed in fairies. And even when I was told countless times that it was time to give it up, to grow up and face the adult world, I had only been pretending. I still read fairy tales in bed at night, cover pulled up tight against my responsibilities, shining a flashlight on the intoxicating-smelling old pages.

I never really thought that my belief would actually come to anything. I guess I was like Constance in her journals … leaping into my metaphorical fairy rings and shouting out, "Is anyone there?" without actually believing I would ever receive an answer.

But now I had. And they were waiting.

Slowly, I looked up from my tea. It might have been minutes or hours. Time passes differently in Faerie. Looking at Bernard with tears in my eyes, I nodded. And he handed me a small and battered tobacco tin. My tears mingled with a strange muddy substance as I smeared it over my eyelids. I felt a slight stinging sensation, and wiped my eyes with a towel Bernard offered. When I opened my eyes again, the entire world had changed. The glimmering lights I had previously seen at the corner of my vision now morphed into tiny forms. I leaned down to the same small home I had investigated just yesterday, and two small winged creatures looked back at me on the other side of the window, their eyes glinting with curiosity. My universe would never be the same again, and I didn't mind at all.

There is no end to this story, really. Only a lesson: If one believes in fairies, one must be prepared to stand behind that belief if the call arises. I gladly will give the rest of my life to helping the fairies, as strange as that might sound … as did Bernard before me, and of course our dear Miss Constance. One day, perhaps, I will also find a story written by a promising and wide-eyed young writer, tucked into a magazine or in a blog somewhere online. Another pair of feet will walk their way down the country lane up to the golden knocker, and I'll while away to the land beyond the fields we know. Until that day, as long as the pixies need a home, I will be here, happily. The fairies have me.

And I vow they always will.

Grace Nuth is a writer, artist, and model living in central Ohio with her husband, black cat, and a garden full of fairies. To follow her projects, please visit gracenuth.com.

COLLEEN MOORE'S FAIRY CASTLE

Of all the miniature houses in the world, perhaps the most awe-inspiring is Colleen Moore's Fairy Castle, housed in the Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago. The almost nine-foot building was created by the famous silent screen actress Colleen Moore and cost almost $500,000 to create—a much greater investment in 1935, when it was completed.

Moore always had a love for dollhouses and miniatures, and when her star rose, she used the opportunity and financial capacity to create the tiny fairy-tale home of her dreams. She hired a hundred Hollywood artists and craftsmen to bring her vision to life. The castle is truly a work of art: It includes such precious objects as a diminutive painting by Walt Disney, an authentic Roman bronze head, a Syrian glass vase from A.D. 740, and minuscule needlepoint tapestries created by a master embroiderer in Vienna.

The library is stocked with actual miniature books written by prominent authors of the day. Moore had tiny one-inch volumes made up and sent to famous authors. Some just wrote a few lines and signed their names, but others wrote totally new stories. George Bernard Shaw wrote a story about a fairy princess's struggle to buy a new gown, and Edgar Rice Burroughs wrote "Tarzan Jr.," about a princess who goes into a forbidden forest despite her mother's warnings. Burroughs's story is even illustrated.

The princess's bath has running water. The chandeliers glow with lightbulbs as small as grains of wheat. The dining-room table has plates and silverware made of gold. And the central staircase in the Great Hall has no railing, because fairies balance themselves with their wings.

After Moore completed the castle, she sent it on tour across America, raising funds for children's charities during the Great Depression. The castle traveled to major cities and was set up in a public location, often the toy department of a prominent department store. In 1949, she donated it to the Chicago museum, where countless visitors in the years since have stared in awe at its intricate details. Each can imagine their own story about who might secretly live in this captivating "museum in a museum."

Although this castle is far more genteel than anything Young Miss Constance created, perhaps if she had ever created a miniature home for the Pixie King himself, it might have looked something like Colleen Moore's Fairy Castle.

Small-Scale Enchantments

Victorian Fairy Painting

BY RICHARD A. SCHINDLER

In 19th century Britain, fairies seemed to hover on the periphery of society. One minute they were invisible spirits, vestiges of superstition; the next they were invading hordes, flushed like a covey of quail in the countryside. Victorian poets extolled them as minute avatars of vanishing nature. Victorian artists brought them to life in pencil, pen and ink, watercolor, oils, and wood engravings. In poems and pictures they trample rings in moonlit glades, cavort at the edge of flower gardens, commune with animals and insects, and hurtle skyward on the autumnal wind. Victorian folklorists argued about their origins: an ancient race, predating human civilization, diminished in stature by time and circumstance; the wandering earthbound souls of unbaptized babies; a subgenre of supernatural spirits; angels fallen to earth or demons risen from hell. Fairies were amoral nature spirits, capable of small beneficial acts or malevolent mischief, depending on their mood.

Victorian Fairy Paintings

Autumn 2016

Should we view this conjured fairy world as a mere historical curiosity, something quaint and antiquated, the way we tend to view Victorian society in our more condescending moments? Certainly, some British artists of the 19th century took the existence of a fairy realm seriously. The Romantic poet-engraver William Blake wrote a charming eyewitness account of a fairy funeral. John Ruskin, Victorian sage, lectured on fairyland at Oxford, extolling the belief in the existence of another realm of existence. Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of one of the most rational intellects in Victorian fiction, vigorously defended the veracity of the Cottingley fairies, as seen in the obviously doctored (to our eyes, anyway) fairy photographs taken by Elsie Wright and Frances Griffith from 1917 to 1920.

The artists of the Romantic and Victorian eras had ample source material for their images of the fantastic. These literary sources for fairy paintings included the fairy plays of Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest;* Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*; and John Milton's poem *Comus*, followed soon by folklore studies, fairy-tale collections, poems, and ballads. Henry Fuseli (1741–1825) set a precedent for British artists with his darkly dramatic fairy paintings for the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery, *Titania and Bottom* (ca. 1790) and *Titania's Awakening* (ca. 1793–94). William Blake (1757–1827) chose a more intimate approach with his chalk and watercolor drawings of *Oberon, Titania, and Puck with Fairies Dancing* (ca. 1786) and *The Goblin* (ca. 1816–20). Both Fuseli and Blake base their pictures on the same sources, folklore with a Shakespearian twist, yet accomplish different results. For Fuseli the activities of fairyland exist at the edge of nightmare, in a swirl of black magic, witchery, and delusion. Blake, on the other hand, offers a sunnier view of fairy life, fairies dancing in a sunlit grove. The goblin, however, quits his abode in a huff when his good behavior is rewarded.

In the early Victorian period, several young artists sought to establish reputations in the Royal Academy by exhibiting fairy paintings. The fairy subject matter offered these artists a chance to celebrate their national heritage and to experiment with literary narratives populated by cascades of tiny creatures engaged in a whirlwind of activities. Daniel Maclise (1806–70), whose art was steeped in Irish folklore traditions, anticipated the rage for fairy paintings with his dramatic depiction of *The Disenchantment of Bottom* (1832). A terrified Bottom yawns and yelps in distress as he wakes from a horrible dream, only to find that he is still enmeshed in the realm of fairy. His tormenters retreat with the rising of the sun, their flight mimicking the shape of donkey ears. The English artist Richard Dadd (1817–86) chose a more benign view of fairies, most probably related to their depiction on stage in pantomimes and ballets. At the beginning of his artistic career he received positive critical attention for such paintings as *Titania Sleeping* (ca. 1841) and *Come Unto These Yellow Sands* (1842). In the former, Dadd conjures a worshipful fairy scene that references both a nativity scene and a bacchanal. In the latter the artist imagines a scene based on Ariel's song in *The Tempest* as a bevy of sprites prance in a graceful spiral down from a rocky arch onto a golden beach.

Dadd's success as an artist took a grave turn when he descended into insanity after his return from a trip to the Near East in 1842. In a fit of madness he murdered his father in 1843 and was consigned to the mental hospital at Bethlem for the rest of his life. While incarcerated for over forty years Dadd painted a number of unsettling, meticulously detailed fairy works, such as *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke* (1855–64). We witness a solemn act, the splitting of nut, through a veil of grass. As our eyes pick out the details, we gradually realize that a crowd of grotesques have gathered to witness the nut cracking. Dadd's work hints at some mood of eerie suspense, all out of keeping with the seemingly simple act in the center of the painting.

Perhaps the most inventive of the early Victorian fairy artists was Joseph Noel Paton (1821–1901), whose pendant paintings, *The Quarrel of Oberon and Titania* (1849) and *The Reconciliation of Oberon and Titania* (1849), met with a positive reception by both critics and public alike, including an appreciative Queen Victoria. Paton depicts scenes of controlled bedlam as swarms of fairies react to the confrontation between their king and queen, who remain oblivious in their passion to the slumbering humans at their feet. The Scottish artist unleashes a miniature army of characters winding through space, engaged in amorous, comic, and violent acts. His imagination stoked by the fantastic theme, he envisions a landscape with a profusion of inhabitants: pixies, sprites, brownies, gnomes, hobgoblins, and kobolds.

Fairy painting had a prestigious place as literary history painting in British academic art by the 1840s. The genre was popular enough to attract the attention of the venerable landscape artist J.M.W. Turner, with *Queen Mab's Cave* (1846), and the animal painter Edward Landseer, with *Scene From "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Titania and Bottom* (1848–51). John Everett Millais (1829–96), a friend of Noel Paton's and one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, tried his hand at fairy painting with *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel* (1849). Millais adhered to the principle of "truth to nature," using a painstakingly realistic technique based on his reading John Ruskin's first volume of *Modern Painters* (1843). The precise rendering of each figure in the painting creates a tension between the costumed figure of Ferdinand and the flying knot of green bat-like sprites that bear a whispering Ariel on their backs. All the figures seem cut out, laid over a lushly rendered backdrop of forest vegetation. This painting would be Millais's sole foray into the fairy genre.

Page 39. John Anster Fitzgerald, *The Stuff That Dreams Are Made Of*

Richard Dadd, *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke*

Victorian Fairy Paintings

Richard A. Schindler

In contrast, Paton would persist in painting fairy subjects. In his masterpiece *The Fairy Raid* (1867), Paton pulls out all the stops in his atmospheric evocation of a procession of fairies marching down a forest path on Midsummer Eve. Subtitled *Carrying Off the Changeling,* the painting visualizes the retinue of the fairy queen, who holds a stolen human infant in her arms. Paton merges Celtic mythology with medieval romance; armored knights and bedizened maidens on horseback mingle with a horde of elves, trolls, sprites, imps, and will o' the wisps. As the procession wends its way through the wooded glen, one can see a standing stone circle in the distance, adding a touch of pagan mystery to the scene.

After midcentury, fairy painting takes an inward turn. Artists, who made the fairy genre their own, delineated the customs, behavior, and activities of the little people as something directly observed, yet treated with a hushed kind of voyeurism. John Anster Fitzgerald (1819?–1906) wrought vividly colored visions of fairy life and death, such as *The Fairies' Banquet* (1859) and *The Fairy's Funeral* (1864). His *Ariel* (ca. 1858) smirks coquettishly from a tree bough laden with blossoms. John Simmons (1823–76) specialized in the depiction of female fairies as erotic nudes, evidenced by his pin-up treatment of *Titania* (1866). The effect is that of a female model shrunk down to a small size, standing in a forest glade, and adorned with butterfly wings. Fairies and elves possess a zany, madcap energy in the watercolor illustrations of Richard "Dicky" Doyle (1824–83). They caper with glee and erupt with manic activity, as in *The Enchanted Fairy Tree* (1845), or smoothly flow through forest groves, as in *Under the Dock Leaves* (1878).

By the 1880s fairy paintings were more of an anomaly in Victorian art, although they appeared in academic exhibitions well into the 20th century. Fairy illustrators like Kate Greenaway, Cicely Mary Baker, Arthur Rackham, and Edmund Dulac began to supplant the fairy painters in popularity. Occasionally, though, artists like Atkinson Grimshaw (1836–93) would attract attention with paintings like *Iris* (1886). A lovely apparition of a lone fairy, in an angelic pose, her head surrounded by a nimbus of light, hovers over lambent marsh waters. Painted after the turn of the century, *Midsummer Eve* (ca. 1908) by Edward Robert Hughes (1851–1914) reminds us of the magical relationship between humans and fairies, as the wee folk swirl around the legs of a bemused and delighted woman. Of course, Hughes's fairies have been made safe and comfortable for the audience, ensconced in a warm fantasy of a benevolent secret world. It is best to remember that the fairy folk shine brightest in the dark and ply their crafts in secret places.

Edward Robert Hughes, *Midsummer Eve*

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Richard A. Schindler is a professor of art at Allegheny College. His interests include Pre-Raphaelite painting and illustration, comic-book art and the graphic novel, contemporary fantasy and science-fiction illustration, punk culture, and anarchist history and political theory.

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Archivart/Alamy

Sir Joseph Noel Paton, *The Quarrel of Oberon and Titania*

John Anster Fitzgerald, *Fairies in a Bird's Nest*

It's the rare artist who embodies a craft so fully that they become their art, defining the medium as a living reference for the practice that they perform.

When someone mentions the word *magician,* an image of a tall, lithe man adorned in Victorian garb and donning a Mephistophelean goatee and top hat typically comes to mind. Unbeknownst to most, this image in our collective unconscious derives from a real personage from the late 1800s: Alexander "the Great" Herrmann, the most famous and influential American magician of his time and one of the top draws on the theatrical scene. He was a household name whose image was caricatured in media throughout the world—the archetypal magician incarnate who helped spearhead the golden age of magic and mystery.

Playing to packed houses throughout the United States and abroad, Herrmann brought to his magical and comedic shows wondrous illusions, lavish scenery, a multitude of animals, variety acts, and a truly unique and mesmeric personality. He enraptured vast audiences through the art of prestidigitation with cards and coins, entertained them with a boisterous wit, awed them with the most technically advanced staging of the day, and topped it all with a genuine French accent that added mystique and refinement.

Herrmann was a prankster with a knack for public display, which gained him notoriety and free advertising for his traveling show. With his eccentric dress and unmistakable profile, he was easily spotted at town markets, with an entourage of press in tow to document the gold coins found in eggs and beards, the heads of ducks severed and restored, and other surprises that gathered large, gleeful crowds, along with many a shop owner who saw no humor in his mischief. One of his favorite routines was to pickpocket objects from passersby in an obvious manner, right under the watchful eye of the police. When he was arrested and hauled to the courthouse, surprisingly none of the objects could be found on his person. With an innocent demeanor, Herrmann would suggest the officers themselves be searched, at which point, to their astonishment, the stolen goods would be found. This routine usually ended in good spirits when the Great Herrmann revealed himself as the instigator, though he was no stranger to the jailhouse—sometimes his sense of humor didn't quite mesh with the local gendarmes.

Herrmann traveled in his own railroad car with cutting-edge mechanics for comfort and performance, and cabins adorned for a king. Along with his full cast and illusions in tow, he typically brought a stable of fabulous show horses (in their own lavish boxcar) that he paraded through town centers and which consistently placed in major equestrian events. He amassed and lost great wealth, gambled with mountebanks, gave profusely to charitable institutions, was an honorary member of scores of social clubs, considered a true friend by countless individuals, and was a ubiquitous presence in every major newspaper in the nation.

Herrmann's greatest prize, however, was his wife, Adelaide, who not only assisted in his illusions but brought her own talents of grace, charm, and fashion to every show. She enchanted audiences with the serpentine dance, under marvelous multicolored calcium lights—much to the chagrin of Loie Fuller, who originated it. She dressed most exotically and had a persona on and off the stage that complemented Herrmann's to a tee. Married by the mayor of New York, the two performed together for royalty and presidents and lived the kind of magical life found in fairy tales.

Tragically, in 1896, at the age of fifty-four, Herrmann's heart gave out in his railcar with Adelaide at his side while returning from a charity event in upstate New York. Throngs of onlookers blocked the streets at his funeral, and men of great wealth and fame served as dignitaries to the man who defined theatrical magic.

Because of his laissez-faire attitude with money, his legal issues, and the sheer cost of his shows, Herrmann left his wife with little capital. After a brief stint with Leon Herrmann, a European "cousin" who failed as a replacement because he lacked chemistry with her, Adelaide used Alexander's apparatus and staging to excel on her own. She is still the most successful woman magician in history and performed grand shows to great acclaim, with a spritely athleticism and charm that lasted into her seventies.

The Victorian era was a time of real magic, as profound scientific innovations sprouted at a pace never before seen in human history. With his dramatic inventions, like alternating current, visionary scientist Nikola Tesla captivated the public's imagination as only a true sorcerer can. The AC/DC wars of Edison and Westinghouse brought spectacles of power and social change that truly boggled the mind. Being able to capture, save, and share voices and images; replacing the light of fire in the home with a glass bulb—these changed perceptions of what was possible. Magicians of the day quickly took notice of the potential and inherent wonder of these new technologies, adeptly incorporating them into their acts.

The French magician and inventor Jean Eugene Robert-Houdin, known as the father of modern magic, took full advantage of the scientific ignorance of his audiences. Houdin would suspend his son with no visible means of support through the magic of the newly discovered elixir ether (which was known to buoy the spirit in the operating room as well). Similarly, he would reduce men to the strength of a small child with his "light and heavy chest," which employed a powerful electromagnet beneath the stage to attract a hidden steel plate in the chest's base.

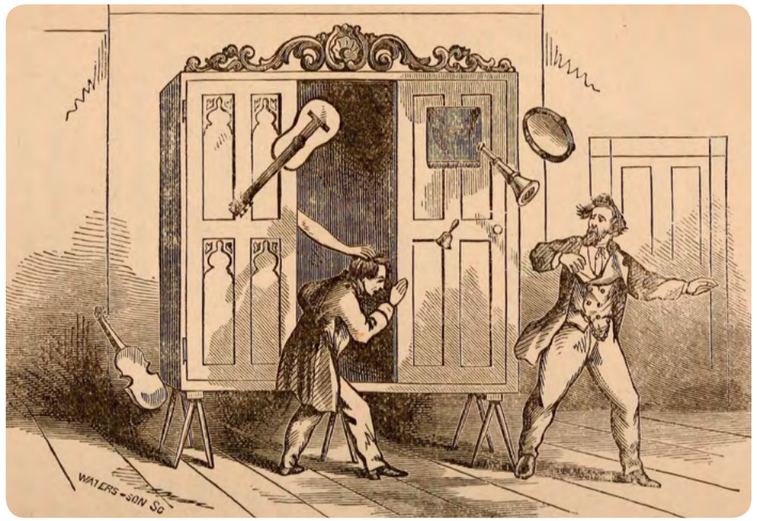
Houdin's performances were so powerful because he did not simply present fanciful impossibilities but wondrously plausible effects that resonated on a psychological level. A young Hungarian immigrant by the name of Ehrich Weiss so admired Houdin that he took his name for his own (with an added *i* at the end), eventually becoming the first international superstar entertainer.

Since science could now harness waves of invisible energies to allow communication through the very air itself among the living, was it also possible to reach out to the spirits of the dead? Many thought so, and thus spiritualism was born. The impetus for this new fad began in 1848 with a pair of young sisters in New York who claimed they could communicate with the deceased through sharp rapping noises that emanated from the beyond. Though the Fox sisters' methods were disproved by numerous sources as the mere snapping of toes and other bodily joints, the allure of contacting lost loved ones was too great, and they attracted a large and fervent following. Even renowned luminaries such as Arthur Conan Doyle, who brought us the supremely rational Sherlock Holmes, jumped on the spiritualist bandwagon with writings and impassioned rallies that attracted thousands.

Magicians and charlatans alike quickly took advantage of spiritualism's emotional impact. They came up with a slew of novel innovations that supposedly aided communion with the dead. The Davenport brothers were the most famous, with their infamous "spirit cabinet" that enchanted audiences with seemingly impossible occurrences that could only be explained by the presence of supernatural beings. Within the cabinet, the brothers would be tightly bound to chairs with ropes. After the doors of the cabinet shut, instruments well out of the tethered siblings' reach

Victorian Magic

Michael Cantori



would, to the crowd's astonishment, play eerie tunes. Moments later, the doors would be reopened, revealing the brothers as tightly bound as before. As with the Fox sisters, their exhibitions were continually exposed as frauds, but the masses' lust for mysteries beyond the grave assured the brothers a long, successful run.

In an interesting twist, it soon became popular for theatrical magicians to stage exposés debunking spiritualism. Harry Kellar, the role model for Frank Baum's Oz (and a former assistant for the Davenports), incorporated a cabinet in his show, as did Herrmann and, later, Houdini. After being bound with chains, handcuffs, and other restraints and staging far more elaborate goings-on than spirits supposedly playing musical instruments, the magicians would make a seemingly impossible escape and explain their methods afterward to both educate and amuse.

Ironically, the seeds for the decline of magic's golden age were in a technological wonder that the magicians themselves embraced and enhanced toward the end of the Victorian era. Just as the still-photography studios of Mathew Brady decimated the ranks of portrait painters during the mid-1800s, the emerging technology of moving pictures was to be the eventual nemesis for variety acts and live performance as a whole. The transition was gradual, as theater owners and performers alike at first saw movies as just another novelty on the periphery of traditional entertainment. As time went by, the cinema eventually eclipsed the entire industry of traveling showmen, with the same curtains lifting to reveal a silver screen where once was flesh and blood.

Traditional theater and classical music still held their own, though the juggler, bicycle acrobat, and strongman lost their footing. Many magicians tried their hand at the new industry, hoping to bring magic to the screen; after all, cinema was merely another illusion. George Méliès mystified viewers with innovative special effects and comedy, and later Houdini hung from airplanes and fought nefarious cartels to showcase his physical prowess and escape artistry. But as cinema became big business, the field became more competitive, and viewers more fickle. Neither magician was long for the screen.

Magic is an ancient and odd profession, an amalgamation of gambling, thievery, snake-oil salesmanship, and shamanism, all tightly packaged as theatrical entertainment. It's always been an insider's art, as the audience is not supposed to see the subterfuges the magician uses to fool audiences. Only fellow magicians can fully appreciate the time and commitment needed to attain such skill, as the spectator sees only the results rather than the mechanics of the work. Magic is also one of the most universally accessible of the performance arts, as a well-crafted show can both entertain the young and intrigue the old with time-honored attractions that hit us on a primal level.

Ultimately, the skills of the magician are trivial if they cannot be presented effectively, as the magical experience exists within the mind of the beholder rather than on the stage. Magic can reach its potential only when presented by a personality who can convince an audience that the mysteries it witnesses are real.

Robert-Houdin famously said that "a magician is an actor playing the part of a magician." The Victorian age represented a time when the magician-actor was at the top of his game, so much so that his image would transcend the era to become an indelible symbol of deception and illusion. The stage magician performed the great service of presenting the unfathomable universe as part of the human experience. After all, without mystery, there is nothing to aspire toward, nothing to imagine, and nothing to give us a purpose.

Michael Cantori is a professional magician, historian, and builder of illusions. He currently resides in Baltimore, performing throughout the region with shows that honor the classic magic of the past. Learn more at cantorimagic.com.

PHOTO CREDITS:

p44. Wikimedia Commons. Theatrical Portrait Photographs (TCS 28). Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University

p45. ©1898 by The H.C. Miner Litho. Co., N.Y.

p46. The Davenport brothers and their spirit cabinet. The Davenport Brothers (1869)

Blue Hair Powder is Back!

LBCC HISTORICAL IS THE FAIRYLAND OF VIRTUAL APOTHECARIES *by Laren Stover*

Imagine walking into a Georgian apothecary with its mortar and pestles and tall glass cases and seeing Jane Austen perusing lavender water and smelling salts or perhaps seeing the dapper politician Charles Fox shopping for blue hair powder, or the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge picking up laudanum. Now picture yourself in that shop in the Victorian era and running into the Brontë sisters buying herbal remedies, violet water, facial powders, and a gift of Bay Rum or mustache wax for a gentleman (that none of them will ever marry).

Alicia Schult's Etsy shop, LBCC Historical, is a virtual apothecary and offers near faithful reformulations of historical cosmetic and apothecary recipes. These range from an almond oil, nutmeg, and Alkanet root rouge from the writings of Nostradamus (1552) to Victorian Rose Complexion Powder to Nefertari Oil Perfume (not to be confused with Nefertiti) from the Roaring Twenties. Schult finds these curious recipes in ladies' journals and antique books. Her collection includes everything from pharmaceutical books to *Pearson's Magazines* dating back to 1896. The idea for an American Civil War–era lip rouge came from an 1860 issue of the magazine *Godey's Lady's Book*. And Schult is just about to the launch a lip balm from a formula she discovered in a Jane Austen archive, reported to be made by the author's friend, Martha Lloyd, who shared a home with the Austen family.

"It's taken me years to track down apothecary and recipe books," said Schult. "I once came across some in an antique store we frequent. I felt a little ping when I saw a locked case and they were hidden beneath stacks of other books. It's almost divine guidance."

How authentic are her formulations?

"People think all historical makeup and apothecary products were dangerous, laced with lead and other poisons. I hope to dispel this myth because so many of them are all natural and good for you," said Schult. When a recipe does call for something taboo, she substitutes safe, legal, and sustainable ingredients. Instead of ambergris, a substance expelled by whales that mellows after years in the sea, she uses the gum resin labdanum from the twigs of a southern European rock rose in her lavender water (which turns out to be the authentic cheaper substitute actually used back in the day), and for spermaceti she uses jojoba. Two of her cheek formulas, 1772 Rouge and 1810 Rouge, get their hue from rare Brazilwood made from shavings sourced from a violin maker.

Schult has been interested in natural remedies since she was a child growing up in Wisconsin and made dill aftershave for her father (from a Victorian recipe) when she was thirteen. "He never touched it," she said.

Other family members were more supportive. "I used to take walks with my grandmother, and she would take an herb book with her. We would learn to recognize healing plants on the roadsides or wooded trails," said Schult. Her grandmother also nurtured another of her passions. "She was always on the lookout for books that she thought I would love. If not Shakespeare, it would be a Victorian book on the language of flowers." Schult's most treasured book, besides a 19th century edition of Grimm's fairy tales from her grandmother, is volume one of an early edition of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

But it was not the Brontës' or Miss Austen's toiletry that initially inspired Schult, who started her apothecary in 2010. Her business was born by way of needle and thread. While researching historically accurate clothing using appropriate draping and hand-sewing techniques, it occurred to her that the historical communities were deficient in historically accurate cosmetics and apothecary. So not only has she created historically accurate clothing for museums, including 18th century corsets, or stays, for Fort Ticonderoga; she has now also been called upon to concoct lavender water for an exhibit at the British Museum. Schult has even meticulously revamped a portion of her 1930s home into a lab, complete with distillers.

Always looking for historical products to re-create, Schult just reproduced an original recipe for 1875 Dusty Rose Rouge, an 1896 recipe for German Lip Salve Victorian Lemon, and rose-scented black dipping ink, perfumed in the historical manner. But the most fanciful product of all is perhaps her Facial Powder of the Fairies, made to the letter from an 1893 recipe containing wheat starch, orris root, French talc, and bergamot.

"The Victorian era in Great Britain was full of fantasy and a fascination with the occult and fairy tales," Schult says. "We start to see a genre of painting and illustration featuring fairies and fairy-tale settings. It was a form of escapism as a result of their rigid Victorian morals. Fairies were associated with freedom, youth, beauty, and fantasy—everything a Victorian woman wanted."

Fairy tales still charm Schult. "You may find me working in the apothecary lab with music from *The Princess and the Frog* in the background and me happily singing away while I mix old recipes."

Color images courtesy LBCC.

Find out more about LBCC Historical at etsy.com/shop/LittleBits.

Follow Laren Stover on Instagram @faerie_style.

Alicia Schult and her husband, Patrick Buchs, seller of perfumes extraordinaire and maker of all traveling fixtures.

A Stitch in Time

LAUREN ROSSI'S COUTURE CONFECTIONS

by PAUL HIMMELEIN

Photography by AIMEE DODDS

According to historical dress designer Lauren Rossi's Instagram profile, she was "born in the wrong time." This was immediately confirmed when I visited her apartment and atelier in Astoria, New York, to talk about her love of sewing, costume history, and dressing up, and to witness firsthand her couture creations. Rossi welcomed me graciously in an original 1920s filet-lace and white-work dress and led me to an intricately carved, velvet upholstered settee.

I found myself surrounded by several dress forms. One was wearing a Fragonard inspired striped affair; another was a curvy, wasp-waisted mannequin laced into a twenty-inch Edwardian corset; and a third was strapped into hip-widening panniers—the baroque skeletal infrastructures that were de rigueur under every women's dress in the 18th century. A wall covered in precious antique silhouette portraits added whimsy and charm, while voluptuous floor-to-ceiling draperies in pink silk imparted a sense of grandeur to the modest space. The furniture and furnishings were all antique or vintage. A curved-front vitrine displayed two volumes of Cato's *Letters* published in 1724 and a collection of 19th century books on etiquette and manners. I felt as if someone had opened a time capsule. The only things I could see from the 21st century were an air conditioner in the window and a Kenmore sewing machine on a small table.

Just like in a movie, Rossi moved to New York City from southern Florida with nothing more than a suitcase and a one-way ticket. "A dear friend already lived here and said I could crash at her place for two weeks," she recounted. "By the end of that time, I had a job and figured out what I was going to do. That was five years and three days ago.

A Stitch in Time

Paul Himmelein

"The bad part about Florida," Rossi said, "is that there are no antiques. Even at fourteen years old, I wondered, 'Where do I find the Victorian clothing?' " How did Rossi come to know about Victoriana at such a young age? "As long as I could remember I've been interested in historical clothing. I came home one day—I must have been twelve—and told my parents, 'I'm going to be a historical costume designer.' And they quickly replied, 'No, you're not.' "

The first dress Rossi designed was in high school for a Renaissance festival that her English Honors Society put on. "I thought, Oh, I need to make a dress for this thing. So I bought a commercial pattern and brought it to my friend's house. Her mom sewed. She looked at it and talked to me about very basic terms. 'You have to cut this on the bias, and you have to do this.' And I looked at her like, 'You have three heads, lady. I don't know what you're saying.' She was going on a business trip and said she could help me when she returned, in ten days. By the time she had come back, I had figured it out and finished the dress. Of course, there were things that could be better, and I did make a mistake cutting my sleeves—I cut two of one instead of a pair. So my dad helped me out and got me more fabric. You learn those lessons very young, but it was just so exciting. After that, I was allowed to go and use my friend's mother's fancy machine and sew whenever I wanted. By my senior year, I was making my homecoming and prom dresses from scratch."

Today, Rossi works in the fashion industry in New York City's garment district, where, surprisingly, she doesn't do any of the designing. After getting her degree in costume design from the University of Florida, she went to graduate school for business. "Costume design really wasn't where I wanted to steer my career. So I pushed myself into the business world and went that way a little bit. Now I combine them for my regular job, where I do product development for a clothing company. It's the back end of producing clothing, so a lot of it is understanding price margins, how things are made, helping the design team tweak their designs so that they're affordable for the mass market, helping the production team develop new fabrics, and then working with the sales team selling directly to the buyers. I think if I did designing at work and designing at home, I would be so burnt out that I would have nothing left. It takes so much out of you when you design something."

The dresses Rossi designs are for herself and, as she puts it, they are "a labor of love." "When I come home and work on a project, I don't want to think of the money, the materials, the time, or any of that stuff—that's what I do at my job."

Apparently Rossi's ability to enchant needle and thread is partly genetic. It wasn't until she was in her mid-twenties that she learned that her father had gone to school to be a tailor. "I had no idea. He had never told me this growing up. But I remember when I was very young, he wouldn't let me sew my Girl Scout patches on my uniform because I wasn't going to do it neatly enough. So he did it. I remember sitting there looking at them and wondering how he made those stitches invisible. I was so mad that I went into his closet and sewed up the sleeves of his shirts—all of them—with a running stitch with red thread. They came right out and it didn't hurt them, but I was like, 'I can sew just fine, thank you!' "

That might be an understatement. Rossi pulled out a rolling rack heavy with her handiwork. The dresses, gowns, quilted petticoats, and wraps that hung from the sleek chrome bar looked fit for either a museum of historical fashions or for dressing actors in the latest costume drama—a new film on the romances of Casanova, a Marie Antoinette biopic, or a cable-network series on the Jazz Age. Sweeping through Rossi's designs was like a fast waltz through three centuries of women's fashion, and I could see she obviously had her favorite periods. But I wanted to know if she was ever inspired by historical figures such as Madame de Pompadour and the Duchess of Devonshire, or by fictional characters in novels of the past, like Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, or Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, or perhaps by women in paintings from previous centuries.

"Artwork, absolutely," Rossi replied without hesitation. "Fictional characters, not as much. One of the gowns here is strongly inspired by one of my favorite paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art." She pulled out a bright green striped silk gown reminiscent of the one that Rose-Adélaïde Ducreux wears in her 1791 self-portrait playing a harp. "So I was influenced by that painting, but it's not a re-creation. The sleeve treatment is very similar, as is the trim on the skirt. But then I threw on this purple sash to get a little punch of color. The pink one here," she said, pointing to a mannequin behind me, "is a different version of the dress in Fragonard's *The Swing*. I just love that painting. I had that in my mind when I was working on it, although I know that the dress in the painting is a robe à la française. But that pink, and the frivolity of it, was definitely in my mind when I created it."

What really inspires Rossi, however, is an event. That is the driving force that motivates her to create another detailed design. Her events are much more elaborate than an afternoon at a Renaissance fair or a cosplay convention; they are often week-long affairs overseas. "I love an event. Carnival in Venice is my favorite. Venice does these 18th century balls. It's a part of their heritage, and I love to go out there and dress up—it's wonderful. But there are also events in the city that vary from 1920s Jazz Age lawn parties to the extravagant Dances of Vice parties, which are different, highly stylized themed evenings every month or two. They'll pick different eras, so I get into those kind of large-scale parties, but party is not the right word because it's more like a conglomeration of artists. Everyone's bringing their A game, and I want to be able to stand with them. It's an opportunity to really push your talent a little bit farther and see what you can create."

So how exactly does this differ from cosplay, especially now that there's a lot more 18th century cosplay out there thanks to the *Outlander* television series? "A lot of what I understand about cosplay," Rossi explained, "is that it's based on fictional characters. And since I don't get my inspirations that way, I don't have a character. A lot of reenactors have a persona they identify with, and I don't. I don't have a different dialect or take on a different history. When I put a dress on, I am not a different character. Actually I feel like I'm more myself. I feel very comfortable. I don't feel like I'm in a costume. I feel like I just put my clothes on. I have a personality that tends to be a little bit more formal and reserved just naturally, and then when I'm dressed like that, it's acceptable that I'm a little bit more standoffish. I just tend to sit up a little bit straighter. And it just feels more comfortable to me. So it kind of makes sense, just fits." Even so, her friends made her promise that when she goes to Venetian Carnival next February, she will bring some "real clothing," like jeans and a T-shirt, so they can "do regular Venice" and not just dress up.

There is more to Rossi's couture creations than meets the eye, though it might take a costume historian to recognize all the playfulness she brings to her designs and the liberties she takes with historical accuracy. "I like a mix of historical fashion and modern couture," she explained. "I want to smoosh them together and turn them into something new." Rossi pulled a dress off the rack. "This 18th century gown doesn't look like much on the hanger, but it's made in a silk organza, which is a very modern fabric and would not have been done in that time. The print is very modern. It's an all-over silkscreen floral—18th century florals would've been a little bit different. That's what I mean by mixing modern and antique. Or I'll tend to blend periods. Here is a rococo gown that is actually inspired a lot by the Victorians. I used Victorian lace and beading and buttons, and then I blended two different rococo shapes. So it's mixing them together, playing with the periods, but they're intentional derivations versus an ignorance of the period. For me, that's the challenge in designing. It would be a lot simpler—I could probably go down a deep rabbit hole—to re-create a gown exactly as I see it in a painting or in a portrait. But to be able to blend it seamlessly with a modern twist and still make it look attractive to a modern person is much more complicated."

Just because Rossi doesn't restrict her designs to historical replication doesn't mean she's not a perfectionist. She is a Virgo, and if you know anything about astrology, you know Virgos are all about the details. For Rossi, they are a bit of an obsession. "I like details. I think I'm better with details than I am with the big picture, which I struggle with. But details I really enjoy." All the ruching, gathering, stitching on the pleats, the cuffs, everything visible on the outside of her gowns, Rossi has done by hand. She even buys antique tools, like pinking irons, to get the right scalloping along the edges of her fabric, which she hand-punches. There seems to be nothing she doesn't fashion herself.

But it's not just what's visible that matters to Rossi. What's hidden is just as important. "When I was eighteen, I went to the South Florida Renaissance Festival and tried out for their costume contest. I got through the first round and had to come back for the big one. And the first question they asked us at the costume contest was, 'Okay, stick out your feet. We want to see your shoes.' Anyone who was wearing sneakers or modern shoes was instantly out. I just happened to be wearing a pair of period-ish ballet flats. But it really stuck in my head: Even if you don't see it, it matters."

There are many elements of Rossi's costumes that the public will never see, but just because you won't see it doesn't mean she won't give it all her attention. "I make everything. I make all the parts. I make my shoes. I make all the undergarments. The proper way to build a dress, I feel, is to build it from the inside out. So depending on the shape of the dress, I'll pick a different undergarment." Whether it's hoops, panniers, or a clamshell bustle, Rossi makes them all. "It's funny, because you don't ever see them because they're obviously under your gown. But I still want them to be pretty, so they're fully finished. All the ribbon is fully finished on the back with silk and hand-dyed to match. I tend to do that a lot, even though nobody will see it.

"This is a pair of 18th century stays that I built for myself," she said, holding up her handmade corset. "These stays are boned with cane. I use wood. Period-correct would be whalebone, of course. Obviously, I can't use whalebone now. So there are different options depending on what kind of effect you want."

With all the stays and corsets involved with Rossi's gowns, I wondered if she had jumped on the waist-training trend. "It does seem to be in vogue," she agreed, "but I do not. Though it's probably something I'm going to have to look into if I do more Victorian clothing. The 18th century dress is all about a conical form. The stays and the way they lace on reshape you into more of a cone. There's no waist reduction at all. In fact, when you wear them, your waist is actually larger because of the stays. You're not going to be tiny-waisted. It's not until about the 1860s that you start seeing the waist reduced. If I want to start doing some of those costumes, I'll have to get to the point where I could be comfortable wearing a corset for a long period of time, and that kind of corset requires a little bit of so-called training. I've tried to wear one for a day, and after two hours, I was like, 'Okay. Just take this thing off me.' So you really do have to practice having that on."

I see a lot of gowns on Rossi's rolling rack that seem to be styled after 18th century French fashions. I wondered if that was her favorite era. "I've been mostly drawn to the late 1700s, for sure," she said. "And I've made maybe half a dozen so far. My events have been 18th century inspired, going to Carnival in Venice. Even my 1920s dress is based on the 1700s. What I love about the late 1700s is its frivolity. It's a time of awakening. There's a sense of youthful enthusiasm, there is always excitement, and they felt like they were so modern and free. There was a sexual awakening. There was a freedom that you saw for women for the first time. It went away, but you saw a little bit here and there in pockets, and I love that. You see it again in the 1920s. That's why my '20s gown is reflective of the 1700s. When I tried the 1930s I hated it! I love the dress though, it's beautiful. But for me, the 1920s dress feels like a period piece, whereas the 1930s dress feels like a modern ball gown. It's just not historical enough for me when I wear it. So I realized my cutoff is the '20s."

So if Rossi were born in the wrong time, what period and place would she like to travel back to if she had the luxury of a time machine at her disposal? The pair of ornately framed paintings of Venice's Grand Canal hanging above her should have tipped me off. "I do love France in the late 18th century. But of course, there was a revolution, so I wouldn't want to get stuck there. You could put me in Italy in the late 18th century. My user name on Instagram is @virtuouscourtesan. Of course, there is the connotation with the courtesan of prostitution. But for me, the appeal of the Italian courtesan—and it's a very rose-colored version—is that these women were the most educated women. They were allowed to read. They were allowed out of their homes. They were financially independent as much as a woman of the time could be. I enjoy the artistry that you see with their fashion and with their craftsmanship. I think I would enjoy the late 18th century. But I would probably be burned as a witch within thirty-six hours. So it probably wouldn't work out."

See more of Lauren Rossi's creations at laurenrossi.com.

Photographer's website: aimeedodds.com

Follow Paul Himmelein on Instagram @lordperegrine.

A Spin on Sylvan Style

by LAREN STOVER

Fairies invented glamour and Scottish poet Sir Walter Scott is credited with introducing the word to humans. Since fairies use glamour to create any illusion they wish, they often use it to dress themselves. They are famous for appearing to humans however they would like to be seen, which is always filtered through our preconceptions. Early to mid-19th century paintings and illustrations have a lot to do with how we see the wee folk, and they certainly didn't seem to mind being seen in almost nothing. Many paintings depict the sylvan people as what Victorians deemed "hopelessly underclothed," adorned in nothing more than flowers, or wisps of gauze, or sometimes only wings, though countless fairy sightings and references in literature and art have documented fairies in clothing.

Fairies have style, and for the most part, get their fashion ideas from nature, but filtered through what I like to think of as an etheric supernatural lens. Since they are dusk-to-dawn types, their influences are moonlight, stars, mist, dew, frost, and all things floral, mossy, leafy, seaweedy, and cobwebby. The way moonlight hits the peaks of waves or shimmers on a still lake or silvers the underside of a leaf with moon glow will influence the way fairies decorate themselves and appear to humans. They may even be opalescent. Dryads and tree spirits, according to an Irish mystic and seer interviewed by W.Y. Evans-Wentz in *Fairy-Faith in the Celtic Countries*, "most often are of a shining silvery color with a tinge of blue or pale violet." And of course elves and fairies can glamour you and even make an acorn cap appear as a gilded helmet.

No one is more glamorous than a fairy. (Exceptions: trolls; banshees; brownies who wear charming but rustic, unrefined bark-colored textiles; and a few other forlorn and not-so-nice types who might be dramatic but are most certainly not glamorous.) Moonlight on dew-spangled sheer gauze, for example, looks like diamonds. And since fairies are fond of adornment, even if only in minuscule and immodest amounts, they find it quite pleasing to fly around in said dew-spangled gauze. In their mind, dewdrops really are diamonds. And if you've been glamoured, well …

Female fairies typically aspire to the stereotypical feminine ideal. They have been known to make appearances in long fluid Grecian gowns in materials with airiness and transparency, often with a silvery sheen, the stuff you'd imagine fairy wings to be made of. Floral garlands, diaphanous fabrics, leaves, and flowers—these are typical outfits of the fairy in Victorian paintings. John Anster Fitzgerald dressed his fairies in ensembles made of flower petals, usually with matching floral caps with delicate stamens or stems with a flurry of tiny blossoms like so many antennae. Flowers might resemble helmets for men. In *The Book of Fairies*, Beatrice Phillpotts, an authority on fairies and fairy painting, wrote poetically that Fitzgerald outfitted his fairy attendants in "the fragrance of summer." Of the spirit Ariel from *The Tempest,* she wrote: "Costumed in a cloud of flowers, he appears to have metamorphosed out of the Hawthorne blossom amid which he reclines." Arthur Rackham's turn-of-the century dreamy lady fairies float, drift, and fly in fluid Gunne Sax dresses, often off the shoulder. An undine might wear a draping dress and a corset and a scarf loosely draped around her waist.

Sea fairies favor sea shades: tempestuous grays, ocean-churned greens, amethysts, tumultuous deep blues—all shades of blue. Pink, coral, and orange too color their world, as water is reflective, and all colors of sky, from dawn to moonlight, appeal to them. In summer a sea fairy may favor red, especially if she is a Chinese water fairy, or hot pink if she is from India. In spring she will be influenced by flowers as well as sky and water colors. She is so sensitive to her surroundings, in fact, that if she visits a koi pond and sees the flickering orange gold of the fish, she will—rather unconsciously—find herself drawn to dressing in the same shimmering shade.

Victorian painter Joseph Noel Paton draped his fairies in little more than shimmering light, garlands, and transparent cloth that concealed nothing. The fairies of Edmund Dulac (1882–1953) had a muted color palette, and his moonbeam fae are dressed in glimmering seaweed green. Fairies typically wear little to no jewelry, with the exception of mermaids, who have access to pearls. And of course, on the solstice eves fairies bring out the finery galore. That's when the fairies frolic most wholeheartedly and dress for the occasion.

Now and then you see ladylike Renaissance outfits mixed in with some see-through gowns: A perfect example is the painting *The Bewitched Piper* by William Holmes Sullivan (1870–1908). The Romantic artist and poet William Blake pictured the fairies in *Oberon, Titania and Puck With Fairies Dancing* wearing leafy garlands; he called them "rulers of the vegetable world." He draped them in moonbeam-colored dresses and togas that bring to mind the fashions of ancient Greece.

One Victorian theater critic noted that the 1840 stage production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* with actress-producer Lucia Elizabeth Vestris, "sexualized the fairies, providing both

William Blake. *Oberon, Titania and Puck With Fairies Dancing*

Oberon and Titania with trains composed of adult women attired in alluring and flimsiest gauze dresses akin to those worn in the ballet." He went on to say that fairies onstage used to be depicted more like muses, classical sylphs, or the Vestal Virgins, but in this version, Vestris kept the gowns classically white: Her fairies "were no longer stately Muses, they donned insect-like wings and crowns of flowers … eye candy for the scores of proper Victorian gentlemen."

Indeed, the attire of the fairies of the Victorian stage is often mentioned in reviews from the period and often associated with splendor. Sometimes that splendor verged less on the mystical and more on the tacky. In the Charles Kean production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1856, critic Henry Morley seemed disappointed that the fairies were "not airy beings the color of the greenwood, or the sky, or robed in misty white, but glittering in the most brilliant dresses with a crust of bullion about their legs." Of an 1853 production of the play he had averred that "every reader of Shakespeare is disposed to regard the *Midsummer Night's Dream* as the most unactable of all his plays … Its characters are creatures of the poet's fancy that no flesh and blood can properly present—fairies who 'creep into acorn-cups,' or mortals who are but dim abstractions, persons of a dream … Their exquisite beauty is like that of sunset colors which no mortal can interpret faithfully." His descriptions focused largely on the tinted gauze curtain that cast a green fairy tinge over all the actors so they resembled dream-like figures. Another critic called them "intangible shadowy beings that … would infallibly at the first cock crow melt into thin air."

Nevertheless, the play is a costume designer's dream. From afar, the fairy crown that Oliver Messel made for Vivian Leigh as Titania for the 1937 production is gossamer with moon-like pearls, flowers, and leaves, and shining with giant diamond drops of dew. But it's pure illusion. Look closely and the gossamer is cellophane, the pearls and blooms faux, and the dew is rhinestones. A mere mortal can only pretend to be a fairy.

It is safe to say that fairies are dream-like and intangible, and whatever the state of their *dishabille,* they are decidedly old-fashioned. You will not find fairies of the trooping and partying sort wearing black—they are not known to mourn, although they do lust, long, and covet. Nor will you find them in leather or anything made of unnatural materials like polyester, nylon, vinyl, or plastic. They never wear anything made of iron, either. The myth about iron is not a myth. They are allergic to it.

Fairies can be mischievous, capricious, ethereal, otherworldly, enchanting, helpful, beautiful, good, or bad. They can be male or female, but they are beings wild at heart, so you will never see them in power suits, business suits, or even bathing suits. Sure, they dress up now and then. But if fairies had a hashtag, it would be #WhoNeedsClothes.

Because Her Face Fades

by Laura Madeline Wiseman & Andrea Blythe

I've learned the woods are nothing more
than shadows of my dreams cast in fragments,
branches overhanging, barren and rattling.

How little I carried on this dash into darkness
as a man chased me, wanting my heart or a stag's.
I've learned the woods are nothing more

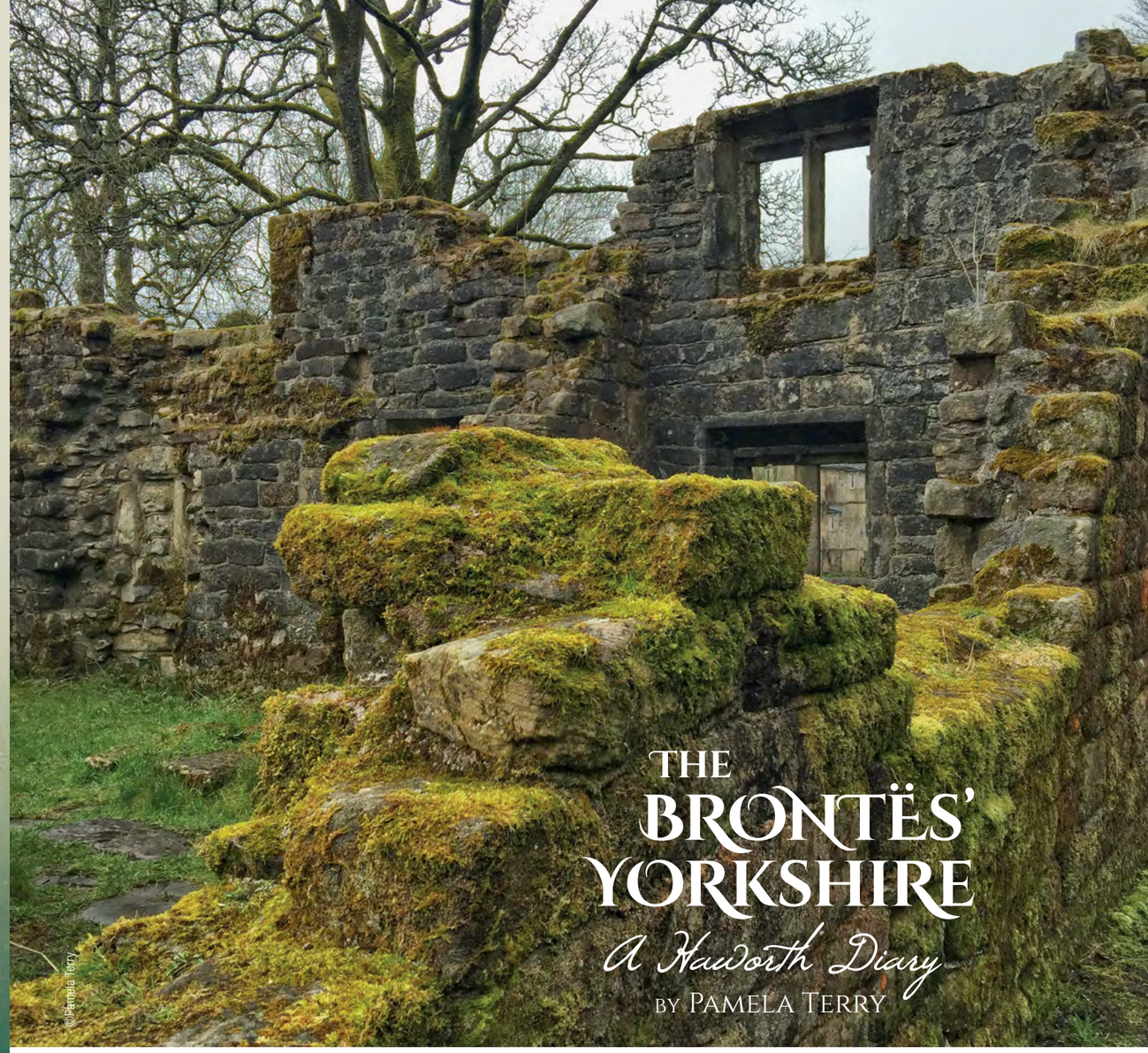
than twisted limbs reaching, twigs catching
as I fled toward the flicker of lamps in windows
and the voices of dwarves, barren and rattling.

Still the man hunted, hot behind me. I heard
the snap of shadowed teeth but saw only dark.
I've learned the woods are nothing more

than places of men, some small, others large
as wolves, hunters stalking their quarry through
overhanging woods, barren and rattling.

I welcome the run, the dark, the flight
unending, hunter at my back, lighted house ahead.
I've learned the woods are nothing more
than overhanging branches, barren and rattling.

Andrea Blythe and Laura Madeline Wiseman's collaborative poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in Yellow Chair Review, Strange Horizons, Rose Red Review, *and the anthologies* The World Retold *and* Red Sky: Poetry on the Global Epidemic of Violence Against Women.



In a reader's life there always seems to be one book that comes along at the perfect time, one that imprints on the soul like fire and remains there for a lifetime, a private talisman whose lines and passages are committed to memory and never far from reach. I was thirteen years old, and for me, *Jane Eyre* was that book. Oh, I had many books under my belt before Jane. I had fallen down the rabbit hole with Alice and stepped lively behind Mary Poppins through the streets of London. I had washed ashore with Robinson Crusoe and entered a snowy Narnia by way of a wardrobe. But *Jane Eyre* was different, or perhaps it was I who had changed. No doubt the power of words depends on the malleability of a soul at the moment those words are read. All I can say is that from the moment I read that first line—"There was no possibility of taking a walk that day"—I could see what Jane saw, feel what Jane felt, hear what Jane heard. The book not only captivated me, it saddened me, frightened me, and made me joyous. I thought about Jane's story long after I closed the book and have returned to it time and again. Such was the power of Charlotte Brontë's art. It wasn't long after finding Charlotte that I discovered her sister Emily. Diving into *Wuthering Heights* was a heady experience, for indeed, "no coward soul" was Emily. The world she created was darker than her sister's, with characters tragically obsessive and doomed, but it was a

world complete, with no flinching, and I was entranced. Ezra Pound once said that "man reading should be man intensely alive. A book should be a ball of light in one's hand." Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë wrote balls of light that showed me what words could do.

Soon, like almost everyone who encounters the writings of the Brontë sisters, I longed to know everything I could about them. Their story was so compelling. Three quiet daughters of an Irish minister living on the moors of Yorkshire, England, who wrote some of the most astounding, controversial, magnificent books ever written, books that live loudly even today. How was that possible? Who were these women? I would often conjure them in my mind's eye, high up on the heathered moors, their pale skirts in billows around them, and I would long to experience the landscape that had brought forth such remarkable talent. The Brontë sisters, more than most writers, are inextricably linked to the landscape of the Yorkshire Moors. I felt in my bones there was magic in that landscape and I had no doubt that their spirits still roamed those moors. It was a place I longed, and vowed, to someday see.

So this past April, in the month of Charlotte's 200th birthday, I found myself on a plane bound for Yorkshire with plans to walk the Brontë landscape for myself and soak up just a little of its legendary magic. Here is my diary of those wonderful days.

Brontë Diary: April 2016
PONDEN HALL

I take the train from York to Keighley on a blustery morning in April. We pick up our car and point it straight toward Ponden Hall, the inn just outside Haworth where we're staying for a few days. I'm grateful my husband is driving. My head keeps turning this way and that as the West Yorkshire moors unfurl outside our car windows. We soon turn off the road onto a smaller track, across a reservoir and up into the hills, eventually turning into a small gray lane. There, just ahead on the right, is Ponden Hall. I hold my breath.

Built for the prosperous Heaton family in 1634, there are few places so directly linked to the Brontë sisters as Ponden Hall. Though most scholars agree that the ruins of an old farmhouse called Top Withins were Emily's inspiration for the setting of *Wuthering Heights*, most also now believe that Ponden Hall was in her mind when she described the house itself. William Davies, a visitor to Haworth in 1858, tells how, after meeting patriarch Patrick Brontë, he was taken on a tour of the area by the Brontës' servant, Martha Brown: "On leaving the house we were taken across the moors to visit a waterfall which was a favorite haunt of the sisters … We then went on to an old manorial farm called 'Heaton's of Ponden,' which we were told was the original model for *Wuthering Heights*, which indeed corresponded in some measure to the description given in Emily Brontë's romance." Entering Ponden Hall now, I cannot help but notice the carved stone plaque above the door identifying the rebuilt and modernized house as dating from 1801 and make the connection—the same year in which the story of *Wuthering Heights* begins. To think I'm going to actually be sleeping here is thrilling.

The L-shaped entrance hall of Ponden Hall is like a portal through which one moves through time, its stone floor leading back to afternoons when Emily and her brother Branwell visited its impressive library, then reputed to be the finest in West Yorkshire. At that time, being women, the Brontë sisters were not allowed to borrow books from either of the two libraries in the area, and though Branwell was known to check out volumes on their behalf, they no doubt enjoyed the freedom of perusing the Ponden Hall library without the shadow of such limitations. A catalogue of this library still exists, containing law, local history, and Gothic romances, each of which scholars have argued can be traced as influences on *Wuthering Heights*.

We are greeted by the welcoming face of Julie Akhurst who, along with her husband, Steve Brown, owns Ponden Hall. Julie leads us into the main hall, appropriately appointed with flagstones and mullioned windows and dominated by a fireplace once sketched by Branwell Brontë. The room is warmly furnished with overstuffed red sofas and has walls the color of summer honey; its long polished oak table is covered with vases of hyacinths and lilies leftover from a honeymoon couple who just recently departed. Feeling the immediate sort of kinship one feels with a person who shares one's sensibilities and passions, I listen as Julie, over tea and homemade chocolate cake, tells me stories of the house and some of its many ties to the Brontë family. She even shares with me a treasure her husband procured for her birthday: a Victorian autograph book containing Charlotte Brontë's autograph, the signature from a letter to her father.

Our bedroom holds particular fascination for me as it contains the quintessential element of *Wuthering Heights* lore, Cathy's window. In surely one of the most evocative scenes in literature, Cathy's ghost comes to this window and claws at the glass, desperate to be let inside. The visitor, asleep in the box bed that surrounds the small, deeply set window and thinking he's hearing a tree branch, says, "I muttered, knocking my knuckles through the glass, and stretching an arm out to seize the importunate branch; instead of which, my fingers closed on the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand!" Emily would have seen this window at Ponden Hall many times, and it is recorded in old documents related to the house that, just as in the novel, a box bed was built around it, bolted into the wall as late as the 1940s. Julie and Steve now have a reconstruction of that box bed, just as described in *Wuthering Heights*, and it is here we are to sleep. Though if I'm honest, I have to wonder how much sleep I'll actually get listening for the ghostly voice of Catherine Earnshaw just outside my window. I decide to worry about that later. First a trip into Haworth to see the parsonage where the Brontë sisters lived and where Charlotte and Emily died.

HAWORTH

It seems most visitors to Haworth take a photo at the same spot, right at the top of the cobblestone street. It's easy to see why. From this vantage point, the 21st century seems utterly inconceivable. It's a shock when a car rumbles past. The 17th and 18th century shops tumble down the impossibly steep hill, leaning into one another, shoulder to shoulder, beginning with the Old Apothecary, a shop frequented by the Brontë family and from which poor Branwell fed his disastrous addiction to opium. Renamed Rose and Co., it sells soaps and sweet perfumes today.

The Brontë parsonage sits alone on a hill behind St. Michael and All Angels Church at the top of the street, famously surrounded on two sides by the lichen-covered graves of 40,000 former locals, their headstones tipping this way and that and glowing green in the afternoon sun. I follow the crooked little lane that leads past the church, step into the parsonage front garden, and raise my face to the sound of rooks cawing loudly in the bare trees above me, their jagged black nests greatly adding to the gothic atmosphere of this setting. Pausing to view the village from the garden, I see the gate, now sealed, that once led to the church. A plaque tells me this gate was used by the Brontë family, and through it they were carried to their final resting places. I feel privileged to stand at this sacred spot. It is a feeling I am to experience frequently over the next couple of days.

We're the only visitors to the parsonage at this hour on this day, and I feel fortunate to be here before the start of high tourist season. To have this place all to oneself is a luxury indeed. Stepping inside the serene, dove-colored entry hall, I am reminded of the words of Charlotte's biographer and friend, Elizabeth Gaskell, when she spoke of the Brontë home: "I don't know that I ever saw a spot more exquisitely clean … Everything fits into, and is in harmony with, the idea of a country parsonage."A smiling docent bids me welcome and gestures to the left, and I'm startled to find myself suddenly standing in the small, cozy dining room where the three sisters wrote. The centerpiece of the room is a polished wooden table that left the parsonage in 1861 in the sale that followed Patrick Brontë's death and was reacquired by the Brontë Society in 2015, thanks to a generous grant from the National Heritage Memorial Fund. I'm suddenly grateful to have waited till now to make this pilgrimage. I would have hated to miss seeing this.

Ink stains and candle burns mark the table, and directly in front of me I see a tiny letter *E* carved in the wood where Emily made her claim one long-ago day. *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Agnes Grey* were all written right here. The three sisters wrote together, pacing round and round the table as they wrestled with plan and plot, reading aloud passages of their work to

The Brontës' Yorkshire

Pamela Terry

each other till late in the night. Long after the premature deaths of her sisters, Charlotte continued to walk this well-worn path, around this very table, in this very room, unable to sleep without the comfort of this nightly habit. Martha Brown, the Brontës' servant, once said, "My heart aches to hear Miss Brontë walking, walking on alone."

I find myself hesitant to look to the side of the room, knowing already what I'll see there, but slowly my eyes travel past the fireplace and come to rest on a curved arm sofa sitting against the wall. This is the sofa on which Emily is believed to have breathed her last. Standing there alone in the pink glow of the afternoon sun, I feel the walls soften and melt around me as my eyes paint pictures of scenes that once were.

Sensing the docent standing beside me, I whisper, "Do you sometimes feel them here with you?"

"Oh, yes," she said. "Often. Especially on quiet days like this. When it's too crowded I think they still like to leave and take their walks."

Many items of remarkable relevance are on display here in the parsonage: a dress of Charlotte's that illustrates just how diminutive she was, several of the microscopically handwritten books the siblings created as children, writing desks, needlework, letters, drawings. I'm particularly captivated by a pair of Charlotte's tiny shoes, which, when damaged by long walks over wet ground, she repaired with minuscule stitches, using the hair of her departed siblings as her thread. While these items are extraordinary to be sure, the real magic exists for me in running my hand along the banister of the stairway as they no doubt once did, placing my foot on the same stone steps that they climbed, looking through the window in Charlotte's bedroom at the same view upon which her eyes once rested. Stepping outside I can't help but notice the sunlight dancing on the moors that begin just beyond the back garden, beckoning me to follow. It doesn't require much imagination to clearly see the sisters as they close the back door and pass by me, heading out over the hills.

WYCOLLER HALL

Back at Ponden Hall we discover that it's a lucky thing to stay at a place where the owners are so generous with their kindness and knowledge. Not only does Steve later drive us to a delicious dinner at the Old Registry in Haworth ("You don't need to be on these dark roads, and I don't mind a bit"), he also shares a special spot often missed by visitors to the area. Wycoller, he tells us, is a chocolate box of a village, hidden far off the road down a steep pathway that winds through sheep fields and into a small woodland described by Charlotte herself in *Jane Eyre*. There's time before dinner, so off we go to follow Steve's instructions to the letter and are delighted to find this pathway, and indeed even the weather, completely unchanged from the day Charlotte wrote:

To this house I came just ere dark on an evening marked by the characteristics of sad sky, cold gale, and continued small penetrating rain. The last mile I performed on foot, having dismissed the chaise and driver with the double remuneration I had promised. Even when within a very short distance of the manor-house, you could see nothing of it, so thick and dark grew the timber of the gloomy wood about it. Iron gates between granite pillars showed me where to enter, and passing through them, I found myself at once in the twilight of close-ranked trees. There was a grass-grown track descending the forest aisle between hoar and knotty shafts and under branched arches. I followed it, expecting soon to reach the dwelling; but it stretched on and on, it would far and farther: no sign of habitation or grounds was visible.

Emerging from the woodland at the end of the footpath, we're rewarded for our efforts by the discovery of Wycoller Hall, long recognized as Charlotte's inspiration for Ferndean Manor, the hunting lodge in which she finds Rochester residing at the close of *Jane Eyre*. It's now a moss-covered ruin, and on this atmospheric afternoon when rain threatens, it could not wear its literary mantle more handsomely. We wander the stone-walled rooms now open to a bruised and threatening sky before rain chases us into a nearby tea room for warmth. Sleet has begun to fall by the time we make our way back through the wood and up the pathway to our car.

We find our room at Ponden Hall lit by a roaring fire, courtesy of Steve, and snuggle down in our box bed under a sheepskin blanket to listen to the hearty conversation of the wind outside. Happily for my husband, as he was sleeping beside the fabled window, Cathy's ghost stayed away during the night, and we woke to the aroma of a hot breakfast wafting up from downstairs. I dressed in a rush, knowing what was in store for the day. I had saved the best for last.

PONDEN KIRK

"Do you think we can make it?" I asked Steve as we listened to the wind roar round Ponden Hall at breakfast.

He got up and looked out the window. "Let's see your shoes," he said, and I lifted one booted foot up for inspection.

"Well, you're better equipped than most," he said. "Good hat, good raincoat, good shoes. If you're determined to get to Ponden Kirk, I'd say go now. It's not a good forecast for later. Just keep the farmhouse on your left when you get onto the moor and you'll be heading in the right direction. It'll be wuthering up there, though, so be prepared."

"Perfect." I grinned up at him, pulled my hood up tight, and we set off.

For anyone familiar with *Wuthering Heights,* Ponden Kirk, or Penistone Crags as Emily Brontë renamed it, owns a legendary place in the heart. Fortunately for me, the path there starts right at the doorway of Ponden Hall, and so we head out straightaway under a kaleidoscopic sky of bright blue, stormy gray, and cotton white. Within minutes we leave the lane behind us and climb out onto the moor, its waving grasses flashing purple and gold beneath a peek-a-boo sun. The wind is ferocious, as predicted, and feels like a strong hand that pushes against me with each step I take. I hold tight to the brim of my hat. Heather, the symbol for solitude, covers the hills on either side of me, and it's never far from my mind that this is the same pathway the sisters loved, the very same glorious solitude they themselves so often sought. I think of Charlotte walking this way after the death of Emily and am reminded of her words:

I am free to walk on the moors, but when I go out there alone everything reminds me of the times when others were with me, and then the moors seem a wilderness, featureless, solitary, saddening My sister Emily had a particular love for them, and there is not a knoll of heather, nor a branch of fern, nor a young bilberry leaf, nor a fluttering lark or linnet, but reminds me of her. The distant prospects were Anne's delight, and when I look round she is in the blue tints, the pale mists, the waves and shadows of the horizon. In the hill-country silence their poetry comes by lines and stanzas into my mind: once I loved it; now I dare not read it, and I am driven to wish I could taste one draught of oblivion and forget.

The path is narrow and the wind deafening when I finally reach the outcropping of gray rock known as Ponden Kirk, so well remembered as the favorite spot of soul mates Cathy and Heathcliff. I climb carefully down and take a seat. The vista below is a consummation of everything I came to Haworth to find. Here before me, every question is answered, every belief confirmed in this unchanged yet constantly changing view. I feel the Brontë sisters sit with me here, each hoping I appreciate this place as much as they, each gently urging me to let its mysterious beauty seep into my soul and change me, just a little. I am grateful to comply.

Even taken all together, the facts we know about the Brontë sisters are far too weak to adequately illuminate the wellspring of creativity and vision that flowed round them during their all too brief tenure here. Emily and Anne, in particular, remain especially unknown to us, their biographies being rather slim. It is perhaps no wonder that the Victorian readers of their day, when presented with novels of such drama and brutality, were shocked, even more so when they discovered the male pseudonyms under which the sisters published—Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell—hid not only women but the three quiet daughters of the parsonage in Haworth. No wonder myths were fashioned to explain them. One critic, in a 1848 review of *Wuthering Heights,* even opined, "There was an old saying that those who eat toasted cheese at night will dream of Lucifer. The author of *Wuthering Heights* has evidently eaten toasted cheese."

When we're faced with the mystery of genius, it is perhaps human nature to cast around for any scraps of information that we can knead and reshape to our liking in order to explain it. This certainly happened with the Brontë sisters. Over the years, frustrated biographers have too frequently chosen to lay the fabric of their fiction over the scant history of their lives, forming a more dramatic but undocumented tale. Characters have been pulled from the pages of their novels in misguided attempts to match them up with various people who populated the sisters' lives. This is almost always a mistake and never more so than in this case. These books were not autobiographies; they were works that sprang from unusual, stellar imaginations nourished by this fiercely beautiful landscape before me. A landscape worthy of dreams.

"I have dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after—they've gone through me like wine through water and altered the color of my mind."
—Emily Brontë

For the past eight years Pamela Terry has authored the popular blog, From the House of Edward (fromthehouseofedward.blogspot.com), named one of the Top Ten Home and Design blogs by London's Daily Telegraph. *Learn more at pamelaterry.net.*

On the Edge of Discovery

THE SECRET *of* FORE-EDGE PAINTINGS

by GRACE NUTH

Have you ever felt the sudden jolt of bliss that accompanies the discovery of a hidden secret? This feeling drives treasure hunters of all kinds, deep-sea divers and junkyard pickers alike, to keep searching. Imagine, then, the excitement and thrill of a bibliophile who discovers a beautifully bound copy of a classic book in a random small bookstore. He opens the book, careful not to crack the leather spine, and as the pages spread open in a fan, the gilt edges reveal an image secretly painted on them. How many people might have thumbed past this volume on the bookshelf without having a clue that such beauty lay hidden on its pages' edges? How was such a painting even created, and who took the time to paint it so meticulously, in a place where so few people would ever see it? And how many more books might he have walked past, completely oblivious to these secret images revealed only by bending the pages?

These hidden artworks are called fore-edge paintings, named for the term used for a book's longest paper side, opposite the spine. In fore-edge paintings, the gilt or marbled edges of the book's pages serve as a disguise to keep the images from being quickly discovered. Only upon opening the book does the lucky reader make a magical discovery.

The term *fore-edge* originates from Renaissance times, when books were traditionally shelved with bindings to the back and the paper edge to the front. Owners would label the edges of the paper with the author's name and the book's title, but nothing more exciting. Samuel Mearne, a bookbinder to the British royal family, is credited with inventing these vanishing fore-edge paintings, and indeed, to this day, it's largely considered a British art form, passed down by word of mouth with, ironically, little written history of its origin. Exactly how long fore-edge paintings have been made in secret is unclear, but the earliest work discovered dates from 1649. (Earlier fore-edge paintings were done directly on the edges and were visible when the book was closed.)

The popularity of fore-edge paintings reached their pinnacle in England in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, thanks to the bookbinding firm of Edwards of Halifax. The company hired skilled artists to paint beautiful landscapes on the edges of books it then sold to enchanted customers. The names of these artists may remain forever unknown, though, as few fore-edge paintings are signed.

The art of fore-edge painting is not yet lost, even in our modern digital age. British artist Martin Frost, for one, is carrying on the tradition. Frost saw his first fore-edge painting in 1969 when he was working as a scenic painter for a theater. Compared with the massive scale at which he had been working, the minuscule and subtle art of these hidden images intrigued him. "I wondered if I could cope with such fine detailed work," he says. A first few attempts turned into a career, and forty years later he has now produced some 3,500 "vanishing paintings," as he calls them.

And vanish they do. But how? Frost describes the process of creation: "For a painting to vanish under the gilded fore-edge of a book it needs to be brushed onto a tiny strip of the face of each leaf. This is achieved by fanning the pages in a specially designed clamp. The work is slow and painstaking, but with care a detailed image can be achieved that magically vanishes when the book is released."

Frost especially enjoys painting the human figure. He is known for creating paintings inspired by the work of the Pre-Raphaelites and by the fairy art of Dadd and Rackham. But he also is quick to credit Clare Brooksbank, another artist carrying on the art of fore-edge painting, for her skill in Romantic-style art as well.

Although original historic fore-edge paintings usually featured either pastoral scenes or heraldic devices, the 20th century brought a greater variety of subjects, including patterns, portraits, romantic or historical figure groups, and erotic scenes. Some collectors have even hired Frost to create custom fore-edge paintings on cherished books they already own, having them rebound with the appropriate leather binding and gilt edge. Can you imagine a secret fore-edge painting on a leather-bound volume of *Harry Potter*? Or *Game of Thrones*?

The 20th century not only brought about an expansion of subject matter for fore-edge paintings but a flourishing of techniques as well. Skilled artists have created double fore-edge paintings, in which bending the pages in different directions reveals two different scenes. Some artists have created paintings that span all three of a book's paper edges. And others have embraced the challenge of painting on miniature books, some as small as one inch.

Works of wonder created just to further beautify and enchant the art of the written word, fore-edge paintings may vanish when the book is closed, but this incredible art form should never disappear.

All images provided by Martin Frost. See more from his collection at foredgefrost.co.uk.

THE *Magic Castle's* YOUNG MAGICIANS

by **CAROLYN TURGEON**

photography by **STEVE PARKE**

Rabby Yang in the Parlour of Prestidigitation

The Magic Castle

Carolyn Turgeon

Diana Zimmerman fell in love with magic as a little girl, when her mother read her stories about fairies. She remembers a tale about fairies gathering on little white flowers to collect sunbeams in brown paper bags. They were having so much fun and it got so late that they fell asleep, and when they woke the next morning in the bright sunlight they found that "the paper bags had melted to the little brown centers, and the sunbeams had created yellow flowers and yellow petals." That was how sunflowers were made. Stories like this shaped Zimmerman and the way she viewed the world. "I don't think you can love fairies without loving all things magical," she says.

So what did she do? She became a magician.

Most kids get into magic after seeing a magician at a birthday party or some other venue, but Zimmerman wanted to do the things she read about in fairy books. "How could I fly? How could make a coin disappear? How could I turn something into something else? I wanted to turn a person into a frog," she says. "I wanted to be able to do the magic that I read about in all the fairy stories." Her dad took her to the one magic shop in Phoenix in 1957—she was eight years old—and when she saw a magician producing coins out of thin air, she was hooked.

At that age, she dreamed of becoming a professional magician.

Six years later, in Hollywood, the Academy of Magical Arts opened its (secret, elaborately carved, Victorian) doors. Housed in a sweeping Victorian mansion christened the Magic Castle, the academy is one of the most extraordinary private clubs in the world. Founded by Milt Larsen and his brother Bill to fulfill their late father's dream of forming a magicians' clubhouse, the Magic Castle quickly became a vaunted place for practitioners to gather and trade tales and secrets. And so the teenage Zimmerman added a second dream to her first: to perform at this famed Hollywood spot. "It's the dream of almost every magician in the world," she says. "To this day, that's the ultimate place to perform if you're a lover of magic."

By the time Zimmerman was eighteen, she had worked in Phoenix go-go clubs and a touring vaudeville show, and she'd won three international magic competitions, the first of which was in Vancouver. (At thirteen, she was the youngest winner and first girl to ever win.) She was ready to pack up and move to Hollywood. Officially, she was too young to become a member of the Magic Castle, but the academy made a special exception for her to join, and she started performing right away. Magic lover, debonair movie star, and board member Cary Grant saw her very first show, and they became quick friends. It was Grant who, a few years later, helped Zimmerman create the Junior Academy so that young people could learn the ancient art of magic.

"I realized that there was no way for young people to be involved," Zimmerman says. "Here we had the greatest minds of magic, the greatest proponents of magic, the greatest historians of magic, plus a wonderful library, but there was no way for kids to be involved." She'd tried for years to get the board to listen to her proposal. Then one night she and Grant were talking at the bar. "He said, 'You know, Diana, I think we should have an educational program here.' And I said, 'Cary, I've been trying to get one going for four years.' So there happened to be a board of directors meeting that night. And he said, 'You come with me.' So I went in and did my pitch again and left as quickly as possible. A few minutes later, Cary came running out. 'Diana, Diana, they're going to let us do it. We're going to have a youth program!' "

That was forty-two years ago. By now, the Junior Academy has graduated more than 3,000 young magicians. (One of the most famous might be Neil Patrick Harris.) Despite its Harry Potter-esque feel, it's not really set up as a school, Zimmerman explains. Rather it is a club sponsored by the Academy of Magical Arts that hosts roughly fifty kids at a time, all between the ages of thirteen and twenty-one. Auditions are twice a year, and the group meets on the last Saturday of the month to workshop and share what they've been doing. "We don't actually teach tricks," Zimmerman says. "What we work on is skill and performing, so they have to have a pretty good knowledge of magic before they get in." Zimmerman, co-chair Robert Dorian, and four other sponsors show up to lead each session. Once a year the Castle hosts Future Stars Week, during which the best of the young magicians perform there for a whole week.

The current shining star of the Junior Academy is twenty-year-old Collins Key, pictured on these pages, who appeared on *America's Got Talent* in 2013 and finished fourth. "No magician had ever come that close to winning before," Zimmerman says. "And his career is just skyrocketing. Of all the kids that have ever gone through the program, he's probably the most talented and most unique performer." And he can do a bit of everything—close-up magic, cabaret-style magic, and the grand illusions. (Most magicians specialize in only one of those types.) "He's truly magic's first pop star," she says. "When Collins was doing *America's Got Talent*, he would have thousands of girls standing outside Radio City Music Hall screaming for him. When he did the Demi Lovato tour, you'd go out and there'd be 6,000 of Demi's fans screaming to meet Collins."

Another of the club's up-and-coming members is eighteen-year-old Rabby Yang, also pictured here, who excels in cabaret performing and loves to tell a story with what he does—"storytelling magic," Zimmerman calls it. "It's really quite elegant." In one act, he tells the story of a young California girl who dreams of seeing snow for the first time. "If you believe in magic, anything is possible," he says to the crowd as he takes a piece of paper and rolls it up into a ball. He dips the ball in water, then slowly waves a fan over it—and creates dazzling flurries of snow onstage. And then, from the snowflakes, the girl herself magically appears, entranced by the scene around her.

Where does Zimmerman's dedication come from, showing up month after month to guide these young talents? "When I was a kid," Zimmerman explains, "I was incredibly poor. I was laughed at and bullied and made fun of. Magic was my escape into a different world. And in Phoenix, there was a wonderful man called Don Seth who had a teenage magic club, and that's where I could feel like I was somebody important. When I did magic there, I was a fairy. I wasn't some little girl from the slums. I wasn't this ugly duckling. I was a princess and I was a fairy. So that's why I'm so devoted to it: to give young kids the same opportunity I was given, that same gift of possibility."

After appearing all over the world as "Diana the Enchantress" and "the world's foremost lady magician" and even hosting her own television show, Zimmerman stopped performing in 1985. But she remains a regular at the Magic Castle. It's a place she's still enchanted by after all these years. How could she not be? To enter the Castle from the lobby, guests must whisper a magical phrase to a sculpture of an owl and wait for the secret doors to slide open. Stepping into the club is like transporting to a more romantic, opulent time. Every night, magicians perform in different theaters scattered throughout the mansion, including the intimate Close-up Gallery, the Parlour of Prestidigitation, and the larger Palace of Mystery. Various bars provide room for impromptu magic tricks. And in the music room, resident ghost Irma plays piano whenever the mood strikes, and she has yet to be stumped by a guest's musical request. Paintings of the Larsens peer down from the

Collins Key, Rabby Yang, and Diana Zimmerman in the Dai Vernon alcove

The Magic Castle

Carolyn Turgeon

Key outside the Parlour of Prestidigitation

Irma's haunted piano parlour

The Houdini Séance Room

Playing with fire in the Palace of Mystery

Zimmerman on the Main Staircase

Practicing in the Hat and Hare Pub

walls, and collectibles on display range from rare 19th century paraphernalia to Houdini's handcuff collection and trunks he locked himself in. Treasures sparkle from around every corner.

Houdini has a special place in the Castle. In the gorgeous Houdini Séance Room, guests can participate in a re-creation of the famous Houdini séances led by his wife back in the 1920s and '30s. In life, Houdini and his wife Bess made a pact with each other: that whoever died first would contact (or not contact) the other and therefore prove or disprove the existence of an afterlife. After Houdini's death in 1926 (on Halloween, no less), Bess and some of the world's most renowned spiritualists attempted for ten years, on the anniversary of his death, to contact her late husband. After a decade of failed attempts, the final séance was held on the rooftop of the nearby Knickerbocker Hotel. This one also failed. Houdini did not make contact, and Bess publicly declared that there was no life after death.

Of course, this doesn't keep guests of the Magic Castle from trying their luck today. On any given night, a group of twelve guests gather in the room for a lovely five-course dinner, leaving the thirteenth chair empty. At the stroke of midnight, a medium enters the room and sits in the empty seat. The chandelier flickers, the table begins to float, tambourines fly across the room—and Houdini himself often makes an appearance. "It's wonderful," Zimmerman says. "It feels like you're stepping back to a time when séances were all the rage."

And still, Zimmerman remains devoted to the magic of fairies. Though she never incorporated fairies into her magic acts—"I never figured out a way to not make it come off as corny," she says—she's amassed one of the largest collections of fairy art in the world, with pieces dating back to the 1700s. And though she's no longer conjuring coins out of the air for adoring audiences that may or may not have contained Cary Grant, she's now weaving magic of a different kind in writing her fairy-filled *Kandide* fantasy series. In the books, fairy princess Kandide becomes an "imperfect" and has to overcome bullying and learn to accept herself—the way Zimmerman herself was able to do through magic. The third book in the series, *Kandide: The Masks of Deception*, is slated to come out this fall, and Zimmerman already has book four in the works. "To me, the real magic in life is found in fairy tales," she says. "And every fairy tale has an underlying theme of overcoming your own dislike for yourself. I think that fantasy allows us to do that. Magic allows us to do that. With it, you're able to create exactly the kind of world you want.

"You see," she continues, "magic teaches you to ask 'Why not?' instead of 'Why?' Most of our life we're taught, Don't do that. You can't do that. You can't do this. But what magic says is, Why can't a lady float in the air? Why can't I make coal turn into a diamond? Why can't a little girl from the slums become a star? It teaches you to think differently, and it teaches you to question what the normal reality of life is. That alone is probably the single most important thing about magic. It forces you to open up to all things possible."

Learn more about Diana Zimmerman and Kandide *at kandide.com.*
Visit Collins Key at collinskey.com and Rabby Yang at rabbyyang.com.
Read more about the Magic Castle at magiccastle.com.

See more of Steve Parke's photography at steveparke.com.
Follow Carolyn Turgeon on Instagram @carolynturgeon.

OPUS OILS

Jitterbug Perfume Parlour

by CAROLYN TURGEON
photography by STEVE PARKE

This stretch of Hollywood Boulevard doesn't seem super glamorous. It even feels a little desolate. So it's a gorgeous surprise to walk into the Jitterbug Perfume Parlour and be thoroughly swept back in time. The building itself is a historic landmark, dating from the 1930s. The front room is all swirly velvet couches meant for swooning, alongside antique tables and cabinets crowded with feathers and dolls and perfume bottles on silver trays. Faces look out from the bottles, which have names like Flapper, Gypsy, Absinthia, Les Bohèmes, and Dirty Sexy Wilde (as in Oscar)—and everything smells divine, transporting. This isn't a specific past here but some fantasy combination of the Victorian age and the flapper-filled 1920s with a dash of the ancient—Egypt or Rome, maybe—thrown in.

The parlor—which extends into a back room and up a staircase into the lab—is the vision of perfumer Kedra Hart, who in her soft kimono, silk pants, and open sandals, her golden-red hair loose and flowing, completes the tableaux. She's relaxed and radiant, as if she's just woken from a long nap. She offers tea, which she pours unhurriedly from a silver pot. And she smells like some blossom you smelled once, maybe in your childhood garden. Just being here is like luxuriating in a warm, perfumed bath. How else would things be in a place like this, where Hart spends her days concocting dreamy scents meant to take people into other worlds and even their own pasts?

Hart has created many dozens of elixirs for Opus Oils, a company she founded (in an earlier form) in the 1980s after attending a workshop on essential oils. She'd never heard of essential oils before—this was before you could walk into a Whole Foods and buy them, she says—and was blown away. "It was almost like the flowers brought me in and were speaking to me," she says now. She has always been "really motivated by scent, obsessed by all things olfactory." After buying small quantities of the oils from the workshop leader, she started blending them and discovered she had a knack for it. Once she started wearing her own mixes, friends and even strangers on the street started clamoring for them. A bona fide business emerged—until the Northridge earthquake hit in 1994, bringing down a whole wall in her house and all her products with it. "It was kind of a running joke that I had the most fantastic-smelling pile of rubble in the neighborhood," she says.

After some regrouping—and a stint with Barneys—she relaunched her business, focusing more on the bespoke aspect as well as on a new ready-to-wear line. Now she serves business clients who hire her to create their signature scents and private clients who come to the parlor for bespoke scents that can take anywhere from a few months to a few years to concoct, "depending on how unique and complicated the product is." For one client, she's replicating the ultra-specific smell of a battered, vintage guitar case with a crushed pink velvet interior. For another she re-created the odor of a beloved dog who was about to die. Others might bring in their grandmother's old empty perfume bottle with just a phantom of the original scent for her to re-create. "I'll take that scent," she says, "and then try to add something unique to it so that it's bringing back the old memories but also creating new ones."

Hart has also developed a simplified version of the bespoke scents for clients who want something special and personal but might not have the time or budget for something made from scratch. For them, she brings out a palette of preblended perfume bases that she has put together over time (she has hundreds), and she'll guide them through the process of mixing a few notes together to create something they love. Often it's a special gift from a daughter to a mother, a groom to a bride, and "it's always really special," Hart says, "because I get to be part of this special bonding experience with loved ones. The scents will bring up all sorts of memories and stories."

These moments might flare up again only because of a specific note of jasmine or lilac that hurls the person back in time. For Hart, it's like putting together a puzzle. "You're looking for the piece that makes it all come together. There's this look that people get when I get it right, that euphoric 'Ah' moment. You can see it in their eyes and their smile. When that happens, I know that we're done."

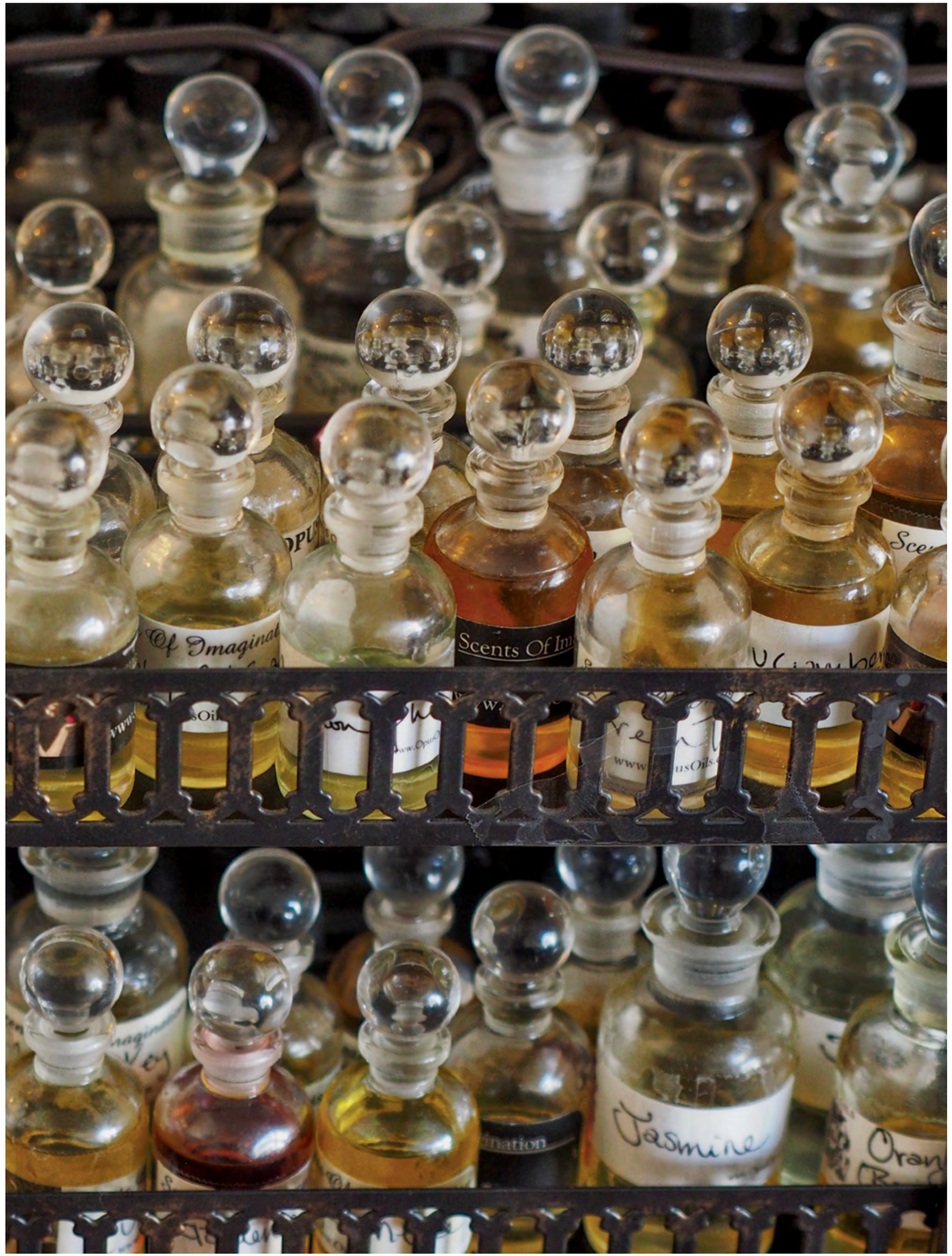
For her ready-to-wear fragrances (she also makes perfumed inks and plumes to accompany them), Hart is constantly dipping into a more general history, depending on what's obsessing her right now. She regularly goes back to the 19th century—to a time of dandies and fainting couches and absinthe and melancholy violets—with a Jazz Age flapper or two thrown in. "I feel almost more connected to those times than I do to the present," she says. "I love reading about the décor, the clothes that they wore, the etiquette." She spent a brief period living in England as a young woman, when she dabbled in acting and modeling and would take day trips by herself to places like Charles Dickens's house. "I can still, talking about it now, smell what it smelled like inside. The rooms are all preserved as they were, and you can actually smell the remnants of the time."

She collects old perfume books, too, which line the shelves of her upstairs laboratory, a hazily lit space with a huge semicircle window looking onto Hollywood Boulevard. She has one book full of "all these wonderful old handkerchief recipes" from when dandies wore scented handkerchiefs in their pockets. Her Dirty Sexy Wilde perfume uses those historical scents as a "blast-off point for the fragrance," to which she added more modern notes to please the contemporary nose. (The dandies were especially fond of civet, a stinky animal scent not always pleasant to current tastes.)

"It's hard for me to work on a fragrance and not go back in time as I'm working on it," she says. "I think that there's a little bit of vintage in everything I do."

Learn more at opusoils.com.
Visit faeriemag.com for Opus Oils perfume oils and inks.

Opus Oils
Carolyn Turgeon



GIRL WITH CLOVEN FEET

by LINDSAY LUSBY

A hunger for green things
starts in the toes,
lingers at the hedges
on deersoft steps.

She waits for nightcover
to track past clover and henbit,

to garden lettuces and parsley
and strips them down to topsoil.

The hunger for knowings
starts in the fingers,
plucks every *thou-shalt-not*,

holds each petal on her tongue
like a sacrament:

He loves me.
He loves me not.

TRIGGER

by LINDSAY LUSBY

The girl with cloven feet
has no shadow left

to drag behind her
like fletching,

like a dark and feathered aftermath.

Call her *Arrowhead*.
Call her *Deerhide without a copse*.

She is a whitetail
in a fallow field,

a jacklight gleam
above the sedge.

TRADE

by LINDSAY LUSBY

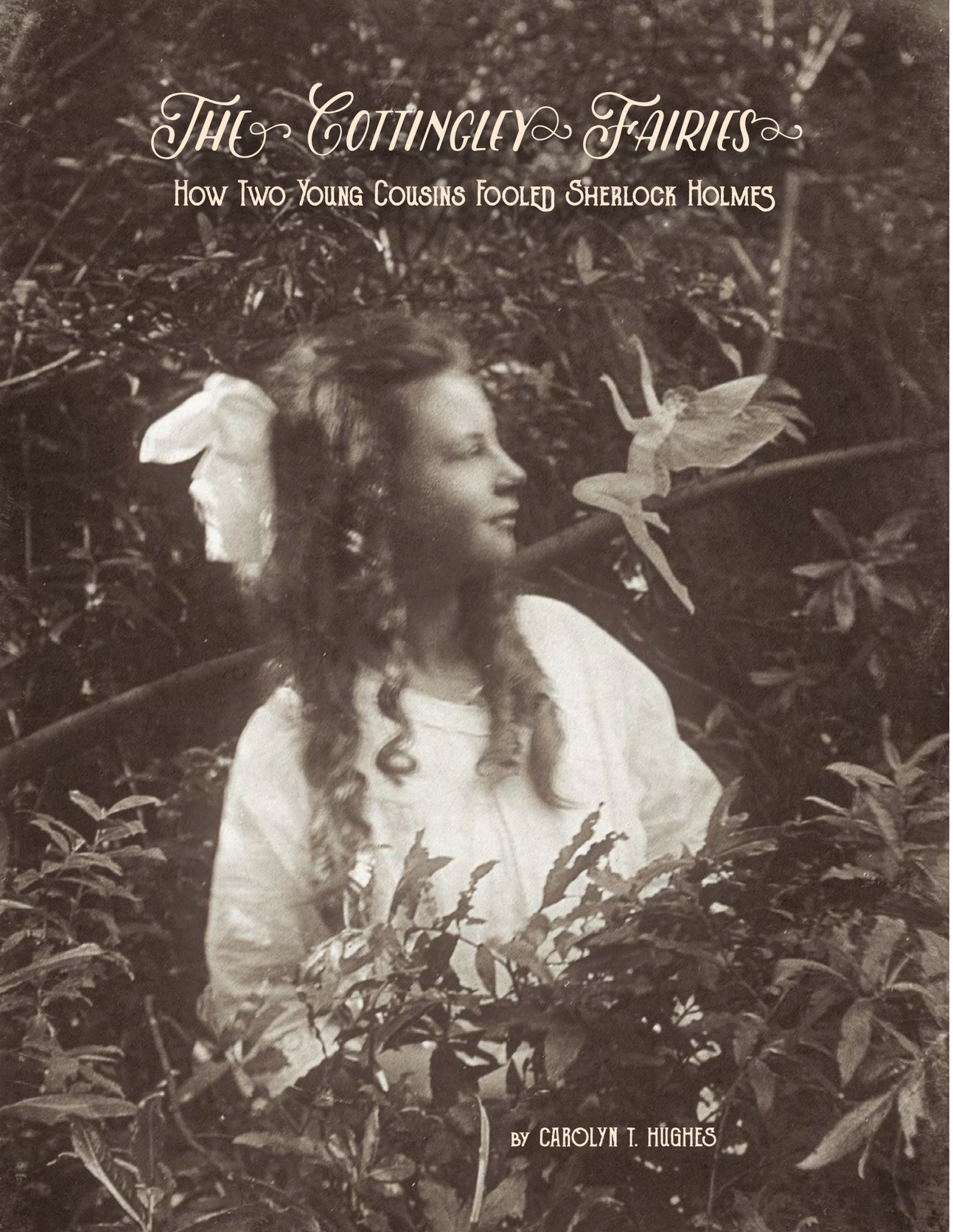
Hers is a false pulsing:

a lightstruck object
mocking life like a moon,

and just as thimble-pocked.

This heart, a salt lick
in its spring-loaded bone-cage.

Lindsay Lusby is the author of the chapbook Imago *(Dancing Girl Press, 2014) and winner of the 2015 Fairy Tale Review Award in* Poetry, *judged by Joyelle McSweeney. Her poems have appeared most recently in* North Dakota Quarterly, Tinderbox Poetry Journal, Third Point Press, Sugar House Review, The Lumberyard, Fairy Tale Review, *and elsewhere. She is the assistant director of the Rose O'Neill Literary House at Washington College, where she serves as assistant editor for the Literary House Press and managing editor for* Cherry Tree.



Carolyn T. Hughes

In the summer of 1917 two cousins, ten-year-old Frances Griffiths and sixteen-year-old Elsie Wright, spent a lazy afternoon lounging by a narrow brook behind the Wright family garden in Cottingley, near Bradford in England. By all accounts, Frances, who had moved from South Africa with her mother Annie to live with the Wrights, was an adventurous child. In fact, she was playing on the rocks by the brook when she slipped and fell in. Frances's mother Annie, decidedly not amused by the state of her daughter's dress or by the girl's insistence that she was playing with fairies, sent her daughter to the attic bedroom she shared with her cousin. Elsie, feeling sorry for Frances, joined her there, and it was while the girls fumed at the injustice of it all that they hatched a plan to play a practical joke on their parents. They cut out pictures of fairies that were in one of Elsie's books, *Princess Mary's Gift Book* (which happened to have a story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the legendary author and creator of Sherlock Holmes, in it), and pasted the fairy pictures on cardboard. Then the girls asked Elsie's father Arthur if they could borrow his Midg quarter-plate camera, and Arthur, unaware of the girls' plans, acquiesced.

One can imagine the cousins giggling as they set off for the brook the next day, blindly unaware that the pictures they would take that afternoon would make them—through the vagaries of fate—the initiators of one of the greatest hoaxes in the twentieth century. All they knew was that the day was sunny and bright. Elsie, who had been given one glass plate for the camera by her father, put flowers in Frances's hair and posed the cut-out fairies around her using simple hat pins. She took four pictures of Frances with her various "fairy" companions that day and then anxiously brought the camera back to her father, who had a darkroom under the stairs. Alas, instead of being excited about seeing a phalanx of little people around his niece when he developed the film, Arthur got angry. He ignored the girls' protests that there were real fairies in the pictures; instead, he said they looked like "bits of paper." (He was correct). Not to be deterred, a month later the girls decided to try the ruse again. This time Frances posed Elsie on the grass with a gnome pinned to her skirt, high-kicking like a performer out of *Riverdance.* When the much-put-upon Arthur developed this new batch of photographs, he'd had enough. In fact, he was so angry at the girls' "nonsense" that he banned them from ever using his camera again. The whole matter would have died then and there except for the fact that the girls' mothers actually believed their daughters and began discussing the pictures at the various theosophy meetings they attended. Elsie's mother Polly even went so far as to bring copies of the pictures to several meetings

News of the photographs spread slowly—but spread it did. In 1920, some three years after the pictures were taken, forty-nine-year-old building contractor and ardent theosophist Edward L. Gardner was sent the prints in the post. Already pro-fairy in his leanings, Gardner was amazed by the pictures and decided to make it his mission in life to prove their authenticity. As luck would have it (and this is a story of luck, both good and bad), word of the photos also found its way to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who happened to be writing an article about fairies for *The Strand*, the very magazine where Sherlock Holmes made his first appearance. A spiritualist and proponent of spirit photography, Doyle was, to say the least, Team Fairy. He was born in Ireland—a country rich in tales of "little people." His father, who suffered from mental illness for decades, drew pictures of them in his notebooks while in the Montrose Royal Lunatic Society. His uncle Richard, a talented artist, not only told Doyle that he had had conversations with fairies but also illustrated fairy-themed books. (Some of his illustrations have made it to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the National Gallery of Ireland.) If that wasn't enough, Doyle's own children professed to have seen fairies in the family garden. Thrilled about the pictures, Doyle put the initial article that he was working on aside. (It would be published in *The Strand* in 1921.) He and Gardner would now combine forces, with Gardner doing most of the work on the ground with the Wright and Griffith families. (Doyle would never actually meet Frances and Elsie, or their parents.) Both men sent the pictures to various photography experts who, depending upon their own beliefs, either thought the pictures were legitimate or, in the case of the Kodak company, had serious doubts, though it said it could not prove that the plate had been tampered with. Friends like author Sir Oliver Lodge and the magician Harry Houdini thought Doyle had fallen for a hoax and told him his reputation would take a huge hit (which it did). He didn't listen because not only did he believe the photographs were real, he thought they "marked an epoch in human thought."

Both Gardner and Doyle wanted more pictures of fairies, so Gardner met with the family in early August 1920 and gave each girl a Cameo quarter-plate folding camera. Gardner was so entranced by what he deemed the innocence of the girls that he didn't even grow suspicious when the girls claimed that the fairies tended to come out only for them. Some two weeks after Gardner left for London, Elsie and Frances produced three more pictures of the "little people." Gardner, ecstatic over these new photographs, sent prints to Doyle, who was in Australia at the time on a lecture tour. Armed with what he considered even more photographic proof of the existence of fairies, Doyle completed his new article, which was published in *The Strand* in December 1920. (The editor of the magazine, Herbert Greenhough, felt that Doyle was being duped, but he ran the article anyway.) The headline was anything but subtle. "Fairies Photographed—An Epoch Making Event Described by A. Conan Doyle." The issue sold out in three days.

The existence (or lack thereof) of fairies and the legitimacy of the pictures became part of the public debate in the United Kingdom and elsewhere for over sixty years. In 1920, there was no CNN or Twitter to spread stories in the blink of an eye. *(Hanging with fairies #tiny). The Strand's* circulation averaged 500,000 at its peak, certainly admirable numbers for a literary magazine but not enough to make this particular story stay in the public's imagination for as long as it did. It seems clear that the sheer fame and reputation of Doyle (co-mingled with the reputation of his most famous creation, Sherlock Holmes) played a massive role in keeping the pictures alive. In Holmes, Doyle had created a larger-than-life character. Holmes battled criminal masterminds and won! He was logic personified. There is little doubt that, as regards the case of the Cottingley fairy pictures, many readers blurred the lines between the author and his creation, or, to quote Yeats, "the dancer and the dance." Thus when Doyle calmly wrote about the validity of the pictures—"after carefully going into every possible source of error … a strong *prima-facie* case has been built up"—one practically expected to read, "Why, it's elementary, my dear Watson." Certainly, Doyle's judgment held more sway in the public's mind than just about any other writer of his time. Even Elsie's father, a man who had serious doubts about the pictures from *the very beginning*, was so awed upon receiving a letter from the author that he kept his feelings to himself.

Doyle wrote that the only thing separating us from "these little folk who appear to be our neighbors" were "vibrations." He went into even greater detail about his theory in his 1922 book *The Coming of the Fairies: The Cottingley Incident* (which also included the two *Strand* articles). "If we could conceive a race of beings which were constructed in material which threw out shorter or longer vibrations, they would be invisible unless we could tune ourselves up or tone them down." To Doyle, it was clear that Elsie and Frances were "clairvoyant" and because of this gift they could photograph the normally invisible fairies. In this argument, Doyle was helped by the fact that the post–World War I population had spent the past four or five years having the invisible made manifest. Science had developed and unearthed invisible gases that poisoned solders on the battlefield; unseen zeppelins had dropped bombs on cities; submarines lurking underneath the water's surface had sunk ships. In addition, the invisible but deadly Spanish influenza had wiped out anywhere from 50 million to 100 million of the world's population. The logic that unseen things could be created and/or unearthed by scientific methods—although grasping in this case—was certainly there.

Another factor was that the population after World War I was crippled by loss and at a standstill over how to deal with their grief. In his book *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, historian Jay Winter paints communities in perpetual mourning

because there were millions of soldiers whose bodies were never found. Devastated families had a desire to connect with their departed and to get the answer to the eternal question: Was there life after death? Spiritualism (i.e., the communication with the dead) and spirit photography (where unscrupulous photographers took advantage of this grief and tampered with pictures so family members believed they saw their loved ones in the images) bloomed during this time, and Doyle, who had lost family members in the war, believed in and was a proponent of both. Initially, the author was hesitant to link these things with the Cottingley fairy narrative, but he eventually relented. Spiritualism, spirit photography, the existence of fairies—all these things proved, in his mind at least, that there were other worlds to be discovered. "When Columbus knelt in prayer upon the edge of America what prophetic eye saw all that a new continent might do to affect the destinies of the world?" Doyle wrote. "We seem to be on the edge of a new continent."

Ouch.

And what of Elsie and Frances—the ringleaders in this great hoax? Gardner and Doyle went to their deaths convinced of the innocence of the girls, while Frances and Elsie rued the day that the men came into their lives. They were bitter toward Doyle because the author gave them only £20 each for their story. They envisioned him making oodles of money off the pictures. (He was paid £500.) Despite the fact that Doyle used pseudonyms for the girls and their family in his writing, it wasn't long before reporters tracked the cousins down. Frances was teased in school about it. Elsie was simply mortified. They both left the country—relieved to be anonymous. But eventually they migrated back to England and time and again were given the chance to come clean. The *Daily Express* tracked Elsie down in 1966, but the most she would admit was that the fairies "might have been figments of her imagination." In 1976, both women were interviewed for a BBC program called *Nationwide*. Once again, they refused to admit any wrongdoing. In 1983, they finally started to tell the truth. Frances admitted to a reporter from the *Times* that four pictures were fake—and Elsie, impressed by Geoffrey Crawley's erudite exposé about the pictures in the *British Journal of Photography*, wrote him a letter admitting everything.

According to the letter, Elsie felt bad for Doyle and Gardner—and was particularly affected by the publication of a cruel cartoon of the author in a newspaper in which he was "chained to a chair with his head in a cloud, and Sherlock Holmes … beside him." Thus, according to Elsie, the girls kept quiet as to not hurt the men any more than they had already done. As far as Doyle's reasons for believing in the pictures, Elsie speculated that "he had lost his son in the war and the poor man was probably trying to comfort himself with unworldly things." Perhaps the most important reason for coming clean, though, was that Elsie didn't want to leave her grandchildren with the specter of a "weirdly grandmother."

Like just about everything with the case of the Cottingley fairies, the story ends with a strange twist. Frances had admitted to the *Times* that the pair had faked four pictures—but she contended that the fifth, *The Fairy Bower* (pictured above), was real. (This proclamation came as quite a shock to Elsie.) Frances was in the middle of writing a book about her life when she passed away in 1986—leaving the fifth picture forever shrouded in mystery. Perhaps after lying for so many years, Frances could not entirely give up being a fabulist. Perhaps she had a psychological break and had convinced herself that she had seen a fairy. Or perhaps the light was right on that fateful summer day all those decades ago and something from another world *had* been captured on film for the world to see. Alas, these are questions not even Sherlock Holmes could answer.

Carolyn Hughes is a novelist whose work has appeared in the New York Times Book Review, *the* Los Angeles Times Book Review, *the* Washington Post, *and the* Village Voice. *You can follow her on Twitter @hughesnews333.*

A NEW ORLEANS WONDERLAND

BY JOI BROZEK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE PARKE

Five years ago, Stacy Hoover found her fairy-tale home in New Orleans, a 130-year-old cottage that had been waiting for her its entire life.

The Bywater neighborhood of New Orleans forces you to take your time as you pass through its entrancingly claustrophobic blocks. Crammed with colorful historic Creole cottages, grand Victorian townhouses, and charming single and double shotgun homes, this former Creole suburb is a bohemian paradise where artists and bon vivants alike make their home these days. It's easy to ignore any glaring presence of the modern day. Squint past the parked cars and don't you dare whip out that phone.

I make it a game, immersing myself in a past I never had. It's easy to do almost anywhere in New Orleans, the so-called "City That Care Forgot," but especially in this area downriver from the French Quarter. The majority of homes are at least a hundred years old. While some admittedly have fallen to ruin, others have been restored to their former beauty. Some are right in between, with perhaps a peek of freshly painted gingerbread trim on an otherwise rotting porch. Broken sidewalks and potholed streets combined with the elderly elegance of homes wedged tight beside one another is an intoxicating juxtaposition. The neighborhood altogether may not have aged gracefully, but we can forgive that.

One particular home stands out: Wonderland, a beautiful prima ballerina among the corps. Fittingly located on the corner of streets named Desire and Royal, the sprawling white cottage held me spellbound the first time I saw it. Flocked with Corinthian columns, the wraparound porches with drapes billowing out are utterly welcoming. Look past them, and you'll find slip-head windows beckoning you to look inside at the even more enchantingly attired rooms. The front and side gardens are bursting with blooms, vines, and potted vibrant tropical plants. This, *this* is a decadent visual feast for all to admire.

Each time I passed it, I had to restrain myself from going up on the porch and knocking on the door, figuring the owner wouldn't appreciate the likes of me interrupting her busy life. Little did I know that if I had knocked, Stacy Hoover, the current owner, would have likely opened the door with a genuine smile and invited me in. Instead, I kept stalking the house and dreaming up its life.

Then I came up with a reason to knock on that door: an interview for *Faerie Magazine.* It is clear as soon as I set foot on the porch that I am welcome here. No one has to say a word, and when Hoover opens the door, I feel like I've known her my entire life … or was it a past life?

I'd soon learn that Wonderland itself has many past lives.

Storied History

Born and raised in Amish country in Ohio, Hoover first moved to New Orleans in 1989 after attending the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She arrived with a couple hundred bucks in her pocket and an abundance of ideas that she would soon make her reality. Over the next decade she opened and operated an antique jewelry store named Hoover Watches and Jewels on Royal Street in the Vieux Carré and bought a 150-year-old home nearby. She had a brief stint in New York City post-Katrina, but she always knew she'd come back to her beloved Big Easy. She returned in 2011 and immediately started her search for a new home. She looked at many before landing at Wonderland.

"I was just walking around the corner and saw a big FOR SALE sign in this yard," Hoover says. She called the number and went to see it the next day. "When I walked in this house, I couldn't believe how beautiful it was. All the molding details and the layout of the house, the grand gesture it makes to you—it felt like a big piece of jewelry. I also knew it could transition: All of these doors open from the wide center hall so that you could make any kind of a labyrinth that you want."

She put in an offer on the home that no one had apparently even viewed in eight months, but was soon told by the agent that a second offer had just come in, so she'd need to counter. Hoover drove around the Marigny/Bywater neighborhoods to see if any other home was as compelling to her. She came to her decision without hesitation to offer above the asking price and the house that would be called Wonderland became hers. She quickly learned about its past lives, the merriment and hospitality—with a bit of scandal mixed in, of course. Old homes in New Orleans have to have scandal attached to them. Some have it in droves.

This house on Royal and Desire was not always called Wonderland. Built from 1883 to 1884, the former two-story home was purchased in 1892 by Andrew Jackson, the owner of Gem Saloon and the president of Jackson Brewery. A booze- and gambling-loving dandy, Jackson was known for his grand parties that spilled out onto porches and the wraparound balconies on the second floor. Within the next decade, he lost both the saloon and his position at the brewery (due to gambling, some speculate) and died in the enormous claw-foot bathtub that currently sits in the main bathroom of the house. Most likely it was suicide. He left behind a young daughter and a wife, who owned the home until 1906 but did not live there after 1903. A fire in 1904 destroyed the second level of the house. Five years later it was acquired by the Fortier family, who owned it through many generations until Hoover purchased it in 2011.

Claire Marie Fortier was surely one of the home's longest residents, having lived there from the 1920s until 2003, when she passed away. Hoover feels that it's Claire Marie's energy that pervades the house the most. "I feel a kinship with this independent woman who lived here alone for years (after her children moved away and her husband passed)," she says, adding that "the house kept me company" for almost five years until she met her current partner, artist Ryan Sartin, who now shares Wonderland with her. Even when she lived alone, she says, she always felt happy in Wonderland. "I always knew this house was in my future," she says.

Despite his infamous demise, Jackson's ghost does not haunt the home, according to Hoover. But this 19th century dandy who once threw decadent soirees that lasted late into the night may have left his revelrous spirit behind: Hoover loves throwing parties for her friends for various special occasions and holidays, but is especially fond of the parties she throws for local children. Santa arrives in Wonderland on Christmas Eve with presents for every little boy and girl that shows up and the Easter Bunny delivers eggs to every child in the gardens on Easter Day.

When it comes to owning an old house, *labor of love* is an understatement. Much attention, time, and money goes into the care of this lovely creature, this beloved elderly pet. The effort is not even a second thought for Hoover. She describes how when she's relaxing on the porch, she may be suddenly compelled to tend to the enchanting gardens. "It makes me happy to do the work," she says. This happiness extends, naturally, to gracing the home with an exquisite touch.

"I've always collected things that spoke to me."

Hoover's fondness for vintage clothes and home decor, her boundless passion for eras past, from the Victorian era through to the mid-20th century, started at a young age. It was in junior high that she bought her first Victorian couch. Every time I've seen her, she's wearing something from another decade, but I have a strong feeling that even if she were wearing skinny jeans and a T-shirt, you'd think she was a graceful time lord, a Puck-like spirit who dabbles in the wanderlust of time travel.

Exploring the elegant yet playfully attired home, I'm fascinated by a virtual treasure trove of antiques: gilded mirrors everywhere, each with varying degrees of haze; dozens of Depression-era glass dessert plates and antique teacups precariously piled to the ceiling on exposed kitchen shelves; velvet chaises and chairs scattered throughout rooms with impossibly high ceilings; painted glass transoms casting a rose-colored glow onto everything.

I pause at a showpiece mirror with an intricately carved wooden frame that Hoover bought at an estate sale twenty years ago. It takes up an entire wall. If only a looking glass could tell stories of what it's seen, I'm certain this one would contain a best seller or two. A few steps away into the front dining room, there's a chandelier made with vintage glass ornaments that hangs over a huge round wooden table set for eight, patiently waiting for guests' arrival. I want to know the stories of *everything*.

Of all the lavishly decorated rooms in the house, Hoover's favorite is the front parlor. "Right near the piano, there's a big energy vortex there—just turn up the music and dance dance dance!" Hoover likes to start her day with dancing whenever possible. I can easily imagine a group of flappers doing a frenzied Charleston to ragtime tunes amid the whimsical opulence of the room. A fête Gatsby himself would attend.

Hoover acquires items that speak to her. **"**They're just sitting around waiting to be reanimated and this house is good at breathing life into people and things," she says, noting that sometimes these are things that most people would overlook. For example, her collection of 200 plastic vintage school lunch trays came in handy at a beautiful dinner party she threw last April for an art collective. Many of her prized possessions were bought twenty years ago, but they found the perfect home in Wonderland—including the unicorn skull found near a waterfall in Abita Springs, Louisiana, by a friend actually named Alicein Wonderland. And then there are the items that came with the house: treasures found in the attic, antique Mardi Gras costumes found in armoires, benches that are now scattered around the house.

If Hoover were forced to leave and could only save a few things (not unthinkable, considering it's hurricane season), she says she'd grab her antique jewelry collection and something less expected: the collection of party invitations she's created over the past twenty-five years. Each invitation is an individually crafted work of art, whether it's an old 45 with details printed and pasted on the center, or a Mardi Gras invitation on a bead medallion.

Joi Brozek lives in the Faubourg Marigny of New Orleans, where she resides in a Creole Cottage on a street formerly known as Rue D'Amour. Find her at joibrozek.com and @joidarling on Instagram.

Surprisingly, Hoover vows she'd be content leaving her priceless antiques behind. "All of these things want to be in this house. Everything is supposed to be here," she says. And when something no longer fits? She has yard sales or she just sets things on the sidewalk with a sign "free to a good home," because sometimes the house is "kicking things out."

Even the most devout Luddite has her limits. When asked what modern convenience she couldn't do without, she pauses. "I do like that it's cool in the house," she admits, though "sometimes I toy with the idea of opening the transoms and doors the way they used to do." We quickly brainstorm how to live without AC. "I'd have to get rid of the velvet chairs and replace them with cane-bottomed ones," she says. How about life without electricity? "I think I could do it," she says, mentioning that sometimes in the winter she lights the home with just gas lamps.

Fairy-Tale Home

Alice in Wonderland has always held strong appeal to Hoover since she read it as a child. "You put your brain in a maze and see what comes out." Over the years, she's acquired more than 300 copies of the story. She doesn't, however, take credit for naming her home Wonderland.

"I never had thought about calling a house Wonderland, *never*!" she swears.

She gives that credit to her good friend, actor Tony Crane, who was in New Orleans on tour for a theater production while she was buying the house and decided it needed a name. "Two months later, Tony sent me a beautiful sign he'd had made with the word *Wonderland* hand-painted amidst vines in Victorian scroll work. 'This is what the name should be,' he told me." She admits she was hesitant, thinking that it would be "a lot for a house to live up to," but then she realized the name would encourage everyone's "mind-set to go into a happy place right away."

The house itself finally had decided on its own name at the age of 130, and it was eager to set out on its second or third life with a series of celebrations, embracing Hoover's desire to let "happy revelers unite!"

"It's a beautiful thing when people convene together in this space," she says. "That's all I want to do—bring people together by opening my house."

When asked to describe her ideal party, Hoover can barely contain her excitement. "On Mardi Gras day we'd set up 100-foot tables intersecting on Royal and Desire and serve a feast." Afterward, guests would come into the house to find playful interactive performances. "It would have an *Alice in Wonderland* theme. People might encounter the Mock Turtle crying over the soup out in the backyard or huge flowers coming to life in the front."

An artist herself, Hoover encourages residencies at Wonderland. "I open it to artists and musicians who are coming through town." If they're doing a project that appeals to her, she lets them stay at the house. She also offers these same artists reduced rent for extended stays in her guesthouse on the property. They pay what they can afford and determine how long they need to stay. Her generosity seems boundless, but it's clear her love of art, revelry, and lifelong friendships fuels her fire.

A New Orleans Wonderland

by Joi Brozek

A WONDERLAND DIY PROJECT:
My Mother's Whimsical Chandelier

- Scour the thrift stores and lighting departments for the largest chandelier, with the most tiers that you can find. The actual look of the chandelier is not important, just the structure.
- Once you have the chandelier, have it professionally installed and hang it using a chain with large links.
- Pull from the attic, basement, or storage space all the solid-color Christmas bulbs from Christmases past. Hunt for more throughout the year at thrift stores and sales. Choose colors that make you happy and use bulbs in those colors only.
- Be sure each bulb has its own hanging wire hook attached, or add a new one.
- Starting at the tippy top of the chain, with the link closest to the ceiling, attach the wire hooks through each link of the chain. Put as many through each link as possible. I use about six bulbs per link.
- Continue this all the way down the chain to the top of the chandelier.
- Fill each arm of the chandelier completely with bulbs. You'll be surprised at how many you can get on one arm. Sometimes I've been able to fit up to fifty on each arm!
- Some bulbs are sure to break while you're doing this project. Each time one does, close your eyes and make a happy wish!
- Use low-wattage bulbs and vintage chandelier shades from thrift stores or new ones that you can decorate with dye, paint, fringe, and trim.

Hoover can bring a little bit of Wonderland to your house or event, too. Check out yourpureimagination.com.

PRESERVED TIMEPIECE

Considering the way Hoover honors the past, it's no wonder that she also cherishes the present and future. Fulfilling the final wishes of her mentor, Stewart Unger, who owned an antique and antique-inspired watch store called Time Will Tell in New York City, she is carrying on his vision, producing his spirited designs as TimeWillTell Watches. The watches are color matched to objects from the past like Bakelite jewelry, vintage pottery, antique glassware, and old fabrics.

The fascination with timepieces came at an early age for Hoover. "When I was a child, my mother had a little antique shop, and I'd always borrow the watches," she recalls. A watch is more than just a unique piece of jewelry, she says. "You can use it as a game," she insists, to manipulate time. "You can try to slow time down. Say you have only twenty-four hours with your lover—you can stretch that time out." And conversely, you can speed up those less desirable occasions. "I look at it as an energy-charged tool. You can bend it to your will, because what do we have really? Perception."

Hoover's watches can be found in shops all across the world these days, as well as at her online store, timewilltellwatches.com.

Gentle Pressure

The Art of Flower Pressing

with Karima Cammell

In 1847, Parisian artist and satirist J.J. Grandville explored the flower-fairy world in his final book, *Les Fleurs Animées,* or *The Flowers Personified*. Among the blossoms he whimsically cataloged are the regal lily, the pensive pansy, and the heartless camellia, each bursting with personality. But there's an interloper in the garden. The meek *giroflée* (known in English as the wallflower) has been kidnapped by a crazed collector, and he's already pressed the periwinkle!

We have to assume that Grandville had tongue firmly in cheek when he pictured these floral purloinings. After all, he must have picked a few flowers himself while preparing this masterpiece of a flower-fairy field guide.

Far from a madman's habit, flower collecting can be a lovely pastime, one that helps you stay calm amid the commotion of life. It can also help you develop a seasonal relationship with nature. You'll learn which flowers and other plants grow near you, and over time, you'll share in the wonder of observing each plant throughout the stages of its life cycle.

Collected flowers can adorn your hair or clothing, or be given to a loved one. To preserve blooms or even entire plants for artistic projects or later study, try constructing and using this simple flower press.

GIROFLÉE

Materials

Drill with 5/16-inch drill bit

2 plywood boards (3/8-inch thick, cut to 12 x 19 inches)

16 sheets of blotting paper (cut to 12 x 19 inches)

9 pieces of corrugated cardboard (cut to 12 x 19 inches)—recycle panels of old boxes if possible

4 carriage bolts (4 inches long by 1/4-inch wide)

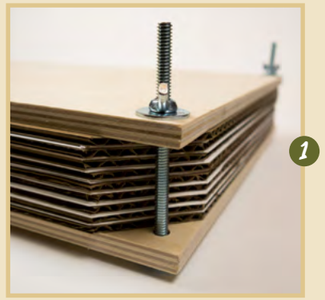
4 wingnuts (1/4-inch)

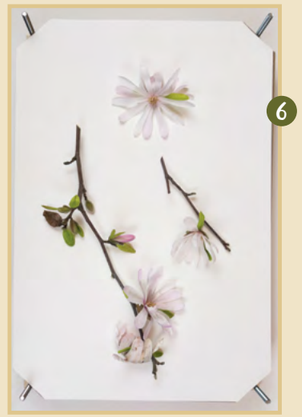
8 flat washers (with 5/16-inch hole)

TIP: Match and test your hardware at the shop to keep from accidentally buying a piece that doesn't fit the others.

Building the Flower Press

1. Place a washer at each corner of your boards and mark an *x* in its center hole to position your drill. If possible, clamp your two boards together and drill both at once. This gives your press better alignment than if you drill them independently of each other.
2. Cut the corners off your cardboard and blotter sheets to allow room for the bolts.
3. Build the layers of your press: one board, then cardboard layers with two sheets of blotting paper between each layer of cardboard, then the second board on top. The corrugations in the cardboard allow air to circulate through the press, carrying away water and drying the plants.
4. Assemble the bolts with the washers against the wood—one under each bolt head and one under each wing nut.
5. You may want to decoupage imagery onto your press to personalize it. I used a Grandville print, but you can decorate yours however feels right.
6. Gather specimens and press them by disassembling the press and layering the plants between the pairs of blotting paper, reassembling as you go and then tightening the screws.
7. Once you've filled your press, stand it on edge and set it in a warm, dry place where it won't be disturbed. Allow one to three weeks for complete drying.





Creative Uses for Pressed Flowers and Plants

- Pressed plants can be mounted on paper by taping them down with glued paper strips. You can also sew plants in place using waxed linen thread, or gently lay the dried plants on a tray coated with a thin layer of glue, then lift them out and press them onto the page.
- Create an herbarium of mounted specimens from your garden, either as framed plates or in a large journal. Note the scientific and common names for each on a card, including the date and location of collection and other observations. Dried seeds from the plant can be kept in a glassine envelope affixed to the front or back of the plate.
- Use the folklore found in *The Language of Flowers* to send secret messages on notecards or in arrangements of dried flowers.
- Mount pressed flowers between sheets of glass or mica using small dots of glue. (Fabri-Tac glue dries fast and is nearly invisible between the glass.) Frame the glass with copper tape or gold Dresden trim. Include a wire or thread loop in the frame to allow for hanging. Tie a piece of ribbon through the loop and hang your framed flowers in a window as a sun catcher.
- Let your imagination run wild as you paint your life with petals!

Tips

- Collect only a few of any one plant—leave some for nature!
- The fairies protect the wild from overharvesting by making some plants irritating to the touch, either through prickles or rash-causing oils. Know what you're picking before you collect, and understand the risks.
- When pressing particularly damp or fleshy specimens, you may need to open the press to check for mold or change out the blotting papers one or more times during drying.
- Change out any blotting papers that show signs of mold.
- Living blooms are delicate things, dried blooms even more so. Handle brittle specimens with care, using tweezers to lift particularly fragile dried plants from the paper.
- Acid can alter pigments, so use acid-free glue and paper when mounting dried plants.
- Mounting framed plants under UV-protective glass will help them maintain their colors.

Karima Cammell is an artist and author. Her latest book, The Troll Cookbook, *is a guide to living in harmony with the natural world. She is the founder and owner of Castle in the Air, a studio for the imagination dedicated to the artistic spirit. Her work can be found at castleintheair.biz.*

Let your imagination run wild as you paint your life with petals!

MATERIALS

2 skeins .88oz/100g balls (each 76.5yd/100m) of Noro Kureyon Air (100% Merino) in color 263.
Or any bulky weight yarn that meets gauge.
Approx 1 yd. of thinner yarn in matching color for seaming hem of hood.
Size 11 (8.0mm) needle, or size to obtain gauge.
Additional needle for 3-needle bind off.
Darning needle.
5/8" button.

SIZES

One size

FINISHED MEASUREMENTS

19" circumference at neck, 28" circumference at top, 17 ¼" length.

GAUGE

10 sts x 14 rows = 4" in Stockinette Stitch

ABBREVIATIONS

K: Knit.
K2tog: Knit 2 sts together.
M1: Make a stitch by inserting the left needle into the horizontal strand between the last stitch worked and the next stitch on the left needle from front to back, knit through the back loop to create a twisted stitch.
P: Purl.
Rep: Repeat.
RS: Right side.
St(s): Stitch(es).
WS: Wrong side.
YO: Yarn over.

TECHNIQUE

3-needle bind off: With the right side of the two pieces facing and the needles parallel, insert a third needle into the first stitch on each needle and knit them together. Knit the next two stitches the same way. Slip the first stitch on the third needle over the second stitch and off the needle. Repeat for three-needle bind-off.

NOTES

There is no need to work a buttonhole, as stitches are big and wool will stretch to pull button through.

HOOD

Cast on 80 sts.
Row 1(RS): K2, *k1, p4; rep from * to last 3 sts, k3.
Row 2: K2, p1, *k4, p1; rep from * to last 2 sts, k2.
Repeat rows 1 and 2 once more.
Decrease on next RS row as follows: K2, *k1, p1, p2tog, p1; rep from * to last 3 sts, k3. 65 sts remain.
Next row (WS): K2, p1, *k3, p1; rep from * to last 2 sts, k2.
Next row (RS): K2, *k1, p3; rep from * to last 3 sts, k3.
Work next WS row even as established.
Decrease on next RS row as follows: K2, *k1, p1, p2tog; rep from * to last 3 sts, k3. 50 sts remain.
Next row (WS): K2, p1, *k2, p1; repeat from * to last 2 sts, k2.
Next row (RS): K2, *k1, p2; rep from * to last 3 sts, k3.
Work even for 3 rows more.
Decrease on next RS row as follows: K2, *k1, p2tog; rep from * to last 3 sts, k3. 35 sts remain.
Next row (WS): K2, p1, *k1, p1; rep from * to last 2 sts, k2.
Next row (RS): K2, *k1, p1; rep from * to last 3 sts, k3.
Work even for 3 rows more.
Increase 11 sts on next RS row as follows: K2, M1, *k3, M1; rep from * to last 3 sts, k3. 46 sts remain.
Next row (WS): K2, purl to last 2 sts, k2.
Next row (RS): Knit.
Work next WS row even as established.
Begin front hood increases on next RS row as follows: K2, yo, knit to last 2 sts, yo, k2. 2 sts increased.
Next row (WS): K2, purl to last 2 sts, k2.
Repeat last 2 rows 9 times more. 66 sts remain.
Work even, maintaining 2 st garter edge, for 24 rows.

FINISHING

Divide sts evenly and fold hood with WS facing out. Using spare needle, work 3-needle bind off. Darn ends. Fold garter edge to inside and, using thinner yarn and darning needle, sew hem starting from first YO increase row at left side and ending at first YO increase row on right side. Sew button to right side, just above collar, on garter edge.

Lisa Hoffman's knitting designs can be seen in Vogue Knitting, Interweave Knits, Knitwear Magazines, Alice Hoffman's Survival Lessons, *and many other publications. She currently teaches at String in New York City.*

Find photographer Jennifer Ilene at jenniferilenephotography.com.

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