

FAERIE MAGAZINE

ISSUE NO.

41

WINTER 2017

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I'm thrilled to present our latest issue to you—medieval-themed, glowing with illuminations, with all kinds of holiday loveliness sprinkled throughout. I've wanted to do a medieval issue for a while and had long imagined the cover: Dante Alighieri's Beatrice with her face tilted to heaven, awash in divine light, as imagined by another Dante, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, centuries later. When, a few months ago, I stood in Steve Parke's Baltimore studio watching this painting come to life ... it was probably the definition of enchantment, or at the very least a dream come true. If only all of life were like the inside of a Rossetti painting! Twenty years ago, when I was busily studying both Dantes in graduate school, I never would have imagined I might one day inhabit the *Beata Beatrix*, if only for a couple of hours.

I hope this issue brings a bit of that medieval magic to you as well, and transports you to other times and places, in their most idealized, ultra-romantic forms. Knights and ladies, virgins and unicorns, herb-growing monks and nuns, poetry-reciting troubadours, fierce rebels with names like Joan and Eleanor, and that love Dante had for his doomed Beatrice, so massive that he vowed, at the end of his mournful *La Vita Nuova*, to write for her "that which has never been written about any woman." What he wrote was the *Divine Comedy*, where he places her in heaven, among the petals of a giant, radiant rose, surrounded by the gleaming souls of the blessed—a gesture more than worthy of any love-struck knight, not to mention the cover of *Faerie Magazine*.

This issue also brings some of the sheer beauty and drama of the Middle Ages to you—in the sweeping, jewel-toned designs from *Game of Thrones* and the Seamstress of Rohan, in the dazzle of the Unicorn Tapestries ... a few feet from which you can inhabit a lovingly cultivated medieval cloister garden right in the middle of New York City. Isn't it amazing that these pockets that defy time and space exist—in a Baltimore studio, in a New York City garden? I hope this issue will be a portal for you, too, and at the same time wish you a most enchanted holiday season, in the here and now.

Love,

Carolyn Turgeon



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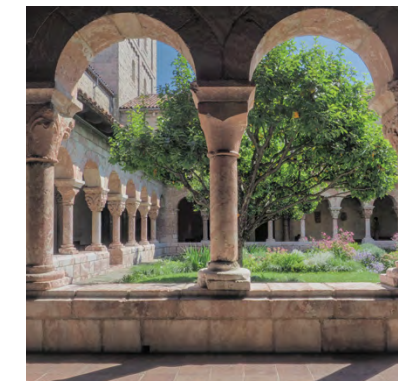
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Faerie Magazine's Medieval Issue



Rona Berg

Editor-in-Chief of Organic Spa Media, Rona Berg is the former editorial director of *Elle*, deputy lifestyle editor and beauty columnist for the *New York Times Magazine* and best-selling author of *Beauty: The New Basics* and *Fast Beauty: 1000 Quick Fixes*. Berg has been cited as an industry expert by *New York* magazine and was called the “Russell Simmons of the Wellness Industry” by the *Huffington Post*. Working on “Medieval Beauty” for *Faerie* was “a different type of writing,” she says, “that expanded my heart and mind. As much as beauty ideals change through the ages, what’s remarkable is how much they stay the same.”



Brian and Wendy Froud

Brian and Wendy Froud are artists and designers who have worked on the iconic films *Dark Crystal* and *Labyrinth*. Brian created the seminal book *Faeries* with Alan Lee. Brian and Wendy have together and separately produced more than thirty books and have art in collections all over the world. For this issue, Wendy shared their winter holiday traditions. “Medieval and fairy celebrations are a big part of our lives,” she says, “and it’s lovely to be able to share them with a wider audience. Brian and I hope to eventually produce a book of fairy feasts and celebrations—just as soon as our world calms down enough to concentrate on it!”



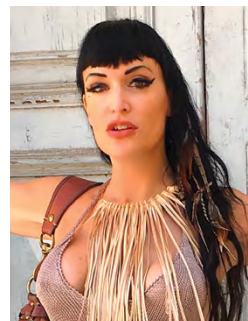
Jill Gleeson

Jill Gleeson is a travel writer and memoirist who writes about her adventures in a bi-monthly column on the *Woman’s Day* website and for her own blog, gleesonreboots.com. She is *Faerie Magazine’s* travel editor. For this issue, she was utterly seduced by the Cloisters gardens. “I admit a particular fascination with the gardens’ magical thorn apple plant,” she says, “though I have yet to use it to fly like the witches of old.” Jill has long loved the art of illumination, but it wasn’t until interviewing Tania Crossingham that she understood why. “My Christmas wish list now includes one of Crossingham’s remarkable illuminated pieces.”



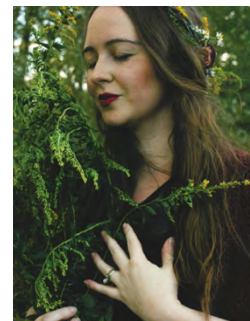
John Matthews

John Matthews is the author of more than a hundred books on mythology, spirituality, and fiction. He is a world-renowned expert on the Arthurian legends, wrote a best-selling book on pirates, teaches shamanism worldwide, and has acted as a historical adviser on several Hollywood blockbusters. His latest book is *Arthurian Magic*, written with his wife, Caitlin Matthews, and Virginia Chandler (Llewellyn 2017). Writing for this issue about the Arthurian stories, he says, “I heard the call of Arthur at age fifteen and have followed it ever since. I find the myths and stories of Arthur and his knights offer the deepest wisdom of anything I have found.”



Veronica Varlow

Veronica Varlow is a real-life Love Witch and international burlesque queen, not to mention our Autumn 2017 cover model. She guides women to unearth their raw instinctual magic in her retreats in Woodstock, New York, and internationally, and has been featured on the *Tonight Show*, *Playboy*, *Bravo*, *CNN*, and *MTV*. “I’m over the moon to be a part of the *Faerie Magazine* family with my new regular column ‘Life of a Love Witch,’” she says. “In my column, I’ll explore magic traditions passed down in my family, old and new rituals, divination, and my very own love magic!”



Guinevere von Sneeden

Guinevere von Sneeden is an illustrator and fiber artist who works out of a 17th century cottage in New England with her rabbits, poet husband, and new baby girl. A practitioner of herbal medicine, Guinevere uses herbal tea dyes in her art, inspired by the medicinal properties and stories behind those herbs. “For my work in this issue,” she says, “I drew inspiration from numerous medieval gold-leaf illustrations and illuminated manuscripts to capture the period’s symbolically rich iconography and tone.” Her charming watercolors were featured in the Spring 2016 issue of *Faerie Magazine* and have decorated many issues since.



Allen Crawford, author of *Whitman Illuminated: Song of Myself* (and, under his pseudonym, Lord Breaulove Swells Whimsy, *The Affected Provincial’s Companion, Volume One*), has had a passion for heraldry for almost forty years. He specializes in making emblems, badges, sigils, seals, bookplates, coats of arms, and flags. “When designing traditional coats of arms,” he says, “I obey the principles of good heraldic design: proper usage of colors, simplicity of imagery, etc. My designs are bold and flat because they’re symbols, not pictures. They’re meant to be immediately recognized from a distance. That was their original purpose back in the Middle Ages.”

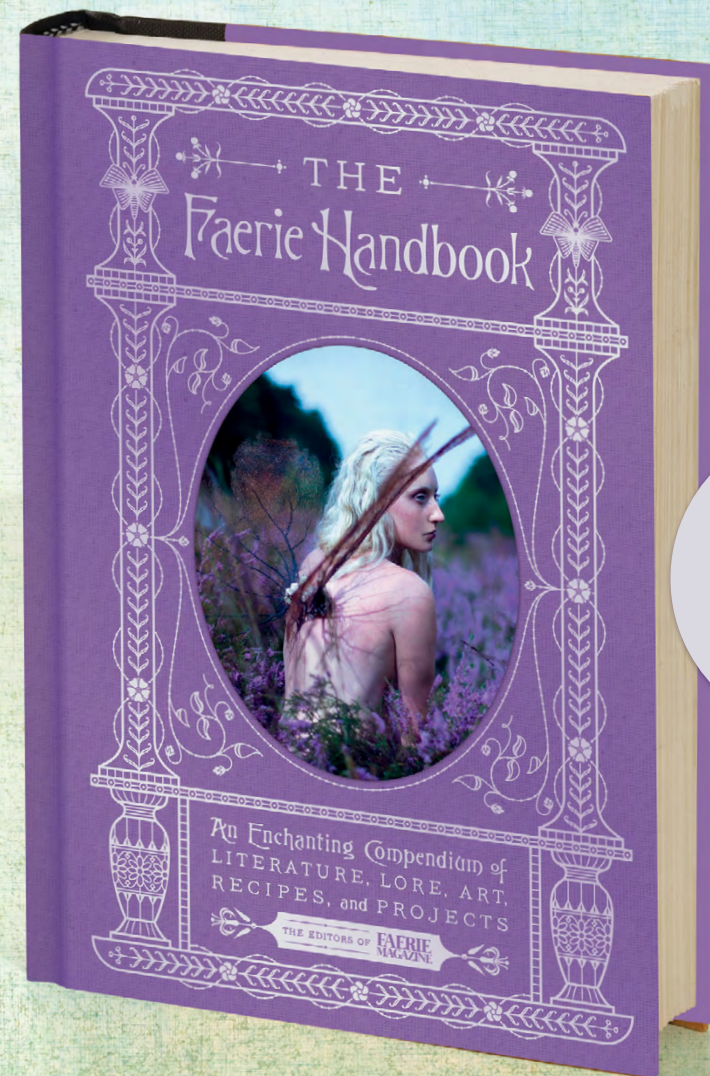


Illustration by Guinevere von Sneeden



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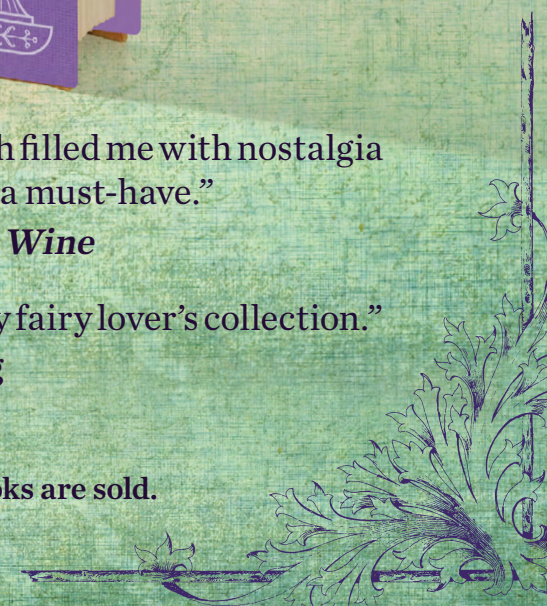
— Elizabeth Sherman, *Food & Wine*

“This handbook is a must read and should be in every fairy lover’s collection.”

— The Luminescence Blog

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Beata Beatrix

by Grace Nuth

Photography by Steve Parke

She sits, back slumped in a way that indicates she is oblivious of our gaze or the propriety of Victorian times. Her russet hair glowing in a nimbus around her head, her eyes are almost but not quite entirely closed, and her lips slightly part in an expression of tranced ecstasy. Her hands lay limp in her lap, palms up to receive a poppy flower dropped into their waiting hollows by a dove flying next to her. This painting by Dante Gabriel Rossetti of his beloved, deceased wife Elizabeth Siddal is not entirely dissimilar to similar artworks of Christ praying, his face upturned toward heaven. But the title, and the subject, honors a different individual: *Beata Beatrix*, the painting is called, and it was named for the woman whom medieval poet Dante Alighieri loved and immortalized in his *La Vita Nuova* and *Divine Comedy* in the late 13th and early 14th centuries.

The ghost of Dante's influence followed the famed Victorian artist Rossetti. His father was an Italian immigrant and Dante scholar who named his son for the Italian writer (and who argued vehemently that Dante's works were full of hidden, esoteric codes and meanings). And Rossetti's famous portrait of his wife Lizzie as Beatrice was only one of many paintings he created that were inspired by the life and writings of Dante. Although *Beata Beatrix* is not Rossetti's only Dantean painting, it is arguably his most famous and most important.



Model: Melissa Wimbish Hair and Makeup: Nikki Verdecchia/NV Salon Collective

Wardrobe: Assembled by Trinket's Costume and Sundry Backdrop: Painted by Nichole Holcombe Leavy

Rossetti first met his wife when she was “discovered” while working in a hat shop by his artist friend Walter Deverell. She modeled for Rossetti many times, and the two were very soon enamored of each other, but Rossetti, who adored her but had a wandering eye for beauty, only agreed to marry her when she fell ill and almost died. Soon after, Lizzie gave birth to a stillborn baby and developed an addiction to the numbing properties of laudanum. She passed away of an overdose just two years after marrying Rossetti, and he was inconsolable—so inconsolable that he dramatically tossed a manuscript of his poetry in the coffin with her, then retrieved it some years later in a more sober state.

Throughout their relationship, Rossetti had a tendency to idealize Lizzie: to set her on a pedestal, treating her as a goddess instead of mortal. The love of poet Dante for his beloved Beatrice was a perfect metaphor to Rossetti for his relationship to Lizzie. Dante also loved Beatrice from afar, saying in *La Vita Nuova* that she was “a deity stronger than I; who coming, shall rule over me.” Lizzie’s death in the flush of her young life just solidified this comparison for Rossetti: Beatrice also passed away at the young age of twenty-four.

Rossetti created this painting as a symbol of all his undying adoration of his wife, casting her in the light of a deity, lost in ecstatic trance, surrounded by symbols and glowing in the light of a heavenly beam that seems to fall directly behind her. All of Rossetti’s grief, set into every brushstroke, makes the painting imbued with so much emotion, the viewer is often overcome upon viewing it. When I first saw *Beata Beatrix* in an exhibition at the National Gallery of Art five years ago, I was instantly overcome. In this incredible exhibit full of iconic images of the Pre-Raphaelite art movement, surrounded by such famous paintings as Millais’s *Ophelia*, William Morris’s portrait of his wife, *La Belle Iseult*, and Burne-Jones’s *Laus Veneris*, it was only

Beata Beatrix that made me burst into tears so passionate I fear I scared a pair of security guards in the room and had to sit for a moment to compose myself.

Beata Beatrix is also incredibly important in the overall story of Rossetti’s career. It was this painting that began a new style of art for him, for which he is best known: large canvas portraits worshipping the beauty of woman with one central figure, usually painted waist-up, surrounded by symbols, painted in lush and vibrant colors, cupid-bow lips swelling in sensual provocation. His earlier work was mostly grouped figures, retelling Arthurian legends, Dante’s poetry, or religious stories. *Beata Beatrix*, simultaneously religious and sensuous, intimate and metaphorical, represents the transition to this new style.

Ultimately, although this poem, written by Rossetti’s sister Christina, has been interpreted as representing several of the model muses Rossetti painted over the years, it is *Beata Beatrix* I think of when I read her words:

*One face looks out from all his canvases,
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:
We found her hidden just behind those screens,
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,
A saint, an angel—every canvas means
The same one meaning, neither more or less.
He feeds upon her face by day and night,
And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.*

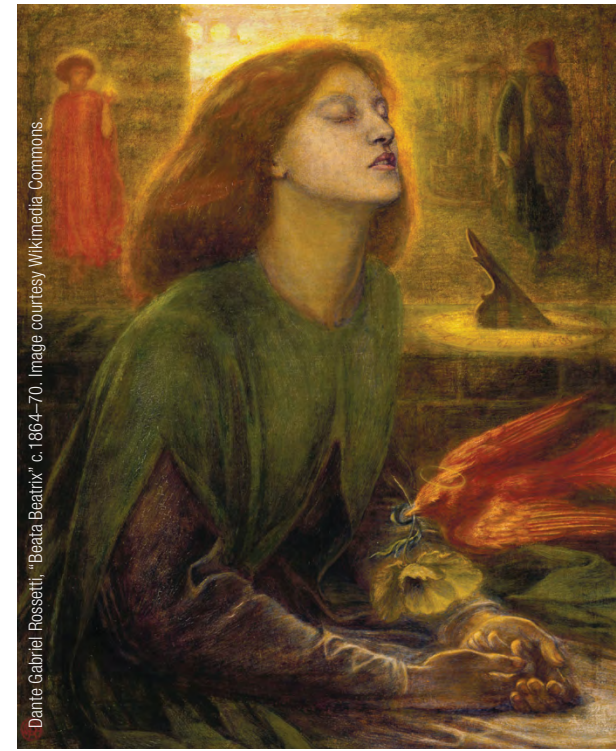
BEHIND THE SCENES

It was photo editor Steve Parke who pulled off our *Beata Beatrix* recreation in his Baltimore studio—enlisting local opera singer (and frontwoman for The Outcalls) Melissa Wimbish to stand in for Beatrice/Lizzie, going to local costumer Trinket’s Costume and Sundry for appropriate wardrobe, and tapping local artist Nichole Holcombe Leavy to paint the stunning backdrop of the painting, including Dante Alighieri himself.

Speaking of the last task, Leavy says, “It was the quality of the light and the gorgeous glow of the colors in the original that I was interested in re-creating. To achieve the look of an oil painting with acrylic paints, I used very saturated colors and applied them in thin layers. It’s easy

to get mired in detail when working on a large piece, so it’s important to step back and remember that the backdrop is there to add atmosphere and enhance—not compete—with the model.”

Parke took all these elements and pulled them together to create the final image. His biggest challenge, he says, was to use the correct lighting, subtle enough to give a painterly feel to the photo but dramatic and intense enough to convey the subject matter of the painting: the divine glow lighting Beatrice’s face as she communes with God (also enhanced with golden touches from makeup artist Nikki Verdecchia). The result? Being on set was like stepping into the painting itself—an enchanting experience for everyone.



DANTE’S VISION OF AMOR AND BEATRICE

My oil painting (above, bottom) is based on a passage from *La Vita Nuova*, in which the poet Dante unwinds the story of his love for Beatrice within the context of the evolution of his poetry. When I first read the book, I was particularly struck by Dante’s nighttime dream-vision of the god Amor, who appeared to Dante holding both the poet’s heart and his beloved Beatrice while surrounded by flames. At the time, I thought it was one of the most intensely romantic things I’d ever read! Years later, I recalled the story when I was planning my art for The Lover’s Path Tarot, and was inspired to finally paint it at last. —Kris Waldherr

Learn more about Steve Parke at steveparke.com.
Visit Melissa Wimbish online at melissawimbish.com.
Find NV Salon Collective at nvsalonco.com.
Visit Trinket’s Costume and Sundry at trinketcostumes.com.
See more of Nichole Holcombe Leavy at nicholeleavy.com.

Medieval Recipes

Medieval cooking is rife with fragrant, exotic spices, which became more and more accessible during the times of the Crusades and the international trade they ushered in. All those spices conveniently camouflaged unsavory flavors and odors too, which was a boon to medieval kitchens. The three recipes here make abundant use of spices beloved in the Middle Ages—especially cinnamon, which was a status symbol for those European nobles rich enough to snag it from Arab traders. Plus, who doesn't love cinnamon and clove during the holidays?



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

Garlic Tart

The original recipe includes pancetta, which you can add in for more savory taste. This version is somewhere between sweet and savory, and best for your more adventurous, garlic-loving guests. Serve a thin slice at your next holiday feast for an unusual, decadent appetizer—with an undeniably medieval flair.



Sweet Tart With Chickpea Filling

Served as a dessert or an afternoon snack, this rich, spice-laden tart is perfect for the holidays. The pureed chickpeas make a nice paste for the filling, adding texture more than flavor, and the rosewater makes it extra fragrant and festive.

Sweet Tart With Chickpea Filling

for a 10-inch tart pan

For the crust:

2 cups flour
1 stick and 1 tbsp. unsalted butter,
chilled
½ cup and 2 tbsp. ice water
pinch of salt

To finish:

1 tbsp. rosewater
1 tbsp. sugar

For the filling:

2 cups cooked chickpeas
1 egg
⅔ cup sugar
4 dried figs
½ cup raisins
½ cup almonds
¼ cup pine nuts
2 tbsp. rosewater
3 tsp. ground cinnamon
2 tsp. ground ginger
pinch of salt

In the bowl of a food processor, combine flour and salt. Cut butter in small chunks, add it to the mixture and process until it resembles coarse meal, 8 to 10 seconds.

With machine running, add water in a slow, steady stream. Pulse until dough holds together without being sticky; be careful not to process more than 30 seconds. If it is still crumbly, add more water, a few drops at a time.

Shape dough into a ball, flatten it out to a disk and wrap in plastic. Transfer to the refrigerator and chill at least 45 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Meanwhile prepare the filling: Place cooked chickpeas in a food processor and puree them. Add sugar, egg, spices, salt, rosewater, and coarsely chopped dried fruit. Mix well and set aside.

Remove the dough from the refrigerator and place on a lightly floured surface. Let it sit for 5 to 10

minutes so that it becomes easier to roll it out. Using about two-thirds of it, roll it out to a circle about ⅛ inch thick.

Place it onto the lightly greased tart pan, pressing gently to fit, then scoop the filling into the tart shell and even it out using a spoon.

Roll out the remaining dough, and using a pastry wheel or sharp knife cut it into 16 to 20 strips. Lay half of the strips across the filling and arrange the other half diagonally across the first ones to form a lattice. Trim edges of all strips to fit into the pan.

Bake the tart for about 45 minutes, then sprinkle the top with additional sugar and drops of rosewater, then finish baking for another 5 to 10 minutes, until the crust is golden brown. Let the tart sit in the pan on a rack for 10 minutes, then remove it and cool completely.

Spicy Pomegranate Drink

for 6 people

1½ cups water
1 cup sugar
½ tsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. nutmeg
⅓ tsp. ginger
4 whole cloves
1 lemon
1 quart freshly squeezed pomegranate juice

In a large pot, combine water, sugar, and all spices. Bring to boil and let simmer for about 8 minutes. Turn off the heat, and remove cloves.

Grate the peel of the lemon and reserve it. Squeeze the juice and

add it to the water mixture along with the pomegranate juice.

Bring to boil again and simmer for 2 minutes.

Serve warm with a garnish of grated lemon peel for each glass or serve cold with a slice of lemon.

Garlic Tart

for a 9-inch tart pan

For the crust:

2 cups flour
1 stick and 1 tbsp. unsalted
butter, chilled
½ cup and 2 tbsp. ice water
pinch of salt

For the filling:

2 cups ricotta cheese, drained
⅔ cup raisins
5 garlic heads
3 eggs
10–15 saffron threads
1 tsp. nutmeg
1 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. dried ginger
½ tsp. ground cloves
salt and pepper to taste

In the bowl of a food processor, combine flour and salt. Cut butter in small chunks, add it to the mixture, and process until it resembles coarse meal, 8 to 10 seconds.

With machine running, add water in a slow, steady stream. Pulse until dough holds together without being sticky; be careful not to process more than 30 seconds. If it is still crumbly, add more water, a few drops at a time.

Shape dough into a ball, flatten it out to a disk, and wrap in plastic. Transfer to the refrigerator and chill at least 45 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Meanwhile prepare the filling: Peel garlic heads and boil in hot water for 15 minutes. Drain and let cool off. Puree garlic in a food processor, then add ricotta cheese, eggs, and spices. Mix well until everything is combined and the mixture is smooth.

Remove the dough from the refrigerator and place on a lightly floured surface. Let it sit for 5 to 10 minutes so that it becomes easier to roll it out. Cut in half, and roll out two circles about ⅛ inch thick.

Place one of them onto the lightly greased tart pan, pressing gently to fit, then scoop the filling into the tart shell and even it out using a spoon. Cover the shell with the other disk and seal the edges, pressing gently with your fingers.

Bake for about 45 to 60 minutes, until the crust is golden brown. Let the tart sit in the pan on a rack for 10 minutes, then remove it and cool completely.

Recipes adapted from:

Fabulous Feasts: Medieval Cookery and Ceremony by Madeleine Pelner Cosman
Libro de Arte Coquinaria (The Art of Cooking) by Martino de Rossi

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/saraghedinaphotography.

Spicy Pomegranate Drink

A very festive, very spicy drink that can be served hot or cold. The hot version is similar to mulled wine; you can increase the effect by actually adding red wine to it, for an interesting medieval spin on a holiday favorite.





HYGGE

Bringing the Spirit of Medieval Winter to Modern Times

By Grace Nuth
Illustrations by Guinevere von Sneed

Temperatures so cold they cut through you when you open the front door. A barren landscape of monochrome shades. The winter months can be a battle. And right around the time that the weather really starts to get bitterly cold and the last of the faded colors of autumn disintegrate, the holidays with all their carols and charms come to an abrupt end, and we are left trying to survive the dreariest months of the year, isolated from friends, huddled under blankets with few holidays to look forward to or rituals to guide us.

The oppressiveness of winter's brutality is well known to the Danish people, who live in a land of snow and darkness for much of five months of each year. They survive, and indeed thrive, in this time of dim daylight and thick snowfall by embracing a concept they call *hygge* (pronounced *hyoo-guh*), a word with no English equivalent. It is defined as a cozy, convivial, and peaceful feeling that one can foster and embrace in the winter months.

This Scandinavian concept of *hygge* has been trendy for the past few years in America, especially during our increasingly extreme winters. And among the articles and blogs, books and social media posts about *hygge*, many of the tips and examples on how to embrace the warmth of winter involve a return to a simpler life—to candlelight and slow baking, gathering together with friends and taking walks in the winter landscape, in part so that one can enjoy the snuggle-down warmth of home's glow and frothy cocoa when one returns indoors. All concepts that seem positively ... medieval, in the best of ways.

The gathering-in of the harvest among medieval farmers and field workers meant it was finally time to celebrate, after many months of back-breaking work from dawn to dusk. Twelve, yes twelve, days of Christmas feasting were a time for communities to gather together and revel, enjoy the warmth of a fire or a magical tale, and share gifts with loved ones. After the Christmas season ended, after all, there were still tasks to be done that required many to set out in the bitter cold and fight against Father Winter to protect their livestock and livelihoods. It was the need to venture into the terrible winter that made it all the sweeter to cross the threshold of home.

Here are a few ideas for how to celebrate through medieval traditions that seem especially *hygge*-like.

THE BOY BISHOP

The rituals of the medieval winter holidays were sometimes inspired by pre-Christian tradition. For example, inversions of the norm were considered a witty and amusing winter holiday pastime. One of these role reversals was the choosing of a boy who would act as bishop in all rituals and processions for the Feast of the Holy Innocents on December 28. This topsy-turvy role reversal was sometimes a time of chaos and misrule, depending on the boy chosen.

The inversion of child and adult, innocence and experience, can also help us embrace winter through *hygge*. Build a blanket fort. Embrace chaos. Remember what it was like to be a child and grab your colored pencils and a coloring book.

Imagination is the cornerstone of childhood entertainment. Foster your own and you may forget all about the howling wind or Jack Frost tapping at the windows.

HOLLY AND IVY

The medieval holiday tradition of bringing evergreens indoors went beyond mere pretty decoration. The pre-Christian belief was that plants that stayed verdant and vibrant all winter long were symbols of rebirth and strength. Also, those who believed in fairies considered the gathering of evergreens and bedecking of the halls a way of welcoming the creatures in and offering them a safe place for the winter months.

Maybe you might not choose to leave your Christmas tree up until the last snowfall, perhaps you will. But there's no reason the lush decorations of the holiday season have to give way to complete stark nothingness on your mantel and countertops for the remainder of winter. Leave some green: Gather holly and ivy and replace them with more when they start to fade. Tuck away the ornaments and let the faux garland stay up a little longer. Buy house plants, or fresh flowers, another common tip to encourage *hygge*. Bring nature indoors and the fairies will thank you.

STORYTELLING



The idea of telling a story out loud, weaving a tapestry of tale, certainly is almost as old as mankind and does not originate in medieval times. But the storyteller was embraced by medieval society, and the telling of yarns and epics, adventures and eerie stories, was enjoyed by king and villager, in castle and tavern alike. Winter months were a time when the opportunity to lose oneself in a story was especially appealing, and the image of a bard or other skilled tale teller standing next to a roaring fire and engaging a captive audience is very easy to imagine.

Sadly today, storytelling is a fading art. What more *hygge* proposition could there be than to try to revive it among your friends and family? Gather everyone together and challenge each other to a storytelling contest. Or perhaps you could try your hand at a traveling tale: Each person has a minute to tell part of a story, and then the next person has to grab the thread and spin it from there.

Or if the idea of public speaking, even among friends, makes

you feel more anxious than cozy, perhaps choose a wonderful book, old or new, and read it out loud to someone else, even if that someone else listens while purring and meows in response.

NATURE WALKS

The everyday medieval individual had no choice as to whether or not they could call in sick to work and stay warm and cozy in bed. The harshness of life demanded they experience the raw winter whether they wanted to or not. But of course this meant that the return home to a crackling fire and pot of stew on the hearth was all the more welcome.

Go outside. Yes. It is ten degrees out there. Don't worry, you can bundle up in coats and mittens, hat and earmuffs. But go outside. Bring a pair of scissors or a small bag and look around your worn and haggard garden, sticks of black-eyed Susan stems poking up out of the white snow. The brown leaf fluttering across your backyard, one last remnant from autumn, is much more beautiful than you ever noticed back in October. Tuck it in a pocket. Take a clipping from that yew tree. Walk around your neighborhood and feel your nose start to grow numb as you see the glowing golden lights from the windows you pass. Then turn around and go back home. Stand for a moment and look at the warm glow from your own windows before you stomp off your snow boots, push open the door, and pour yourself a steaming hot mug of cocoa with whipped cream frothing from the brim. This is *hygge*. This is the magic of embracing a slow, cozy, intimate, and yes, medieval winter.



Grace Nuth is a writer, artist, and model living in central Ohio with her husband, black cat, and a garden full of fairies. She also co-wrote *The Faerie Handbook*. To follow her projects, please visit gracenuth.com.

There is an indisputable alchemy to the gardens that grace the Cloisters, the Metropolitan Museum of Art's magnificent repository for decorative arts, sculpture, and architecture dating primarily from the Romanesque and Gothic periods. After all, this is Manhattan—if the far most northerly stretches of it—one of the loudest, busiest, and most bustling slices of real estate on the planet. But although New York City may be bull's-eye for the movers and shakers of the world, in the gardens of the Cloisters all is serene. As you wander down the quiet paths, past plants wicked and welcoming, from deadly thornapple, with its extravagant leaves and funnel-shaped flowers, to sweet-smelling rue, blue-green like the sea, it might well seem as if by enchantment you've left modern life far behind.

The gardens—which number three, like Macbeth's weird sisters, or the cycles of life (birth, life, death), or even that which makes us human (mind, body, spirit)—undoubtedly benefit from the structures that rise around them. There are four cloisters, or covered, open-air walkways, each excavated primarily from medieval French abbeys and reassembled on the crest of a hill covering four acres in upper Manhattan. Part of Fort Tryon Park and overlooking the mighty Hudson River, with views to the New Jersey Palisades, the Cloisters is home to more than 2,000 artworks and architectural elements primarily dating from the 12th to 15th centuries. There are chapels and a hall, too, like the cloisters built during the Middle Ages in Europe, and it's all been integrated into a site imbued with the kind of peaceful solitude one imagines was endemic to medieval monasteries.

Workers tilled and seeded the ground from which the gardens would spring in 1938, the same year the Cloisters opened. The brainchild of John D. Rockefeller, who donated both the land on which the museum sits and the works that would form its early collection, the Cloisters was designed by Charles Collens. That is, save for the gardens, which were created by Cloisters curator Charles Rorimer, with help from Margaret Freeman. In the interests of veracity, they conducted grueling research into medieval plants, investigating how they were used, by whom, and what they represented symbolically. Freeman, who would rise through the Cloisters ranks from lecturer to curator and finally to director, grew so fascinated by the project she published the book *Herbs for the Medieval Household* in 1943.

After she retired in 1976, Freeman followed up with a monograph about what are perhaps the Cloisters' most beloved works. Entitled *The Unicorn Tapestries*, the book contains a chapter, "The Groves, the Flowery Fields, and the Gardens," concerning the flora depicted on the seven exquisite Gothic wall hangings that illustrate a hunt for the mythical one-horned equine. Most of the plants pictured on the tapestries were identified in the 1930s by New York Botanical Garden botanists E.J. Alexander and Carol Woodward. This allowed the museum's Trie Cloister garden to emulate the millefleur (with

Photography by Steve Parke



SECRET GARDENS

THE STORY BEHIND THE MEDIEVAL
LANDSCAPES OF THE CLOISTERS

by Jill Gleeson



a thousand flowers) style of *The Unicorn in Captivity* tapestry, using many of the same species found in it, such as roses, thistle, irises, lilies, and columbine. As Freeman wrote, “flowers strewn over the background” was a look “suggesting the flowery meadow that the people of the Middle Ages liked so much.”

Historically correct though the lush medieval paddock may be, it is not precisely artistically accurate. Art from the Middle Ages frequently favored idyllic, idealized scenes, and the Unicorn Tapestries are no exception. Plants with different bloom times, for example cherry trees and daffodils, are frequently shown at the height of fecundity together. Lead horticulturist Caleb Leech has found a way to make it work, however, by planting the garden so that something is always in flower or fruit, which helps give the space a bit of the fertile feel of *The Unicorn in Captivity* no matter the season. And so the Trie Cloister garden—wild, untamed, evoking the medieval passion for spring and its ecstatic, unruly growth—beautifully recalls the Middle Ages’ luxuriant landscapes even without the license that great art so often exhibits.

Says Leech, “The smaller gardens modeled after the medieval pleasure garden and millefleur garden tell a story that I believe is fundamental to understanding the importance of plants in the Middle Ages. Plants were not just raw materials for food and medicine and craft but were important also for our psychological well-being. This is important because people have a view of the European Middle Ages as a time when plants were only important if they served an immediate interest. I believe we have a greater tendency now to accord plants value according to whether we can eat them!”

The medieval pleasure garden Leech is referencing, dubbed the Judy Black Garden in the Cuxa Cloister, sits on the museum’s main floor. Cloisters surround the garth, open to the sky, into which the garden is tucked. This enclosed space is protected from the harshest weather by its rather ingenious proximity to the main chapel, much as how such a massive stone structure would have sheltered the garth and garden of an abbess during the Middle Ages.

Classically monastic in structure, the garden is quartered by two paths crossing each other. At the point where they intersect sits a circular fountain, representing the heavens. The quadrants, each planted with a thick patch of grass from which a crab-apple tree springs, symbolize such medieval concerns as the four humors, which were once believed to cause human behavior and emotion, and the four elements used in alchemy. A sensory experience rich in texture, fragrance, and color, the garden has been sown not only with medieval European plants, like sweet-smelling lavender, but also modern Asian and American species. Whether intended or not, this mingling of greenery from different continents and time periods is a tip of the hat to the evolution of those long-ago pleasure gardens into the ornamental gardens of today.

The meticulously planned and executed Cuxa Cloister garden is not only medieval in hardscape design and plantings but also in the way it is tended. For example, the crab-apple trees are pruned by the pollard method, which involves cutting back branches to within a few feet of the crown so that only a knobby end remains. From these knobs leafy shoots emerge in the spring, which grow to provide a uniformly dense, ball-like canopy. Devised in Europe during the Middle Ages to produce more kindling and livestock fodder, it is said to prolong the life of a tree.

According to *The Unicorn Tapestries*, even the loveliest flowers were almost always cultivated for more than their aesthetic appeal. Most medieval plants served dual purposes. “A large number of the plants in the Cloisters tapestries were undoubtedly chosen because of their symbolic significance,” wrote Freeman, “but almost all, to the medieval observer, would have been meaningful as well as beautiful. A plant might mean, among other things, that it would cure ‘worms in the belly’ (plantain), or ‘chaps that are in the seat’ (wallflower), ‘withdraw spots or pimples from the face’ (primrose) or ‘cause the hair to grow in used-up places’ (lily); it might make a good salad or be flavorful in a pudding (primrose, violet, rose), be a seasoning for ‘chickens in hocchee’ (sage), or an ingredient in a ‘green pickle for preserving fish’ (clary).”

It is within the borders of the Bonnefont Cloister Garden that the hardest working plants of the Middle Ages, some 300 of them, get their due. From the garden’s raised beds—like the space’s wattle fencing and wellhead, a structure often mentioned in medieval sources—grow what has been called one of the most specialized plant collections in the world, the foundation of which is based on several sources from the ninth century. They include an edict from emperor Charlemagne naming the eighty-nine plant species he wanted grown on his estate, and “Hortulus,” a medieval poem written by the monk Walahfrid Strabo, which describes the herbs he tended in his garden.

The Bonnefont Garden has been thematically divided into plots, with plants grouped according to what they were used for, including housekeeping, art, industry, medicine, sustenance, brewing, and magic. Here sprouts woad, madder, and weld, the three plants used to dye *The Unicorn in Captivity* its vibrant blue, red, and yellow shades. There grows powerful mandrake, used as anesthesia and what Leech calls “one of the most revered herbs.”

It is important to note, Leech adds, “that many, many of the plants cultivated in our gardens would have been wild-crafted in the Middle Ages. There was a recognition that many of those so-called humble native plants of the region were just as powerful medicine as the costly, exotic, luxury plant stuffs. Rather, the exclusivity associated with such things as ginger or black pepper made them more suitable as medicine for the affluent.”



Some plants, such as vervain, Saint-John's-wort, henbane, and plantain, served both medicinal and magical purposes. This is not surprising, since during the Middle Ages, as Leech says, "the distinction between magic and medicine was not always clear." Perhaps the most magical greenery found in the Bonnefont Garden belongs to the genus *Datura*, which consists of fifteen poisonous species, including the thorn apple (*Datura metel*), a powerful hallucinogenic used in witches' flying ointments.

The herb-paris, also grown in the Bonnefont Garden, was more benign; the spring-blooming plant was tucked in hats, purses, and hoods to bring luck in love. The yew, however, had both negative and positive connotations. As an evergreen it was considered a tree of life, and since it was believed to be protective it was grown in churchyards and doorways. But because the leaves of a yew tree as well as the seeds of its fruit were so poisonous, it also had darker associations. Meanwhile, alchemilla, also known as lady's mantle and also grown in Bonnefont, was big magic—and still is. Medieval alchemists thought the water drops that formed on its leaves were the liquid's purest form and so might make gold from base metals. Today, thanks to its astringent and anti-inflammatory properties, herbalists give lady's mantle to women to help regulate menstruation and strengthen the uterus. It's also good for sore throats when brewed in tea.

No matter what draws you to the Cloisters' gardens—be it to research into the proper plants from which to brew witchy potions, to peek at a landscape so enchanting it seems possible a unicorn might spring from it, or to reap the tranquility that comes from gazing at a green space that recalls the monastic love of plants beautiful in sight and fragrance—Leech hopes your first visit will be only the beginning. "Gardens are ephemeral by nature. It's never the same experience," he says. "We encourage people to come as often as possible to appreciate that ephemerality."

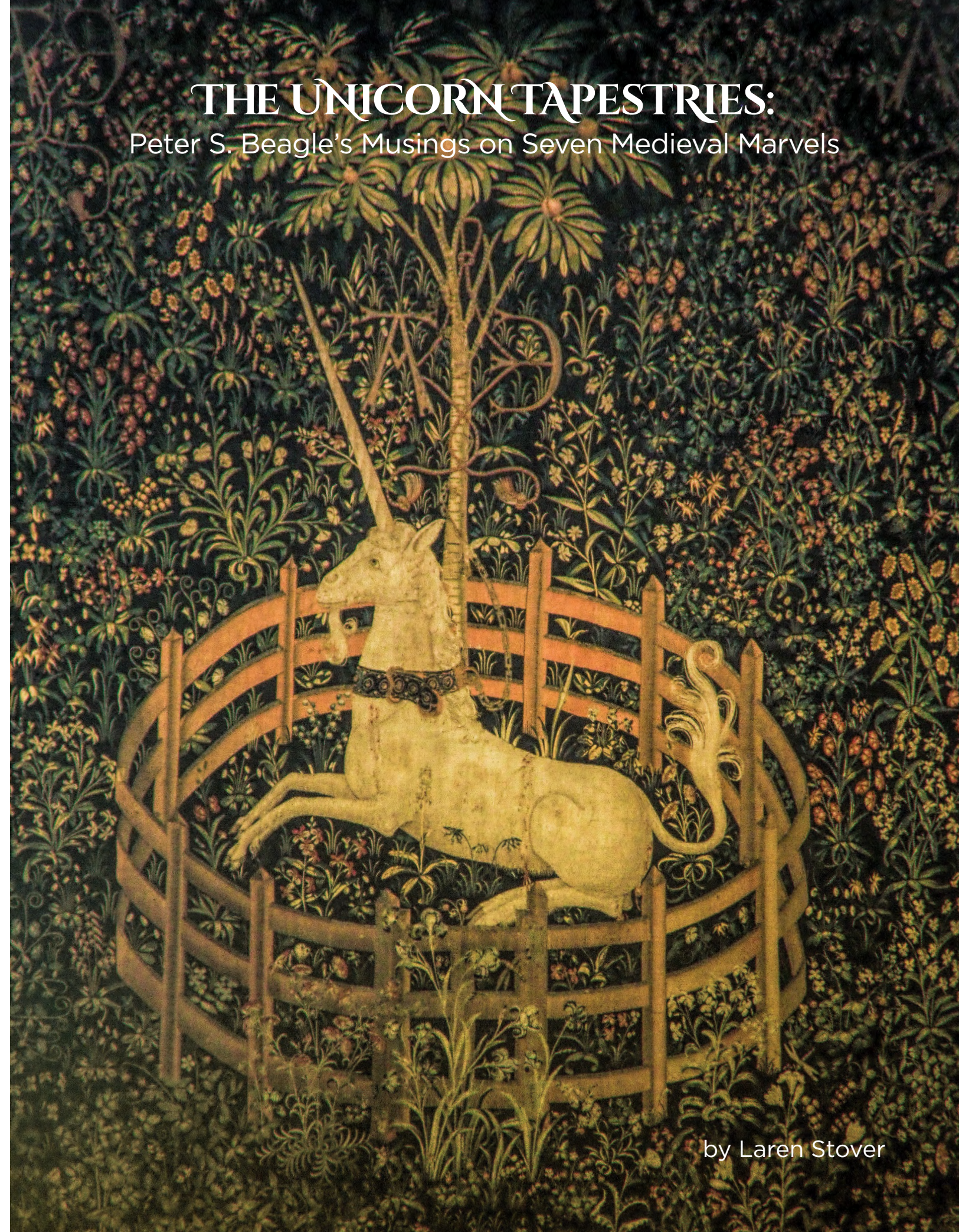


Find Jill's columns about adventure, love, loss, and healing at [womansday.com/author/17246/jill-gleeson](https://www.womansday.com/author/17246/jill-gleeson).





THE UNICORN TAPESTRIES: Peter S. Beagle's Musings on Seven Medieval Marvels



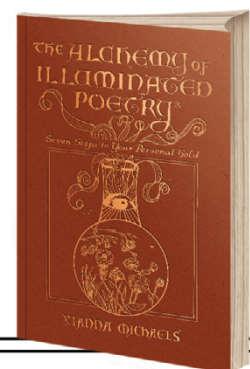
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by Laren Stover

The Unicorn Tapestries

Laren Stover

“The unicorn lived in a lilac wood, and she lived all alone. She was very old, though she did not know it, and she was no longer the careless color of sea foam, but rather the color of snow falling on a moonlit night.”

Thus begins *The Last Unicorn* (1968), a novel by Peter S. Beagle, who once lectured on the mythical creature to his mother’s class of first graders when he was four. Now seventy-eight, Beagle gained his early knowledge from meditating on the seven late-Gothic Unicorn Tapestries (1495–1505) hanging at the Metropolitan Museum’s Cloisters in Fort Tryon Park in New York City. Because the Beagles had relatives nearby, Peter insisted that they visit the Cloisters often, despite the asthma attacks he’d begin to suffer within a half hour of arriving—he thought it must be the tapestry dust. There, in the stone room dedicated to the Unicorn series, he’d fantasize that he was the little boy who looks away at his dog in the final tragic scene of the *Hunt of the Unicorn*, after the creature has been pursued through the forest by hunters.

The tapestries, which were likely woven in Brussels and Liège and were owned by an aristocratic French family, managed to survive the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution. Beheading royalty and destroying their property is one thing, destroying a magical, elegant unicorn the color of snow falling on a moonlit night is another.

Beagle’s visits with the unicorn remained woven in his consciousness like the lustrous “silk, gold, and silver threads ... brilliantly dyed with weld [yellow], madder [red], and woad [blue]” he describes in his book *We Never Talk About My Brother* (2009) and began to blossom into a fairy tale when he was twenty-three. He started *The Last Unicorn* in the summer of 1962 when he was sharing a cabin in Cheshire, Massachusetts, with his childhood friend, the painter Phil Sigunick, who is known for his idyllic landscapes. “Phil was out painting all day, and so I had to do something creative to show him,” says Beagle. It was in Santa Cruz, California, in an unheated shack, listening to Edith Piaf, George Brassens, and Jacques Brel, that he finished the novel on his Hermes noiseless portable typewriter.

In *The Last Unicorn*, a hunter, sensing a unicorn may be near, explains to his friend that his great grandmother encountered one and was smitten with his scent: “She never could abide the smell of any beast, even a cat or a cow, let alone a wild thing. But she loved the smell of the unicorn. She began to cry once, telling me about it.” Beagle leaves the scent of the unicorn for us to imagine, and so I have, conjecturing that the striking sylvan mystical creature the color of daisies and moonlight on the sea would smell like a ferny, mossy, forest-edged meadow of wildflowers melded with the very botanicals and fruits that appear in the *Unicorn at the Fountain* tapestry—sage, pot marigolds, sweet orange (medieval antidotes to poison), holly, and wood strawberries—mixed in with a slightly feral perfume of wild stallion and downy tuft of a bunny’s ear. Glamorous creatures,

it would seem, have the power to glamorize us with their perfume.

And the unicorn is arguably the most glamorous creature in the bestiary kingdom. Beautiful creatures in shimmering moonlit shades of fragility seem to provoke a desire to both protect them and to hunt them, Beagle says. Like any unattainable icon, the unicorn in the Cloisters tapestries does not fare well—and is certainly never freed. Beagle has documented this in a collection of poems about the unicorn’s sacred beauty and magical qualities, its seduction by a pure but heartless virgin, and its death.

In *We Never Talk About My Brother*, where we find these heartbreaking and transcendental verses, Beagle writes of his passion for the Cloisters despite his asthma: “It was worth not speaking for a few hours to see the stained glass and stonework, the covered walkways and open gardens, the view of the tree-lined Hudson River from the West Terrace ... and especially to see the Unicorn Tapestries ... these hangings captured my imagination with their silent tale of a brutal unicorn hunt.”

His seven poems about the tapestries are told from the point of view of the small boy who appears in the sixth tapestry, who, Beagle explains, is just behind the lord and lady that he believed commissioned the hunt. He describes the unicorn as “not white as ivory, / or snow, or milk, as men declare, / but white as moonlight on the sea — / oh, white as daisies! white as air!”

In that book he also writes that we never see the ceremonial virgin who captures the unicorn because a strip is missing from the center of the fifth tapestry. “I chose to imagine that the boy’s mind had closed the woman out: literally refused to remember a person who could do what she had done.” That scene with the virgin is imagined by that young boy with a painful exquisiteness: “She played with his mane, / she stroked his head; / and the dogs drew near, / sniffing where he bled... and she winked and she signed / that the beast was tame. / And a man blew a horn, / and the hunters came.” It’s poignant to note that the unicorn can never really die—its mythic resonance is too strong. It is resurrected the next day, depicted in the last tapestry, *The Unicorn in Captivity*, “red with the pomegranates’ sugary rain” but alive and chained to a tree.

But Beagle cannot let the unicorn be the last. Like all of us he is too in love with the dream. He has, in fact, given new life to the legendary creature with his newest unicorn novel, *In Calabria* (2017), where a unicorn is born in a rundown farm.

Why does the unicorn endure? Beagle, whose most famous book was influenced by what some consider to be the most beautiful tapestries in world, says simply, “Humans need beauty and magnificence.”



Follow Laren Stover on Instagram @faerie_style.



Images © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



HOLIDAY TRADITIONS AT THE CLOISTERS by Carolyn Turgeon

From early December until early January, the Cloisters is decked in sumptuous wreaths and garlands, all made from the fresh plants associated with the medieval celebration of Christmastide, the great feast held over the twelve days between the Nativity and the Epiphany. The designs are based on information gleaned from carols, wassails, romances, customs, and art, some of them dating back to ancient times.

Evergreens—especially holly, ivy, and boxwood—have long symbolized eternal life. When guests enter the Cloisters in its fully razzle-dazzled wintry state, they first pass under an arch of holly boughs (associated with the medieval feast) shining with red fruits symbolizing light, welcome, and warmth. The smell is intoxicating. Inside, they’re greeted with grand arches bedecked

with fresh ivy from local Fort Tryon Park, dressed with hand-polished lady apples, hazelnuts, rosehips, and pinecones. Elsewhere, throughout the halls, cloisters, galleries, and arcades, visitors can admire more topiaries, garlands, and wreaths, not to mention ivy-swaddled candelabras adorned with roses and windows filled with luscious potted plants like citrus, rosemary, and cyclamen.

Gardeners and staff at the Cloisters begin preparing for this “decking of the halls” in the fall and spend weeks crafting each piece for the displays. In just one example, they gather more than 2,000 ivy leaves from Fort Tryon Park—then hand-wash them and insert them into water-filled floral picks.



BY CAROLYN TURGEON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE PARKE

RING in the HOLIDAY SEASON

WE VISIT BALTIMORE-BASED FLORIST CRIMSON & CLOVER

One of the loveliest parts of the holiday season is bringing in sumptuous greens from the snowy outdoors and decorating your home with them—in true medieval fashion. For a sweet variation on a traditional wreath, we asked manager and designer Alyse Crumley from Baltimore's Crimson & Clover florist shop to share a more modern but still festive design. We love what she came up with: a brass hoop

that can be used and reused (even multiple times over one holiday season, not to mention throughout the year) and an asymmetrical bundle of local greens accented with wheat and juniper berries. Feel free to swap out ingredients with whatever's thriving now in your part of the world. A fun (and fairy-esque) variation might involve decking the hoop in white-gray moss and a bright, colorful ribbon.

MATERIALS

Brass hoop, from a craft store

Waxed twine, dark green

Wired sheer ribbon, copper-colored

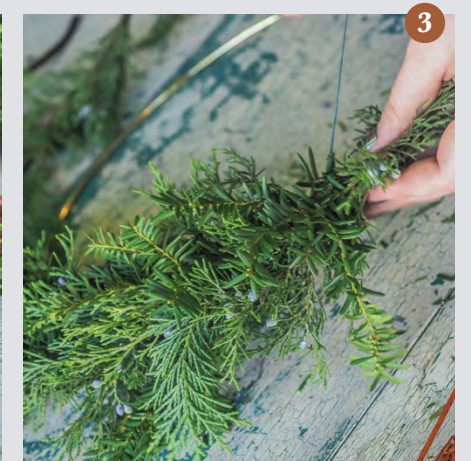
*Dyed and preserved natural wheat
(the wheat here is brown)*

Sprigs of juniper

Sprigs of cedar

Sprigs of local fir

1. Find a starting point on your brass hoop. Take the waxed twine and make a knot at your starting point.
2. Create little bundles with your greens, all three kinds. Lay them on top of the knot and wrap the waxed twine around each bundle and pull tightly.
3. Repeat this process until the hoop is about half covered (though you can cover less or more, depending on your taste), fluffing the greens periodically. Make the greens as thick or as thin as you like.



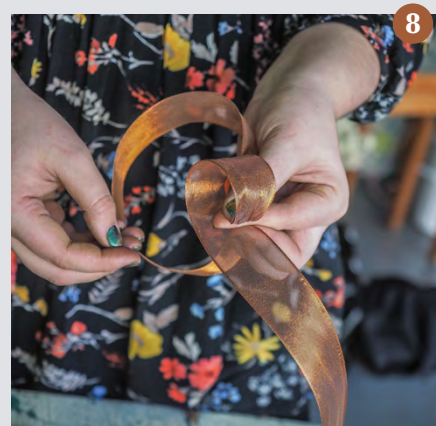
Make a Wreath

Crimson & Clover

4. To finish, find a good stopping point and then knot the waxed twine upon itself. Go back and tie in little sprigs, tucking in to cover up the exposed hoop.
5. Trim the stems at the end, so it's not just bare stems showing.
6. Next, figure out which way you want the wreath to go. In this case, the greens cover the left half of the hoop and the bow is on the bottom.
7. Take your bundles of wheat and trim down to desired length, then tuck the wheat in through the evergreen and waxed twine. You might lay out the wheat and plan your design before tucking it into the greens.
8. For the ribbon: Take two yards of the copper-wired sheer ribbon, and leave about 10 to 14 inches for a tail. Pinch and twist underneath itself, and pinch again to create the middle loop. Make another loop away from yourself and then bring ribbon back toward the center, and create another loop toward yourself, so that you have three loops, one on each side and one in middle.
9. Continually repeat this process, to create five loops total. Make the two outside loops larger than the rest, and make sure to leave room for the tail.
10. Take a piece of waxed twine and thread it through the middle where your thumb is, through the center loop, then bring it around all the loops and tie it in a knot. Straighten the loops and the tails out. If one loop is bigger than desired, just pull a little on your ribbon to even.
11. Leave length on the edges of your waxed twine and use this to tie a bow onto the wreath wherever you like.
12. Trim the ends of the ribbon so that ragging doesn't occur. Finally, trim the twine you used to tie the ribbon on.

PRO TIP: If you tie the ribbon where you end the wrapping, it will cover any extra twine you might see.

See more at crimsonandcloverdesigns.com.



VERONICA VARLOW

Life of a Love Witch

Welcome, my magical co-conspirators! I'm Veronica Varlow, a real-life Love Witch and international burlesque performer based in New York City. I am honored to be conjuring up a new regular column here at *Faerie Magazine*, "Life of a Love Witch." If you peeked through the pages of autumn's *Practical Magic* issue, you saw my mystical mountain art dwelling, Magic House, met my powerful fire sister Sage, and heard all about my beloved Grandma Helen as we played in the realm of mirror magic.

When I heard that this issue was medieval-themed, the first thought that flashed into my mind was the lesson my Grandma Helen taught me about the ace of swords in the realm of tarot. I do Tarot Tuesdays on Instagram each week, and I love checking in with my old friends the cards to see what they have to tell us. If you are reading this right now, this message is meant for you.

The card is simple but carries a powerful message. In the traditional deck, the image is of a sword coming out of a cloud. A laurel victory leaf crown sits on top of the sword. Even if you aren't a third-generation reader, your intuition will be correct that this card is all about owning your own victories.

But it goes deeper than that. The ace cards in tarot (there are four in the seventy-eight card deck) are all about new beginnings.

When I was small and my grandma was telling me stories about the cards, she likened the ace of swords to the story of Arthur and the sword in the stone. In the legendary medieval story, Arthur is a boy when word gets around about this mysterious sword; it was said that whoever could remove it from the stone would be the future king. As you can imagine,

people came from neighboring towns and from far-off lands to try to pull the sword from the stone. Arthur, thinking himself just a boy, stood around and watched as many people tried and failed. Finally, he was alone one night and saw the gleam of the sword as if it were calling to him. He followed his intuition and pulled the sword from the stone—and found himself holding it up in the air.

He was the future king.

We are all unsuspecting future kings and queens of the domain that we wish to manifest and draw to us. This is my message to you this quarter: May you rise up to your power and greatness. May you allow yourself to grow, to learn, to take chances, to adventure, to stand in your own power. May this bring about a new beginning for you of confidence, self-love, and self-esteem, and *know* that you have got this.

Just like Arthur, how often do we doubt that we are good enough to be the one to make a change?

How often do we hesitate for a moment, thinking that someone else out there deserves it more or has a bigger voice than we do?

How often do we play small because our minds won't let us grow or see beyond the boundaries we create for ourselves?

The story of Arthur is one of the every-person. It is the story

of someone who dared to take a risk and succeeded, who believed in himself enough that he was willing to entertain the idea of standing in his power.

In the unsettled world of today, much like in medieval times, we need more everyday people to rise up. We need more diverse voices and stories to help guide us as we try to make our world more whole again. This means that people like you and me, people who maybe wouldn't have had a voice just a few decades ago, now have the freedom to speak up and stand up.

It is up to all of us. We need to take the urging of the story of the sword in the stone and the ace of swords and *own* our own victories. It's time to take the lead, take action, and also help others see their power as well, so we can grow and rise together.

The sword is there, shining brightly, calling to you.

Read more about Veronica Varlow at lovewitch.com or on Instagram @veronicavarlowe.



WINTER FAERIE BEAUTY

by Alise Marie

When frosty air is upon us, and shimmering crystalline winds caress your face, precious fairy skin simply *must* be protected! Cloak your heavenly body in rich moisture and deep hydration, while infusing your entire being with vital nutrients. Ancient beauty secrets are unlocked inside these captivating potions, so get ready to settle in for a luscious ritual and, because beauty begins on the inside, a delightful sip to accompany you on an icy winter's eve. These make for enchanting holiday gifts, too!

Winter is when we go inside, literally and figuratively. It is the time for deep introspection, and for planning the future. So, while you're lounging in your own little sea, and treating your face to a delicious confection, take time to imagine something you would like to have blossom in spring.

What is it? What does it look like? How does it feel? What do you need to do to create it? Let the intuitive, expansive power of water open you up to the possibilities! Allow ideas to come in while sipping your elixir, as it mingles with the sacred waters of your body, creating a dynamic flow of energy. Not only is it feeding you inside and out with much-needed hydration, it also helps to soothe and protect from environmental stresses by way of romantic vanilla bean. Loving lemon helps to brighten skin, banish toxins, and give an infusion of vitamin C, while coconut nectar bursts with minerals, so essential to your good health. All these potent forces are present to help guide you on your path, giving you the life force needed to create, and are especially effective during a waxing-to-full moon cycle.



Snow Queen Facial Masque



Crystal Snowflake Elixir

WARMING YULETIDE BATH

- 1/2 cup Celtic salt
- 1/2 cup epsom salt
- 3 drops clove essential oil
- 3 drops nutmeg essential oil
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 1 tsp. ground mustard seed
- 1 tbsp. rosehip oil

Blend the two salts together in a bowl. Add the spices, then the essential oils. Give it a good stir. Sprinkle into a warm bath, lie back, and heave a sigh of relaxation...

SNOW QUEEN FACIAL MASQUE

- 1 8 oz. can organic coconut milk, chilled
- 1 tbsp. rosewater
- 2 tbsp. almond flour, finely ground
- 6 drops frankincense essential oil

You can prepare by placing the can of coconut milk in the refrigerator for about an hour. This will allow the solid cream to separate from the liquid. Spoon the cream into a large bowl, and set aside the liquid for later. Add the almond flour and rosewater to the cream. Using a hand mixer, blend until you have a fluffy, whipped consistency. Fold in the frankincense, inviting in all the beauty of

the season. Massage in a circular motion onto clean skin to remove the dulling surface layer of cells, then let the masque set for 10 to 20 minutes. Rinse well with cool water, pat dry. Your skin will be glowing, radiant, and oh so soft to the touch!

Spoon into airtight jars and keep refrigerated until you are ready to use. This recipe makes quite a bit of masque, so you have plenty to enjoy and share. It also works beautifully as a hand and body treatment.

CRYSTAL SNOWFLAKE ELIXIR

Makes one serving

- 1 cup pure coconut water
- 1/2 lemon
- 1 vanilla bean
- 1 tsp. rosewater
- 1/2-1 tsp. raw coconut nectar, to taste
- Unsweetened shredded or flaked coconut for garnish

Combine the coconut water you set aside earlier with the fresh lemon juice and rosewater. (A bit of the coconut cream will still be in the can, which will add body to the drink.) To prepare the vanilla bean, spilt lengthwise down the middle with a sharp knife. Carefully open

the pod, and scrape the tiny black seeds into the liquid mixture, using a dull knife or a small spoon. Add the desired amount of sweetening from the coconut nectar and blend on high speed until creamy. Sprinkle with coconut flakes and enjoy!

You can easily multiply the recipe by using a larger container of coconut water. It makes for a lovely libation to serve guests!



Revel in the celestial glow, darling fairies! The shining star here is you, supported by magical fruits of the earth and sea. Taking center stage are two important ingredients to always have on hand: coconut and rose. Coconut is immensely hydrating, both internally and topically. It is ruled by the moon and the element of water, deeply connected to spirituality and psychic awareness, while delivering integral moisture to your skin by way of essential fats. Rose is an ancient beauty goddess unto herself. She is the messenger of Venus, also water-ruled, and the absolute embodiment of love gifted to your skin in the form of dewy radiance. Almond meal adds additional oils and vitamin E to soften skin, and offers a gentle exfoliation, as well as drawing

prosperity in. Cherished frankincense is one of the earth's oldest and greatest treasures, both for its healing and beautifying properties. Solar powered, it works here as an important balance to the lunar energies and helps prevent wrinkles while lifting and toning skin.

In your bath, the salts detoxify and soothe aches, as the rosehip oil imparts silken moisture. The ginger and mustard are incredibly warming, so this is a fabulous soak all season long, particularly if you are feeling a bit under the weather. Clove oil is antibacterial and antiseptic, helping to boost the immune system

and repair skin tissue. Nutmeg oil stirs circulation and eases aches.

One more secret: Add raw, unpolished crystals to your beauty potions and rituals, as pictured. Have them present when you are concocting, then nestle them inside each mixture to infuse their powerful energies, letting their essence grow stronger with time. (When you make a new batch, you can reuse the crystals.)

Here, clear quartz amplifies intention, and moonstone is a talisman of the inner journey, bringing to light that which must be illuminated. Sapphires have been used for centuries to impart hydration to the

skin, and rejuvenate, restore, and protect from environmental effects. Amber is a solar stone, bringing both joy and an ability to circulate the blood, giving your skin a lustrous sheen.

* Happy Winter Solstice! *

Alise Marie is an actress, writer, and certified holistic nutritionist. Potions and rituals like these will be brewing in her upcoming book, Luna Beauty: The Moon, The Stars, and Your Heavenly Body. She can be found at aliseinwonderland.com.

WINTER WARMING

“In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy.”—William Blake

With temperatures dropping, it's time to reach for warming lotions, luscious creams, and fragrant oils that feed and nourish the skin, and keep it soft and glowing, even as you sit by the roaring fire.

When the climate is most harsh, it's important to be kind to yourself, and embrace a gentle beauty regimen with rich natural botanicals (like the beautiful blooming rose), nut oils (tropical coconut extracts), and plant elixirs (cardamom and sandalwood) that are stimulating to the skin.

Here are some of our favorite winter warmers.

**ROSE
Organic Pharmacy Virgin
Cold Pressed Rosehip Oil with
Frankincense & Vitamin E**

A nutritious organic rosehip seed oil, loaded with antioxidants and essential fatty acids, which is harvested at high altitude in the Chilean Andes Mountains. Helps soften scars, stretch marks, wrinkles, and fine lines all over the body. theorganicpharmacy.com

Juara Radiance Vitality Oil

When the world is cold and dark, this delicious oil will transport you to sunny Bali. A lovely blend of frangipani flower extract, passion fruit seed oil, coconut, avocado, and turmeric will firm and smooth your skin and reduce redness and inflammation.

juarabeauty.com

Jurlique Rosewater Balancing Mist

Rosewater is a natural astringent that has become popular in spritzes, sprays, and toners. The scent boosts the mood, and a soft misting plumps and hydrates tired skin (and hair). It also leaves the room smelling like a bouquet of roses! jurlique.com

Trilogy Rosehip Oil

Rosehip oil is healing and perks up dull, dry skin. It stimulates the circulation, and leads to, well, a rosy glow; helps promote cell regeneration; and reduces fine lines and wrinkles, which is why it is commonly found in facial serums, age-defying lotions and creams. Rose oil can also constrict small blood vessels, and reduce broken capillaries, penetrating deeply into the skin. trilogyproducts.com

CARDAMOM

Red Flower Cardamom Amber Oil

A warming blend of cardamom, sandalwood, jasmine, and black pepper, with a scent that is intoxicating, this sensual body oil is soothing and calming to the nerves and skin.

redflower.com

COCONUT

COCOME Bodystick

Like a magic wand, this coconut balm stick can fix just about everything! Portable enough to carry with you at all times, it leaves a soothing gloss of organic virgin coconut oil on lips, cuticles, and dry spots anywhere on the face or body. Also protects skin from chapping. cocomebodystick.com

Farmacy Hydrating Coconut Gel Mask

Though we love dark spots and freckles, if you don't, this mask will slowly help to brighten skin and fade them out. Echinacea and coconut gel hydrate the skin and temporarily tightens it right up! Great before a big night out.

sephora.com

—Rona Berg



ELEANOR
 Chainmaille collar, overskirt, and earrings: **It Is Known**
 Crown: Judy and Madeleine
 Gown: Moresca

ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE JOAN OF ARC *by Sally Reardon, designer of It Is Known*

I first became aware of Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122–1204) when I was ten, after reading E.L. Konigsburg’s *A Proud Taste for Scarlet and Miniver*. I was immediately struck by her fearlessness: She sharply contrasted with the other gentle ladies of that period I’d read about, and I was captivated to know that female rulers existed that far back in time. Around the same time, I saw Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s striking painting of Joan of Arc (1412–1431), a passionate, romantic image of a woman led by her convictions. I went on a mission to figure out who she was, discovering numerous Pre-Raphaelite depictions of her and the uncanny story of a seventeen-year-old warrior-visionary.

Although I later learned that, in many ways, these two women couldn’t be more different, their mutual, defiant spirit

continued to resonate with me. I resolved at some point to pay a tribute to them and to tell their stories in one way or another. In my adult life, I’ve learned that the visual medium is one of the most powerful ways to get people excited and talking about ideas, and this is something I channel in my chainmaille designs and the imagery surrounding it. Working with photographer Andrew Bacha, model Melanie Kazmercyk, and our talented, passionate team of creatives presented the perfect opportunity to retrace history through images and fashion. When people with a strong background in the arts and culture get together, there is the potential to create work that isn’t just fashion photography but storytelling. In this series, we endeavored to do justice to the legacy of extraordinary women in history, filtered through the modern lens of the camera.

Photographer: **Andrew Bacha** flickr.com/photos/andrewjbacha Model: **Melanie Rose Kazmercyk** @melanierosebud
 Chainmaille designer: **It Is Known** etsy.com/shop/ItIsKnown Makeup: **Colleen Farley** @colleen.farley
 Hair: **Sam Vega** @samvegadotnet Crowns: **Judy and Madeleine** @judyandmadeleine



JOAN OF ARC
 Coif and scalemaille collar:
It Is Known
 Gown: **Vintage**
 Sword: **Medieval Collectibles**



SING a SONG of PRINCESSES

BY KRIS WALDHERR

We all know what constitutes a princess by modern standards. Be beautiful. Be kind. Wear a sparkly tiara and glamorous gown. Generations of young girls have grown up straining to be the fairest in the land, believing their lives would be perfect if only they could attain this royal ideal.

I should know: I was one of those princess-obsessed girls.

Despite the disadvantage of an American suburban childhood, I daydreamed I would be revealed as blue-blooded and swept off to tea at Buckingham Palace. I yearned to grow my dishwasher-brown hair as long as Rapunzel's, so I might be rescued from the tower of my decidedly middle-class life. My princess fantasies only grew after I was informed by an elderly great aunt that my mother's family was distantly related to English aristocracy.

Turned out great-great-grand's way into *Burke's Peerage* was via the nursery: She was the governess and, like *Jane Eyre*, fell in love with her employer. (Luckily there was no madwoman hidden in the attic.) As a teenager, I rose at dawn to shed happy tears at the televised wedding of nursery school teacher Lady Diana Spencer to Charles, Prince of Wales. Years later, I eagerly watched Kate Middleton wed Prince William, just as I now read British newspapers for news about Prince Harry's future princess.

It's a comfort to know I'm not alone in my princess mania. Love them or hate them, princesses are a deeply entrenched and growing phenomenon in today's society. Major corporations leverage their financial health on the belief that a merchandised form of this most feminine of royal archetypes will invoke happily ever after. The largest princess-oriented merchandising company is the Disney Princess brand, which launched in 2001 to sales of \$300 million. Emboldened by Disney's success, other princess-themed lines leaped onto the bandwagon, some expanding upon already successful properties: Barbie, Dora the Explorer, and even Lego. However, princesses aren't just for the kiddie crowd. Disney's offerings include princess-branded wedding gowns and destination weddings. (Are you a sweet, romantic bride? Try the Snow White gown. A bit bohemian? Aladdin's Jasmine is for you.)

But where did the cultural and economic princess juggernaut originally arise from? Was Walt Disney the Big Bad Wolf? Or is the truth more Grimm? Or perhaps the ideal of the princess originated from an even earlier era. Something medieval.

Enter the troubadour. Not only did these talented musicians compose their songs, they also performed them. They sang in a variety of styles about everything from the wonders of the Crusades to the difficulties of true love.

One popular troubadour subject was the *princesse lointaine*—"distant princess"—an ideal of a beautiful royal lady. (Sounds familiar, doesn't it?) In most cases, the troubadour had never even laid eyes on their *princesse lointaine* before penning their lovesick songs. Her reputation was enough to enflame eternal devotion.

In a way, these songs about the *princesse lointaine* could be viewed as the first instance of "princess press." They served to spread to a wider audience what we would now consider the archetype of the ideal princess: a royal girl who happens to be fairest in the land.

One troubadour, Jaufré Rudel, was especially famed for his devotion to his *princesse lointaine*. Rudel's unnamed biographer wrote that the troubadour "fell in love with the countess of Tripoli, without seeing her, for the praise he heard of her from the pilgrims who came from Antioch; and he composed many songs about her with remarkable melodies but less beautiful verses."

The *princesse lointaine* who inspired Rudel to write songs of "less beautiful verses" was Hodierna of Tripoli (circa 1110–

1164), a princess of Jerusalem who gained the title of countess after she wed Raymond II of Tripoli. Their marriage was complicated at best. Hodierna had three sisters who schemed with her for advantage. Nor was it the happiest: rumor held that Raymond grew jealous of Hodierna's interactions with other men, and locked her away in a tower. From here, it's easy to conjecture what inspired Rudel's devotion to his *princesse lointaine*. Hodierna's disappearance from court spurred stories about her unattainable beauty; Rudel heard of poor imprisoned Hodierna and fell hard for Her Unavailable Highness.

One story even claimed Rudel traveled all the way to Trivoli to be united with his *princesse lointaine*, using the excuse of the Crusades to cloak his amorous intentions. Rudel's songs included such impassioned verses as:

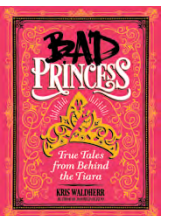
*My heart never stops desiring
her whom I most love;
and I will have been Love's fool
if lust takes her from me.*

After reading of Rudel's saga and songs, one might wonder whether the troubadour and his *princesse lointaine* ever united to love in the flesh. Rudel's biographer wrote that the couple finally *did* meet—but only when Rudel was breathing his last. You see, he'd taken dangerously ill while traveling to the Holy Land to meet Hodierna.

In a scene akin to the ending of *Tristan and Isolde*, Rudel's ailing body was brought to an inn, and Hodierna managed to escape her tower. She rushed to her never-before-seen troubadour admirer "and took him in her arms, and he knew she was the Countess, and recovered consciousness, and praised God and thanked Him for having let him live to see her. And so [Rudel] died in his lady's arms." Unlike Isolde, who was united with her Tristan in an ecstatic *Liebestod*, Rudel's biographer claimed Hodierna survived her beloved's death only to take the veil, moving from tower to convent.

Most concur that this story of tragic love is fanciful at best, but it's a good one. Still, as I consider my own lifelong princess obsession, I can't help but think it doesn't matter whether or not Rudel and Hodierna ever met and loved. All that matters is that their story inspired others—just as princesses today can inspire us to "have courage and be kind," to paraphrase one recent Disney film. After all, the best stories offer truths that transcend the bonds of time.

About the author: Kris Waldherr is the author-illustrator of Bad Princess: True Tales From Behind the Tiara (Scholastic Books). Her other books include Doomed Queens, The Book of Goddesses, and The Lover's Path. Learn more at kriswaldherr.com.



Medieval Beauty

BY RONA BERG

Twenty years ago, a vial of perfume was discovered beneath a thick stone wall in the basement of a home near Erfurt, Germany, east of Frankfurt. When the pretty silver bottle was opened, a delicate herbal scent, a bit like patchouli, wafted through. It was barely perceptible. The scientists who later tried to break it down at the L’Oreal Perfume Institute in Paris thought they may have detected notes of rose and jasmine as well, but they couldn’t be sure. After all, the fragrance was almost 700 years old.

That vial was part of a rare medieval cosmetic kit, believed to have been buried some time before 1349, which included ear cleaners and tweezers. The archaeological dig also uncovered magnificent jewel-studded brooches and belts, a tiny love token crafted as a padlock, 3,141 silver coins, fourteen ingots of silver, rare and beautiful clothing, gorgeous secular medieval metalwork, and more than 700 pieces of gold and silver jewelry.

The spectacular haul contained a clue to the identity of a woman whose body was found with the precious vial tied around her waist. A gold wedding ring, engraved “Mazel Tov” (“Congratulations” in Hebrew) and decorated with a six-pointed star, revealed that she was Jewish. Historians believe she was a survivor of the plague, which killed one third of Europe’s population in 1347.

The 14th century was a time of great suffering for Erfurt Jews, who were driven from the city by pogroms, triggered by rumors that the Jews poisoned the wells and caused the Black Death. Among those who survived were the perfumers, who were virtually immune to the plague. The reason? They were protected by sweet-smelling pomanders and healing aromatic

plants, now used as the basis for many prescription drugs.

When I think of medieval times in the West—which I do often—I’m reminded of smells. I imagine moldering monks and mystics, sweaty knights sheathed in armor for months at a time, dank dungeons, chafing women locked into chastity belts impossible to remove. Let’s just say the first thing that comes to mind is not “spick and span”—surprisingly, a popular phrase in the 14th century. Though not as unhygienic as we may think, it was certainly a fetid time. The plague was believed to be airborne, which made bathing dangerous because medieval doctors thought it opened the pores to disease particles carried through the air.

Nobility were advised to keep their windows closed, but it was not so easy for common folk, who most likely didn’t have windows they could close! But the wealthy slammed theirs shut and invested in thick, lovely tapestries that covered their windows for extra protection. Under these conditions, they not only found themselves supporting the burgeoning weaver’s guild but they also could bathe! Warm baths scented with herbs followed with fragrant oil and unguents rubbed into the skin were popular throughout the entire medieval period, with wealthy women and herbalists like Hildegard of Bingen soaking bouquets of sweet william, marjoram, and rosemary in basins for a sponge bath.

Not surprisingly, scent was used to mask bad smells on the body and in the home. It isn’t hard to imagine a lady dipping an embroidered linen cloth into water infused with lavender and discreetly tucking it into her bosom. Solid perfume, made with essences of violet and rose mixed with wax, was carried in a locket. Pomanders, or “scent balls” of ambergris,

musk, and chive with clove or cinnamon, and a solid substance, perhaps wax, were placed in jewelry worn around the wrist or encircling the neck.

But that wasn’t all. Plant and flower essences were relied on for mind-body magic and medicine, much as we use aromatherapy now. Believed to dispel demons in medieval times, the essences of flowers and herbs permeated everything—people’s daily ablutions, what they wore, even the cuisine. The heady and mysterious art of joining flowers and herbs, woods and spices, even animal essences, into beautifully complex layers of scent is a way to spin a seductive cloud of magic that is now known to penetrate the limbic system (the emotional center) of the brain in an instant. Then, as now, nothing was as popular as the smell of roses, said to be a favorite of Eleanor of Aquitaine.

A ROSE IS A ROSE

Throughout centuries and across cultures, the intoxicating scent, velvety-soft petals, and brilliant blaze of color from the red rose has delighted the senses and warmed the heart. Alchemists and aromatherapists say the smell of rose oil promotes feelings of love.

The Crusaders and pilgrims were the first to bring rosewater back from the Middle East. And everyone went crazy for it. Essential oil extracted from rose petals also has a powerful healing effect on the skin, and it is precious. It can require thousands of pounds of rose petals to yield just one pound of oil.

Boccaccio rhapsodizes roses in *The Decameron*: “Without permitting anyone else to lay a hand on him, the lady herself washed Salabaetto all over with soap scented with musk and cloves ... The slaves brought two fine and very white

sheets, so scented with roses that they seemed like roses; the slaves wrapped Salabaetto in one and the lady in the other and then carried them both on their shoulders to the bed ... They then took from the basket silver vases of great beauty, some of which were filled with rosewater, some with orange water, some with jasmine water, and some with lemon water, which they sprinkled upon them.”

Rose was known to soothe anxiety, which may explain why rubbing a woman’s hips with rose oil was supposed to ease the pain of childbirth in medieval times. Rose petals floated in the bath. Bed linens and clothes were boiled in water strewn with bundles of lavender, dried orris root (used to attract love, and smelling like violets), rosemary, woodruff, and rose to make them smell sweet.

MEDIEVAL BEAUTIES

Women pulled beauty and drew power from the magic of plants and herbs and transformed them into powders, poultices, elixirs, masks, and makeup. Standards of beauty in the Middle Ages, as in any age, were very clear.

Noblewomen wore modest linen wimples to cover the head, a look that also served to elongate the neck. (Linen was the “it” fabric, and “flaxen” the gold standard for hair.) The ideal woman was slender, with thinly plucked brows and a bulbously high forehead, achieved by shaving or depilating the hairline. (In fact, that’s where the word *highbrow* comes from!)

Hairlessness and denuded lady parts were achieved with depilation pastes made with vinegar or quicklime. Bellies that protruded slightly, along with rounded sloping shoulders, were the desired body type. To look even more slender, wealthy women would bind their bosoms with bandeaux, even though priests warned that in the next life, those would turn into bands of fire!

Women have always been willing to suffer for beauty, and the 14th century was no exception. Someone who was considered a real babe would have had a ghostly pallor “white as snow on ice,” according to a phrase made popular in

The Song of Roland. It could have been achieved with sheep fat and white lead powder (yes, that was poisonous, but still in great demand to cover blemishes or scars from smallpox or plague), procured in back-alley shops with clandestine doors, since makeup was not technically approved by the church.

It was believed to be the work of the devil: Altering the face meant challenging the work of God. But women used it anyway. Aristocrats reddened their lips with a mixture of sheep fat and red roots, or rubbed lemon on their lips to increase the blood flow. “Lip rouge” was believed to literally work magic—which any modern woman knows it can!—and even ward off death. Eye makeup was not popular, but women would drop deadly nightshade in their eyes to dilate their pupils and make their eyes look bigger, which is why the common name for nightshade is *bella donna* (“beautiful lady”).

Smooth clear skin was desirable not only for its beauty but also because freckles, moles, and birthmarks were believed to be the devil’s mark and could mark you as a witch. The French favored a beautifying concoction of asparagus roots, wild anise, and the bulbs of white lilies steeped in the milk of asses and red

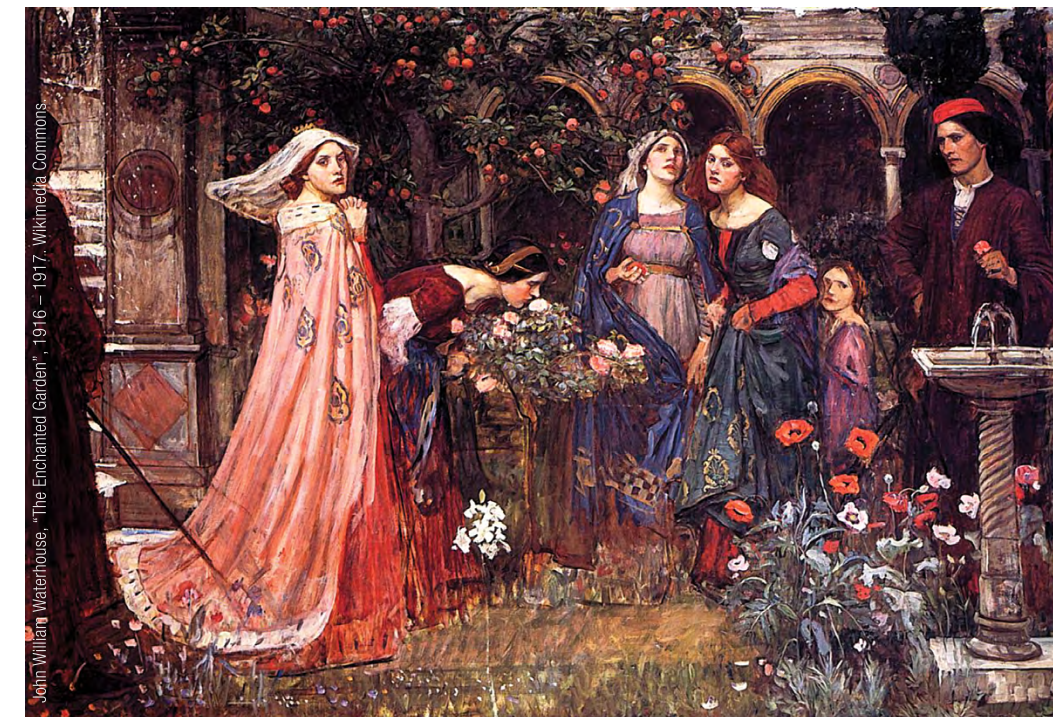
goats, aged in warm horse manure and filtered through felt. Skin brighteners were made with bull’s or hare’s blood, or a paste made from vinegar and porridge to fade marks.

If a lady didn’t come by her blonde hair naturally, she could lighten it with an infusion of saffron and stale sheep urine. Combs—like the double-sided ivory comb with 12th century scenes of Thomas Becket being crowned Archbishop of Canterbury, in the permanent collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City—were popular styling tools in England and helped with “plaiting” the hair.

“Faces go in and out of fashion,” Diana Vreeland once said, but some things stay the same: the pleasure we derive from beauty and the lengths we’ll go to get it. And that will never change.

****For a whiff of what Eau de Medieval may have smelled like, try Aura Cacia Medieval Mix Essential Oil (auracacia.com), a potent blend of sweet orange, lavender, lemon, red thyme, rosemary, and eucalyptus oils. In medieval times, roses were compressed into beads worn around the neck. Try Jai Mala Rose for an example (celestionorati.com).**

Visit Rona online at ronaberg.com.





MICHELE CARRAGHER'S INTRICATE EMBROIDERY FOR GAME OF THRONES

BY CAROLYN TURGEON

When thinking of our favorite medieval-inspired fashions, we couldn't help but turn our minds (and hearts) to our favorite show, *Game of Thrones*, and all our beloved (and beloved to be hated) Targaryens and Starks and Lannisters and their enviably lavish garb. If you look closely, many of the fashions on the show feature gorgeously glittering encrusted embroidery, too—a dire wolf snarling among curling flowers; multi-colored, three-dimensional flying birds; a roaring, crowned lion. These sly commentaries are the doing of costume embroiderer Michele Carragher, who's worked under costume designer Michele Clapton since the show's beginning, in 2011. We can't imagine a more glamorous task. Here we ask Carragher about her background and work on the show.

Faerie Magazine: How did you become interested in historical costuming work?

Michele Carragher: I have specialized as a hand embroiderer working in the film and television industry for twenty years now. I never had any extensive education in embroidery—my skills in hand sewing were forged at an early age when my mother taught me some basic stitching, and I have evolved within my craft by just being self-taught, learning on the job, or doing small projects for myself. If I haven't tried a technique or stitch I will read up on it and experiment myself.

The first time I used embroidery creatively was while I studied fashion design at college, as I wanted many of the designs I was conceiving there to have a sculptural presence to them.

Where I truly honed my hand-needle skills was after college, when I worked in textile conservation, learning different techniques and stitches, absorbing inspiration from all the beautiful historical textiles that passed through my hands.

I have always been interested in historical costumes, from an early age, but professionally I developed a deeper fascination when I started to work in film and television. One of the earliest productions I worked on was an adaptation of Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* for the BBC, and my interest increased further when I was asked to work on the 2005 production of *Elizabeth I*. That was the first time I acted as a principle costume embroiderer, mainly working on the costumes worn by Dame Helen Mirren, who played the leading role. I really enjoyed working on this project, as the Elizabethan era is such a great period of history to work on, with lots of rich encrusted decoration.

FM: Are you a fan of *Game of Thrones* and/or fantasy shows like it?

MC: Yes, I think I would be a fan of the show even if I didn't work on it. I am very open to appreciating many genres of film. As a child I avidly watched westerns with my dad, but I love anything that has great drama and fascinating characters, be it historical, fantasy, or contemporary.

FM: You spent a long time doing textile restoration. Can you talk about that?

MC: My work in textile conservation has given me the great opportunity of being able to see and handle many different textiles from around the world from all different periods in time. It was like having my own personal museum to work in. Apart from absorbing much inspiration from all these textiles, I learned different techniques in conservation, from invisible mending to mounting delicate textiles onto a stabilizing fabric, such as silk crepe. Working in conservation also gave me the opportunity to practice my embroidery, building up speed and precision, learning different stitches on different textiles that needed sections filling in, where there were holes or the original threads had simply rotted away. It also meant I needed to learn how to source suitable threads to match whatever type of embroidery I was working on.

I would definitely say that during my time working in conservation, I became a more efficient and creative embroiderer. All the skills I learned and developed there have become invaluable for my work in film and TV.

Some of the most interesting pieces I worked on were a couple of costumes worn by Marilyn Monroe: the famous little





Learn how to create Daenerys Targaryen's dragonscale dress texture using the North American smocking technique on Michele's website.

black beaded number worn in *Some Like It Hot* and the sexy show-stopping red-sequin dresses from *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* that she and her co-star Jane Russell wore. These were displayed in an exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in London and were lovely to see. I was surprised to see how tiny they were!

One of the most enjoyable pieces that I had to conserve was a pair of 16th century gloves. The leather of the gloves was in good condition, but the gauntlet section needed to come off so that I could patch any holes in the silk and sew down any loose embroidery and gold threads. The silk godets on the gauntlet in between the embroidered sections needed patching and in some cases replacing where the original fabric was too rotten. Once I had conserved the gauntlets I joined these sections back on to the gloves. It was quite satisfying working on these beautiful period gems, and it inspired me to make my own version of an embroidery encrusted gauntlet glove.

FM: How did you start working for film and television?

MC: While I was still working in conservation, in my spare time I started to get involved in making short films with a group of friends, taking on the role for the first time as costume designer. By working on these amateur films it gave me the chance to experiment and was a good grounding for me to learn about working with costumes for film.

But my first venture into the professional world of filmmaking was when I worked as a costume assistant on a low-budget feature film, which was unpaid of course, working every hour under the sun, but this seems to be the standard way to get a foot in the door. And being undeterred by the long hours and lack of payment, I used this opportunity to gain a wealth of experience. But most important for me on this job, I was very fortunate to meet and work for Mike O'Neill, the costume designer on this film. Mike was a very experienced designer who had worked on many award-winning period dramas, and after this initial job I was able to work with him on many other future projects. He became a great mentor, imparting onto me his vast knowledge of the costume-design process.

FM: Do you have a favorite period to work in?

MC: No there is no definitive period that I like to work in. They all have interesting aspects and challenges and creative possibilities for me to get immersed in.

FM: How did you start working for *Game of Thrones*?

MC: The costume designer Michele Clapton invited me to work on the show. I had worked with her on other projects beforehand so she had an idea of the sort of work I was capable of doing. Michele is a great advocate of arts-and-crafts artisans, and therefore her approach to the creation of her costume designs, for other productions as well as on *Game of Thrones*, is that she loves to have her main cast's costumes all hand-finished, from fabric that is woven, printed, embroidered, and then carefully aged or distressed. So my skills as a hand embroiderer fit with her ethos.

FM: What have been some of the most challenging—and more fun—pieces you've worked on for the show?

MC: The wonderful aspect of working on a production like *Game of Thrones* for me is that it has given me the opportunity to experiment and develop my craft, trying new ideas and processes each season. Each design I work on can pose a challenge in some way, either technically or in sourcing the right materials in order to create a suitable piece for a particular character. But the main angst is always, Will I be able to achieve the design that I have envisioned in the limited time I am allocated? Although sometimes this forces you down a new route and you stumble across or develop something you hadn't thought of before.

I have enjoyed developing the embroidery for the character Cersei throughout the seasons, embroidery that echoes her personal journey. She has had a lot of lovely rich encrusted embroidery, some with three-dimensional elements known as stumpwork.



Other stumpwork that I loved creating were the jewelled fish and birds that embellish the collars of the insane character Lysa Arryn in season four, and the many bugs that I created for a mysterious tribe from season two called the Qarth. It also has been a pleasure developing the dragon-scale texture that features on Daenerys's costumes that first appeared in season three.

For season five, I was really proud of the embroidery that I created for some of the female characters who reside in Dorne—Ellaria, Tyene, and Nymeria Sand, and Myrcella Baratheon. For these costumes I was asked to embroider each of their gowns with beautiful wild flowers, enhanced with bead and ribbon work.

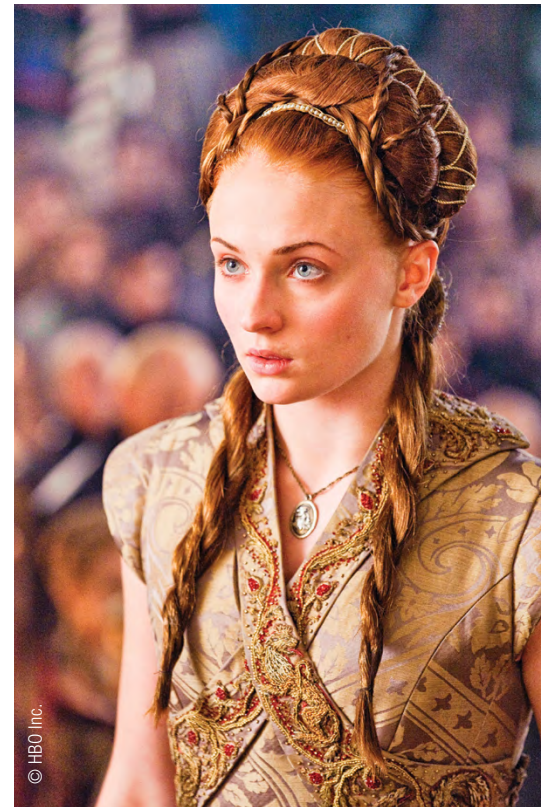
FM: Can you talk about the dragon scale you designed—the thinking behind it, the process of designing it?

MC: Daenerys is an interesting character whose costume has constantly evolved. When we were introduced to her in the first season her costumes show her to be an innocent, vulnerable and weak.

After the death of her brother and then her husband too, Daenerys begins to abandon her weak persona. She becomes a leader of many and a mother to three newly hatched dragons.

To show this transition Michele Clapton wanted me to create embroidery for Daenerys that reflected her growth in power and inner strength that she gets from her dragons. I began by doing some samples, experimenting with various beads, different stitches, and smocking techniques, and the North American smocking was chosen as the base for the texture with some lock stitch and mesh-wire highlights.





FM: How much do you bring in historical medieval embroidery techniques to your work?

MC: When working for film and TV, I am working toward the costume designer's vision for each costume on a particular project. The costume is a narrative tool that conveys much to the viewer, be that a period in time, a country the character may inhabit, or their social status.

Even when I work on a historical drama, where I will research the style and type of decoration required and source suitable threads and beads, there will not be the time available to re-create pinpoint accurate embroideries that I have found documented in costume books or seen at museums. Also for some early periods in history I may be reliant on painted portraits for my characters, which are of course an artist's impression of the fashion of the day. So I will set about creating an impression of the desired decoration using a variety of techniques. I have to create something that is believable to the audience so that they recognize the period or character I am representing on screen, but very rarely is there the time to do an accurate stitch-by-stitch re-creation of something, so you are allowed a certain amount of creative license.

FM: In what ways do you work a character's personality or the symbolism of a scene into the embroidery work of a costume?

MC: When designing the embroidery I have to take into account each character's personality, status, and surrounding world. In *Game of Thrones* each noble house is signified by their sigil, a sort of coat of arms. The sigils are very important

for me, as they can play a major part in my designs for the embroidery for the show. I myself like to incorporate hidden meanings and metaphor within my designs for a character's costume. I will place imagery or use materials that I have researched and have found to add some meaning to the personal narrative and personality of a character that I am working on.

For example in season six, I created a design for the character Sansa, who comes from the noble house of Stark, who rule over the vast cold region of Westeros known as the North. The Starks' sigil is that of a grey dire wolf. At the center of my design is a dire wolf surrounded by branches that flow into the wolf's head. The branches are a representation of those from a sacred tree called weirwood, a tree that is associated with the worshipping of the old gods of the forest, a pagan faith that the Stark family subscribe to. Their devotion toward this faith is ever present, as they have a tree within the walls of their home at Winterfell.

The Stark family have used this tree as a symbol of their proud heritage, and the tree has given the members of the family great solace at times of trouble. This embroidery shows Sansa's rekindled devotion and connection toward her family.

This design also helps to mark a new development within Sansa's personal journey—from innocent naive girl, to victim, to now, where she is a strong powerful independent woman.

FM: How do you collaborate with Michele Clapton on embellishing the costume designs, and what do you try to bring to the designs with your work?

MC: My process when creating an embroidery design for a costume on *Game of Thrones* starts by meeting with Michele, who will have illustrations, mood boards, colors, and fabric swatches of the costume that I will be creating a design for. We will discuss a character's back story, traits, and personal narrative within the script. All this will all go toward influencing my design.

After my initial conversation with Michele I will then go away and perform research in relation to the piece I am creating. For the next stage I will need to start sourcing suitable materials that will help to portray the character's status and personality, then start with some sketches of a design, followed by creating samples of the design to show Michele in order to get her input. The design will develop and evolve from there.

When I start my embroidery I will draw my design onto tracing paper and pin it to the costume or costume toile (prototype) to work out the flow and scale of the design required. When I begin stitching the embroidery design I quite often start off on some organza, working separately to the costume, creating a kind of motif that I will then apply to the finished garment. This is because the costume is usually still being made, and there isn't time to sample and plan the embroidery to fit to the pattern pieces before construction of the costume. The way I approach my embroidery is as if I were drawing or painting using threads and beads instead of pencil and paint, and the design will evolve organically as I work on it.

I have found working with Michele, from the design conception to the completion of an embroidery for a costume, to be a very collaborative and supportive process. She has encouraged me and given me freedom and the opportunity to create diverse and interesting work, and she has a great spirit and enthusiasm in her approach to realize her vision for the show.



FM: I read that you spent two weeks covering Cersei's kimono in flying birds. Can you talk about that?

What did the birds mean? Are you often attracted to subjects in the natural world?

MC: Cersei was an obvious candidate for some decoration, and I felt that her embroidery could be quite rich and decorative given her status. In regards to showing her personality within her embroidery designs, one of her first costumes that I embroidered was her Blue Bird dress, for which the embroidery reflected her position at the time. When we are introduced to her in season one, she is a beautiful woman with a hidden desire for power and a wish to be regarded as an equal in the male-dominated world she inhabits. At that stage she lives in the shadow of her husband King Robert Baratheon, who holds power over her and the kingdom. Having this imagery of a bright colorful bird on her costume helped belie Cersei's intention of power under a soft unthreatening feminine look, and references the twittering and scheming she is involved with behind the scenes.

As to being attracted to subjects in the natural world, I was about six years old when my parents decided to move to the Isle of Wight, feeling it would be a great place to bring up myself and my sister, and they were right. I see it as a jewel of beauty in miniature with beautiful scenery that my grandmother, a talented amateur painter, would capture in her oil paintings. She inspired and taught me to draw and paint, using imagery from the natural setting of the island, and by doing this I developed a love of nature that has continued to inspire my creative work.

FM: Do you research as you go? What kind of research do you do?

MC: When it comes to my process, I love the first steps, the research period. If it's a historical drama, this entails researching the specific period's costumes; if it's a fantasy like *Game of Thrones* I spend my time sourcing imagery from the internet or museums to inspire me. I also love searching and



sourcing unusual materials and experimenting with them while I'm doing my sampling process, but I think the best part for me is the moment I feel that the piece is starting to evolve into the design I had envisioned it to be.

I can get my inspiration from anywhere and in everything! I love sculpture, architectural decoration, vintage textiles, René Lalique jewelry, and haute couture embroidery. I'm drawn to a lot of classical art but not exclusively. I won't dismiss anything contemporary, I will draw elements from all.

FM: Do you have an affinity for the medieval period, and if so, what attracts you to it?

MC: I can't really look to one period, country, or region, and think that or this is the best. For me all decoration is of value or interest, be it the Boro textiles of Japan, born out of poverty, as well as their fine kimono embroideries, or the fabulous array of embroidery from India and Pakistan, North American Indian beading and symbolic decoration, South American pre-Columbian weavings and feather work, Mughal emperors of India, the Shahs of the Safavid Dynasty of Persia, and the sultans of the Ottoman Empire—all of them had amazing bejeweled textiles.

Across Europe, fine and folk embroidery have always been present, the highly decorated Spanish bullfighters' costumes, the Russian pearl embroideries, the English work of the 13th and 14th centuries for ecclesiastical garments. In the Tudor and Elizabethan era there was definitely a flourishing of embroidery by amateurs at home as well as professionals, the flamboyant embroidery of the 18th century, Louis XIV helping a resurgence in France that continues to this day. In the 19th century William Morris with the Arts and Crafts movement led to the setting up of the Royal School of Needlework that is still thriving today, and there is the exquisite contemporary haute couture work, or even some simple darning in a thread bare garment. To me it is all equally beautiful.

As humans, we are all tribal and have always adorned ourselves, be it for warmth and protection, to show status, or which tribe we assimilate with. There is something out there for everyone and to pick one as the best would merely be a subjective opinion. There is no right or wrong, just a great variety and diversity of creativity.



Follow Michele's projects at michelecarragherembroidery.com

Carolyn Turgeon is the author of five novels, most of them fairy tales, and the editor-in-chief of Faerie Magazine. She also penned The Faerie Handbook (November 2017) and The Mermaid Handbook (May 2018), both from HarperCollins.





The Illuminating Art of Tania Crossingham

by Jill Gleeson

Tania Crossingham knows it might seem odd for an Australian woman living in the 21st century to be making a form of art popularized in Europe during the Middle Ages. Over the nearly three decades she's been creating illuminations, Crossingham has asked herself the question over and over again: "Why? Why

am I driven to do this?" The work itself—decorating calligraphic text by hand with elaborate designs and pictures—is painstaking. The most complex illuminations might take her more than two weeks to complete. Yet she remains absorbed by the art perhaps, she has come to think, because she practiced it long ago.

"I believe in reincarnation," Crossingham says gently, her broad Aussie accent softened by the care she takes in choosing her words. "People that lived in that time period are very drawn to this art, and they sometimes can't even explain why. I absolutely existed in a previous life during medieval times. I have one vague memory of illuminating, and I was a nun. When I started illuminating in this time I had no teacher. I just started doing it, and it wasn't until I started teaching other people that I realized how difficult this is to produce. But it was not difficult for me. It was like I just remembered, like I already knew how to do it because I'd been taught a long time ago."

The earliest extant examples of illumination—the term refers to the way in which manuscript pages painted with gold or silver appear to glow when light strikes them—date back to the fifth century. Islamic clerics practiced the art form as well as monastic scribes from Europe; some of the most breathtaking examples of illuminated text are from ancient Qurans. One of the most famed illuminated manuscripts is Ireland's *Book of Kells* (A.D. 800), which contains the Four Gospels and is on permanent display at Trinity College Library in Dublin. Eventually, illuminations moved from strictly religious applications into secular ones, gaining prevalence until the arrival of the printing press in the mid-1400s caused them to fall out of favor.

Crossingham's illuminations are crafted in much the same way as those created centuries ago. While she eschews making her own paint and uses a steel-tipped pen rather than a quill, Crossingham says that "the basic technique is the same. It's still lots and lots of layers of paint." She also uses the rich, bold colors found in the illuminations of old, which she thinks may actually have greater meaning in today's world. "A lot of the clothing and architecture in the 21st century has actually become quite bland," Crossingham says. "There's a lot of beige and gray used in our modern lives. I think one of the things that draws people to the illuminations is the really vibrant use of color and its invitation to celebrate life and celebrate light."

Crossingham enjoys employing symbolism as well, though she acknowledges that much of the meaning of medieval symbols—for example, a stag once denoted Christ—has been lost to the ages. She not only uses animals and flowers symbolically in her work but also geometric shapes. Among her favorites is the vesica pisces, which is essentially two circles of the same radius intersecting so that the center of each lies on the circumference of the other. This very powerful symbol, according to Crossingham, represents a womb or, often, the gateway between the physical world and the spiritual.

Crossingham has long tread the line between the physical and spiritual realms. She holds a teaching degree from Queensland University of Technology and has taught art to high school students and illumination and calligraphy to adults off and on throughout her professional life. Her exhibitions and stints as an artist in residence are almost too numerous to mention; her work



has been presented to Queen Elizabeth II and at the Marist Brothers headquarters in Rome. Crossingham even created a spellbook and map for *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, the third Narnia film. And more than a decade spent doing medieval reenactments with various groups around southeast Queensland provided a feel for that time period useful to her art.

But along with her more earthly accomplishments, Crossingham is also a passionate student of spirituality. For nearly seven years she was a member of the Ancient and Mystical Order of Rosae Crucis, a society of mystics who incorporate metaphysics in the service of self-mastery. She has more recently continued her explorations with someone she calls “a great teacher and actually a channel for John the Beloved, who was John the Disciple of Christ in a previous life,” and she believes it is this spiritual work that has inspired her illuminations.

“I see what I’m doing as an evolution of the art form, in terms of the message that it brings to people,” Crossingham says. “What I’ve done is taken the artwork from this medieval time period, which I see as very magical, and removed the religious message and put in a contemporary spiritual message. When I do my meditations these messages just download for me. I don’t even ask for them—they just come to me and I write them down. It’s the combination of the message and the art together that really touches people on a subconscious level, so I guess it’s my way of contributing to the evolution of human consciousness.”

The messages in Crossingham’s work range from the simple—for example, “Happiness comes from within”—to longer musings that touch upon subjects including perfection,



self-mastery, and love. They not only instruct but comfort, although one of Crossingham’s favorites bears no text at all. *The Invitation*, which the artist calls “deeply personal,” depicts a haloed figure—a great teacher—standing before his students. The illustration, rich with deep red and blue, is stunning. “It’s a tribute to all the people throughout all of time that have done what I’m doing now,” Crossingham says, “which is to invite people to connect back to their divine self. Since the fall of mankind there has been an invitation to reestablish that connection and to make that choice once again.

“What I’m hoping with my work,” Crossingham adds,

“is that it really touches people on a soul level and encourages them to see that they are more than who they believe they are. Everything that I’m doing is about self-discovery. It’s about people reconnecting with who they are, reconnecting with their divine self, and just realizing more of their potential and seeing the bigger picture of who they are. I’m a big picture person. I always like to look at things like on a universal level, and I hope my work encourages people to peek behind the veil of



reality and begin to see that there’s so much more than what they’re experiencing on a day-to-day level. Because most get so caught up in everyday life they don’t see that. And there’s so much more to them.”



See more of Tania Crossingham’s work at tania-crossingham.com.



THE MYTHIC WORLD OF THOMAS CANTY by Grace Nuth

For those who love the genre of fantasy and fairy-tale retelling, the 1980s and 1990s were a sort of a golden age. Terri Windling and Charles de Lint, among many other authors, explored the narrative of urban fantasy and mythic fiction. The fairy tales of childhood were brought to the modern world, and magic seemed to leap off the page and into daily life. Many who read some of the brightest and most memorable of the books from this era would be familiar with the art of Thomas Canty. His work appears on the covers of Terri Windling and Ellen Datlow’s *Fairy Tale* series (“the high point and hallmark of my early style,” Canty says), the *Redwall* books by Brian Jacques, and the *Year’s Best Fantasy and Horror* anthology series, among countless others.

His style from this era is immediately recognizable. The Art Nouveau technique of intricate linework on figures, surrounded by looping borders of flowers, Celtic knotwork, and other elaborate patterns (inspired by his background in design) is an idea that has been re-created by many artists over the years, but Canty’s voice made it fresh again and relevant to the time in which he was painting.

As Windling describes it, “these unabashedly Romantic works made a strong impact in the fantasy field—particularly when viewed among the imagery that was prevalent at the time (a plethora of muscular barbarians and women in chain-mail bikinis).” Canty’s work was unlike anyone else’s at the time and perfectly suited the new kind of story emerging on the publishing scene.

Canty’s work is also inspired by the work of John William Waterhouse, Edward Burne-Jones, and other Pre-Raphaelites. Even more compelling to him, however, is the art of the medieval era that inspired all the above artists and art movements with which he is sometimes associated. “The iconic aspects of medieval art coupled with the frightening religious overtones appeal to me. And how can you resist the legends as well? Arthur, his knights, Camelot. All of them,” he says.

“My very first exposure to anything related to the medieval era,” he says, “happened in my twenties when I stumbled onto Howard Pyle’s illustrated *The Story of the Champions of the Round Table*. On reading this, I was hooked. All things medieval, English, Arthurian, I was deeply hooked. I traveled to England, I went to the Tate, I took a bus tour of Kelmscott, I visited castles, I looked at the Crown Jewels, I took lodgings in Earls Court. I bought a small British car. I was an American Anglophile. I came home completely enthralled and nearly drowned myself in any and all things Arthurian related. An all-encompassing interest in fairy tales came later, obviously due to the influence of Terri Windling. Through her, I was exposed to every and all things related to fairy tales. I found that the Arthurian legends and stories were closely interwoven with fairy tales and was seduced by all of it. My paintings and book covers can attest to this seduction.”

When asked which of the artworks he has created is his favorite, he confesses, “Honestly I really like around eighty percent of the cover paintings that I’ve done. Very hard to choose favorites.” Among the pieces of which he is especially proud are the cover painting for *Dandelion Wine*; the paintings for Windling’s *Fairy Tales* series; *Snow White, Blood Red*, again with Windling and Datlow; and the new painting for *The Forgotten Beast of Eld*.

Currently working with Tachyon Publications, Canty is excited by the interesting and challenging assignments they have offered him recently. “I have been privileged to work on Patricia McKillip’s books and collections, something that I love.” His brush still has many stories to tell, and he will forever be remembered for the stunning covers he has already created.

“Books should be like magical jeweled boxes,” he said in an interview with Windling. “It’s the writer’s job to tell the story. My job is to make you want to pick up the box and peer inside.”





A Solstice Celebration

by Brian and Wendy Froud

*When the snow lies on the ground
And when the wind blows cold
Come to the fireside, bright and warm
And welcome to you all*

*The holly and the ivy twine
With berries bright as blood
The mistletoe above us hangs
So green and white and good*

*Come drink the wine and give good cheer
Come eat the food prepared
We gather here with love for all
And welcome the New Year*

Our house has always felt like a winter house. Nestled in a small valley on the edge of Dartmoor, it seems to emerge from the hillside with half of the living room below ground level, rather like a hobbit hole. But then, our house is well over 400 years old, a medieval longhouse. It's made of blocks of the same granite that emerges from the moor as tors, those towering stone edifices that loom up out of the Dartmoor landscape. They are the bones of the moor, and the granite blocks are the bones of our house. Topped by a thatched roof, covered in ivy and climbing roses, our house is truly the epitome of a fairy-tale cottage. Of course in fairy tales the roof doesn't leak, the appliances don't break down, the windows never need washing, and broadband isn't an issue, but that is by the by—It is a fairy-tale house, full of firelight and candlelight and the soft, deep reds and greens of winter.



The gardens are a series of lovely, wild spaces—stone circles, a brook, and a small but determined forest. When the weather is fine, the gardens are our magic place, but when the weather turns and the nights draw in, we retreat to the house, the living room, and the huge stone fireplace, and snuggle down for the winter.

Winter Solstice, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day are all winter holidays here. They are times to gather friends together, reflect upon the past year, decorate the house with holly, ivy, and mistletoe, and plan winter feasts. We have lived in this house for over thirty-five years and each year has been marked by winter gatherings—celebrations of the season.

Just before the 21st of December, the Winter Solstice, we go out to collect greenery to decorate the whole house. Sometimes we'll find fir-tree boughs lying on the ground in the nearby forest, sometimes holly with bright red berries gathered from the hedgerows and ivy that climb over the walls around the garden. That sounds terribly romantic, but we also go to garden centers to buy mistletoe and two Christmas trees! We'll do this in the morning and spend the afternoon decorating the trees—one in the living room and one outside the back door for the birds—and Brian takes special care to make up hanging garlands and bunches of mistletoe, ivy, and holly to hang throughout the house. Once the greenery is up, we bring out the Christmas decorations that we've been collecting since we were married, as well as childhood decorations that we both brought from home. It is a beautiful collection, with each piece reminding us of a Christmas past. We also buy or make one new piece each year to add to the collection. About fifteen years ago I made six flying fairies for the book *A Midsummer Night's Faery Tale* and ever since then we have hung them on the tree. They fly through the branches, with the naughtiest one at the very top, her tongue sticking out, making faces at the people below. Somehow, it wouldn't be Christmas now without the fairies on the tree!

I love to cook, and one of the fun things about living in a medieval house is that I can justify cooking medieval feasts that are magic for the eye and hopefully good to eat as well. I spend hours looking through accounts of feasts, strange and exotic recipes and inspirational ideas that I've saved through the years. Brian and I both feel that medieval feasts and fairy feasts must be quite similar—from a time when fairies were still believed in and respected by most people and the veil between the worlds was thinner. I always think that when I create something strange and beautiful, I'm honoring the fairies.

Growing up in America, we never had the tradition of iced Christmas cakes like they do here in England. These are rich fruitcakes, fed for months with brandy, covered in marzipan and royal icing, and then decorated, usually with a snowman or Father Christmas figure. Instead, I like to make food-grade silicon press molds of beautiful things we have around the house, like interesting pressed brass objects, antique jewelry, or leaves. I then press sugar modeling paste into the molds and dust them with edible gold or colored glitter and place them on the iced cake—these might be angels, faeries, or green men, whatever takes





my fancy for the celebrations. My friends over the years have experienced all my experiments with gold leaf, gingerbread fish, marzipan sheep, and six-legged chickens. I think they wait with slight trepidation to see what I'll come up with next!

When our son Toby was little, I always made a gingerbread house or castle, with sugar windowpanes and white icing snow on the roof. We put little lights inside to shine through the windows and took delight in it for the whole Christmas season. By the time we took the decorations down, on the twelfth night, the gingerbread was far too stale to eat, but we took it out to the garden and the birds and mice enjoyed it. Even though Toby is grown now, with a family of his own, I still make a gingerbread house most years. The fairies like it, so I make it for them when the family isn't with us.

Marking the old year and bringing in the new is important to us, and we celebrate with friends and family for five nights over the holidays. Tired but satisfied, we begin January with a sense of fulfillment and joy for the year to come. Because our house is so very old, Brian and I are aware of the many generations of families that have lived and celebrated here. We always invite their spirits in to celebrate with us and are often aware of the presence of many people now long gone, crowding around



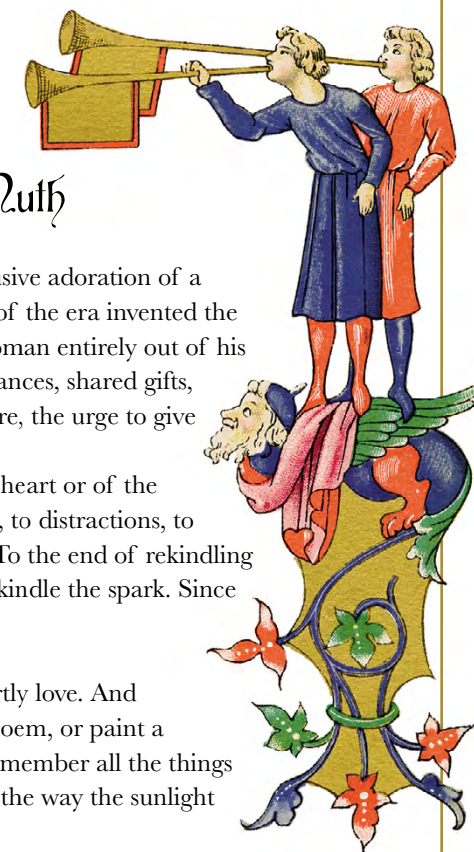
the edges of the rooms. And the fairies? Well, they are always present, but we like to think that they too enjoy the holiday time with us and we're careful to make sure that they are remembered and included, and in turn they bless our house for the coming year.



Visit the Frouds at worldoffroud.com

The Troubadour's Guide to Modern Courtly Love

by Grace Ruth



Ah, young courtly love, the all-consuming, not-quite platonic, and entirely effusive adoration of a medieval knight for his liege's wife. The troubadours, poets, and storytellers of the era invented the idea of an honorable knight's almost worshipful and passionate love for a woman entirely out of his reach. The relationship was meant to stay unconsummated and consist of longing glances, shared gifts, obsessive pining, and poetry. As we all know from the story of Lancelot and Guinevere, the urge to give in to temptation was sometimes too great to bear.

Although we at *Faerie Magazine* do not encourage extramarital affairs, either of the heart or of the body, it is true that to many of us in modern life, we can become married to our jobs, to distractions, to daily habits, and forget about the passionate side of love with our significant others. To the end of rekindling the sort of passionate love exemplified by the troubadours, here is a list of ways to rekindle the spark. Since love comes in all sorts of forms, we will use varying genders for our tips.

Write him poetry. The art of the poem was the primary means of expressing courtly love. And indeed, the whole concept of courtly love was invented by poets. When you write a poem, or paint a picture, of a subject, you cannot help but have to look very closely at every detail. Remember all the things that made you fall in love with him to begin with. Study the pulse beneath his wrists, the way the sunlight plays on his hair.

Give her glittering gifts of beauty. Andreas Capellanus, 12th century author of *De Amore* (About Love), described the process of seeing one's beloved for the first time as a vision of her, made of light, entering the eye and going down through the body to the heart, piercing it until one is "love-struck." Show her you remain just as pierced with love's sharp arrows as ever by giving her shimmering gifts: Fairy wings, glittering dresses, or iridescent journals work just as fine as diamonds or jewels, depending on your lady's tastes and preferences.

Strive to be a person who is worthy to be loved. The code of conduct befitting a knight who yearns to be loved by his lady is precise and strict. And it's true: A healthy loving relationship includes not only a passion and love for the other person but also working hard to be a better person for each other as well. Notice when he is exhausted from work and needs you to help with fixing supper. Catch yourself before you snip at her with anger when really you're upset about something a co-worker said earlier in the day.

Keep each other's secrets, and have secrets. A knight's love for his unattainable lady was a secret only they shared. Respect your partner, and keep their secrets. That much should be obvious. But also, why not share secrets with each other throughout daily life as well? Put a note in his pocket that asks him to solve a riddle, the answer of which is a hint about a surprise awaiting him that night after work. Have a secret code word when you're out with friends that means it's time to go home and just be with each other. You and your beloved are your own little world. Remember that, and keep some things just for you both.

Relish that you have him to come home to. The knight's journeys, on quests, in battle, to do his king's bidding, could be long and exhausting, but he would carry favors of his beloved with him, a ribbon from her hair or a scrap of a gown. When you return home, always embrace your beloved. No matter how terrible or wonderful the day has been, whether you emerge victorious or defeated, they are there for you. Always.





A ROUNDTABLE CHAT WITH JOHN MATTHEWS

Illustrations by Pavel Tatarnikov

We asked Arthurian expert John Matthews, who has devoted the past forty years to King Arthur studies and penned more than 100 books on myth, fairies, the Arthurian Legends, and Grail Studies, and who was an adviser on the Jerry Bruckheimer film *King Arthur* ...

What most inspires you about your medieval studies and all that you've learned?

For me, the most important thing I have learned about the medieval world I have studied for so long is the way they lived life to the full and how they honored their companions. We hear a lot about the world of chivalry, how it was a way of life that taught respect for others from all stations of life. This was not always the case. Historically speaking medieval knights were just as likely to be cutthroats as good men, but within the Arthurian legends we meet those who were honorable, kindly, and caring—who were willing to lay down their lives for another and for each

other, who were devoted to the ideals of the life they lived.

This is best summed up in the pledge that Sir Thomas Mallory, the 15th century author of the greatest book about Arthur and his Knights, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, had King Arthur ask of all the knights who joined the Fellowship of the Round Table. It is one of my favorite quotes, from Book III, Chapter 15, and I pass it on to anyone who believes in the magic of the Round Table:

“The king established all his knights ... and charged them never to do outrage nor murder, and always to flee treason; also, by no means to be cruel, but to give mercy unto him that asked mercy, upon pain of forfeiture of their worship and lordship of King Arthur for evermore; and always to do ladies, damsels, and gentlewomen succor upon pain of death. Also, that no man take no battle in a wrongful quarrel for no law, nor for worldly goods. Unto this were all the knights sworn of the Table Round, both old and young.”

5 THINGS YOU (PROBABLY) DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT KING ARTHUR by John Matthews

1. THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

Arthur, sometimes known as “The King that was and the King that shall be,” is recognized all over the world as one of the most famous characters of myth and legend. Yet if he existed at all (which few scholars agree upon), he would not have been a king but the commander of an elite force of fighting men. He would have lived more than 500 years before medieval storytellers placed his name at the top of the roll call of the most familiar worldwide heroes.

One theory claims that Arthur was a Roman centurion named Lucius Artorius Castus, who fought against the Picts, a northern tribe that constituted the largest kingdom in Dark Age Scotland, along Hadrian's Wall some 300 years before the sixth century, when Arthur's dates are normally set.

Even Arthur's birthplace and base of operations are questionable. Camelot—the castled city associated with King Arthur—was invented by the 12th century French poet Chrétien de Troyes, and Arthur's association with Cornwall and parts of Wales is an idea fostered by 18th century antiquarians such as William Stukeley, who carried out one of the first archeological investigations at Cadbury Castle in Somerset, long believed in local folklore to be the original site of Camelot.

2. THE ROUND TABLE

The Round Table is the centerpiece of the Arthurian world. According to the 13th century poet Layamon, Arthur ordered the table to be built for him by a famous Cornish carpenter, who somehow made the table capable of seating 1,600 men yet easily portable to wherever Arthur set up his mobile base of operations.

Other stories suggest it was Merlin, the king's magician, who made the table round, “in the likeness of the world” and who sent out a call to the bravest and truest knights to join a great

fellowship whose task was to care for the disenfranchised (especially women) and who would do no harm to anyone who did not deserve it.

Some 150 knights were said to have sat at the Round Table—the earlier estimation of 1,600 is clearly an exaggeration, since such a table would have been too large to sit within any hall then in existence. Their adventures lead us into a magical realm of wonder, where “fairy women” test the nobility of the knights by offering them seemingly impossible tasks and strange creatures lurk in the shadows of a vast forest in whose depth are clearings where castles, chapels, hermitages, and ruins are found—some empty, others containing dangerous foes.

3. MERLIN

Merlin, Arthur's adviser, appears in different legends as a magician, a prophet, a wild man, or a visionary poet. He is said to have helped bring about the birth of the future king by magically giving Arthur's father, Uther Pendragon, the likeness of his rival, Gorlois of Tintagel, Duke of Cornwall, so that Uther could engender a child with Gorlois's wife, Igraine. Once Arthur was born, Merlin is said to have carried him away to a secret location in the forest and watched over him until he came of age.

At this point, Merlin supposedly arranged the test of the Sword in the Stone, which only the true king could draw. Some scholars have suggested that this tale may be an ancient memory of a sword crafted from iron extracted from a fallen meteor which, when poured into a stone mold, could be said to have come from a stone. This sword is often confused with Arthur's most famous weapon, Excalibur, the legendary sword said to have magical powers. In fact that blade was given to Arthur later by the Lady of the Lake.

It is another such fairy being, Nimue,

the handmaid of the Lady of the Lake, who becomes Merlin's nemesis: Merlin falls passionately in love with the beautiful damsel, who tricks him into giving her the secrets of his magic and then uses them against him, locking him forever in a cave from which, years after, the cry of Merlin could still be heard.

4. FAIRY WOMEN

Many fairy women thread together the stories of Arthur and his knights. This is probably because a good number of the stories originated not in Britain, but in Brittany—or, as it was known then, Armorica, where belief in ancient deities and the fairy race lived on. These fairy tales became interwoven with stories of chivalry beloved by the courtly circle. Within this circle these stories were told by roving troubadours, poets who learned dozens of Arthurian tales by heart.

5. THE GRAIL

The greatest task undertaken by Arthur's knights was the quest for the Grail, a mysterious vessel linked to the Passion of Christ. According to the 12th century poet Robert De Boron, the Grail was used to celebrate the Last Supper and afterward by Christ's “uncle,” Joseph of Arimathea, to catch some of the blood that flowed from the Savior as his body was taken down from the cross.

Earlier stories from the mythology of the Celts can be seen as precursors of the Grail: They spoke of “cauldrons of plenty” that provided food for heroes and could even bring the dead to life. But once the links with Christian belief were established in the 12th century, the Grail became a holy relic that was sought by mystics and heroes—and, most famously, by Arthur's fellowship.

Learn more about John Matthews at hallowquest.org.uk.

THE ECCENTRICITIES OF GENTLEMEN

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

Suspicion and Sympathy

The indelibility of invisible inks



To mix his ink, the medieval scribe might have relied on the dregs of wine, the rust of nails, the rind of the pomegranate apple, soot from bathhouse chimneys, burned ivory, the dark crust scraped from brass kettles, black amber, fish glues, and nut galls. And then there were the “sympathetic” inks, invisible until held up to the flame of the candle to unlock their secret messages, the notes written in the juices of onions, oranges, and artichokes. “By these means maids sending and receiving love letters, escape from those that have charge of them,” wrote John Baptista Porta in 15th century Naples.

In *Forty Centuries of Ink* (1904), David N. Carvalho attempted to chronicle this history of the inkpot but lamented that “historians have neglected to record information about the very substance by which they sought to keep and transmit the chronicles they most desired to preserve.”

He blames the Dark Ages for some of this disappearing ink—medieval kings and emperors who couldn’t read, or wouldn’t read, and preferred to spend their time torching libraries.

“When the Crusaders took Constantinople, in 1204,” wrote Theodore De Vinne in *The Invention of Printing* (1878), “they exposed to public ridicule the pens and inkstands that they found in the conquered city as the ignoble arms of a contemptible race of students.”

An alchemist by the name of Paracelsus, the father of laudanum among other nifty curatives, dabbled in sympathetic inks in the Middle Ages, and was famously credited for a trick painting that could change from a winter scene to a summer garden. From Sigmund Lehner’s *The Manufacture of Ink*: “The

branches of the trees are executed with ordinary brown paint, while the leaves are painted with vanishing cobalt-nickel ink. On heating the drawing the bare branches become clothed in green.”

Lehner writes also of an “ink for ladies,” all the rage in Paris in the 1890s, peddled as a solution for love letters. “In four weeks characters written with it disappear, preventing all abuse of letters, and doing away with all documentary evidence of any kind in the hands of the recipient.”

Carvalho, the ink historian, addressed the issue of invisible ink—and other matters of the pen—in courtrooms in hundreds of cases. Court documents of the late 19th and early 20th century are riddled with his expertise and testimony, and the newspapers loved him, reporting on the crimes he solved and the plots he twisted, based on the slant of a signature and the press of a pen nib.

In her biography of Carvalho, his daughter cited his “careless elegance”; in his youth, she writes, he wore a black cloak, “a tender little moustache, and on the curve of his chin, just under his lower lip, a tiny tuft of black beard.” Dandified and confident, Carvalho took the stage to defame dignitaries, expose forgeries, and disappoint murderers.

Carvalho attempts to describe the disappearing tricks of certain ink during a court case involving deceptive checkbooks and invoices in 1913. “You don’t mean to tell the court and jury,” he’s asked in examination, “that something can be gathered from the air and put on that check that is not there.” The *Alice in Wonderland* rhythm and rhyme is the court’s own.

Carvalho explains the difference between an ink being removed (“If it was taken away entirely, of course it could not be restored”) and an ink being invisible (“I can bring it back again”). He demonstrates his sensitivity to the grades of ink by making a distinction between quality writing fluids, such as David’s Ink and Stafford’s Ink, and “the trashy stuff that is used, by-products of coal tar ... they are not inks at all; they are sort of *stains*.” (The added emphasis is mine, based on my sense of an implied sneer.)

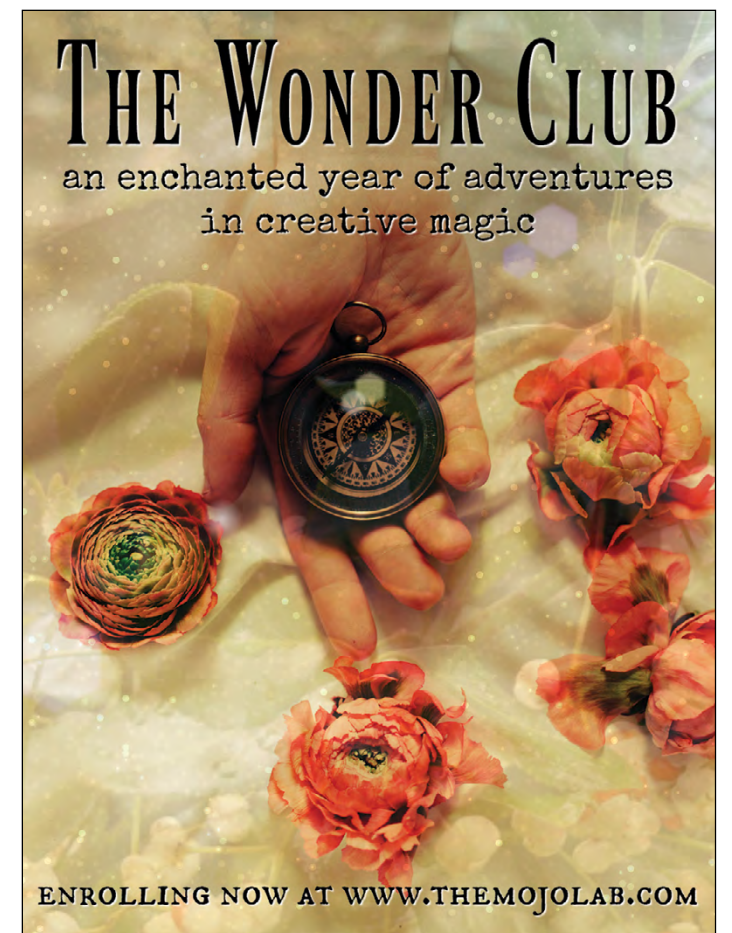
A 1903 edition of *Practical Druggist* offers an alternative to invisible ink: disappearing paper. The paper is steeped in acid, dried, glazed, then neutralized by ammoniac vapor. “But the acid still remains in the pores, and that paper is infallibly doomed.” This invention is recommended “to those who cannot always trust their correspondents to ‘burn these letters.’”

Such a tool might serve the spy, as do these methods outlined by the American Protective League, a World War I-era volunteer auxiliary formed to sniff out German sympathizers and antiwar activists, in its assessment of enemy tactics: “A piece of necktie has been taken off one German, a corner of which, snipped off and put in a glass of water, would make an invisible ink. A shoestring has been known to do the same thing.”

Death Behind the Door, a mystery novel by Victor MacClure published in 1933, includes a clue in invisible ink. If you were to hold a match to the right page, a skull would appear. One critic reported that he caught the page on fire, creating a case of “burnie, burnie, little fingers.”

While many ink recipes and formulas sizzle with acids and sulfates, John Badcock offers this soothing recipe for “Invisible Yellow Ink” in *Philosophical Recreations, or, Winter Amusements* in 1820: Steep marygold flowers, seven or eight days in clear distilled vinegar. Press the flowers, and strain the liquor, which is to be kept in a bottle well corked ... To render visible the characters which you write with this ink, pass a sponge over the paper, dipped in the following solution: Take a quantity of flowers of pansy, or the common violet, bruise them in a mortar with water, strain the liquor in a cloth, and keep it in a bottle for use.

Timothy Schaffert is the author of five novels, most recently *The Swan Gondola*. He is a professor of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Learn more at timothyschaffert.com.



THE TROUBADOURS: AN APPRECIATION

by Susanne Dunlap

The audience of nobles in the region of the Langue d'Oc, sometime late in the 12th century, waits patiently, sated with a feast of wild boar, roasted swan, ortolans, venison, fruits and nuts from the fertile countryside, and wine that flows like water. The entertainment is about to begin. But they expect no troupe of wandering minstrels, no peasant acrobats come to earn a few extra *sous*. The host has invited a fellow nobleman, a renowned troubadour, to provide music and poetry that will satisfy his guests' refined taste for the most arcane forms.

Everyone is seated at tables by rank, the most exalted at the head table, the minor aristocrats and wealthy merchants at lower tables set up on trestles along the sides. The rich velvets and silks the ladies wear exhibit the massive wealth of their husbands, who number among them counts and barons, lords and wealthy merchants, doctors, lawyers, Christians, and Jews. Wax candles flicker, their light dancing off the silver and pewter goblets. A ewer makes the rounds, inviting the diners to rinse their hands in clean water and towel them dry with the softest, white linen.

A hush falls over the gathering. One of the guests rises from his place at a side table and gestures toward a servant, who brings him a stringed instrument that looks like a guitar with a body shaped like a holly leaf. A *vielle*.

After plucking the strings and tuning his instrument, the nobleman takes his seat on a stool in the middle of the gathering. Next to him is another stool, for the moment empty.

He begins with a song in praise of the lady of the manor. Its form is intricate, exact. Not a syllable, not a rhyme, is out of place. Everyone at the gathering hears his artistry and appreciates it. All the metaphors, the allusions, the conventions, are familiar to everyone. This is a skill that has taken him many years of careful study. He is able to improvise perfection.

When the applause and murmurs of appreciation die down, he rises from his seat and approaches the head table, bowing to the lady who has just been honored with his song. She stands, walks around the table to him. He takes her hand and leads her to the other stool in the middle of the gathering, placing his *vielle* on the floor by his feet. For this next entertainment, there is no need of accompaniment.

The lady is a renowned *trobairitz* in her own right. Like many of the noblewomen of that time and place, she has

been well educated, expected to be wise as well as beautiful, to possess the ability to serve as master when the lord is gone.

She and her noble guest have sung together many times before. They are in the midst of a long argument in poetry, where each of them must supply a stanza in turn, playing off the other's without violating any of the requirements of the form. This argument, a *tenso*, is like a story in serial. Only at the end, the guests will decide which side of the argument prevails, who is the winner of this genteel contest of verbal and musical skill.

None of them—not the troubadour and *trobairitz*, not the noble and common guests, not the servants—can foresee that a generation or two from that time, these traditions and arts will be little more than a memory. The language of the troubadours—not French, but Occitan—will no longer be spoken except in secret. The peaceful, open society that has helped the troubadours and *trobairitz* flourish will have succumbed to the cruelty of France's only domestic crusade, against the heretics known as Cathars.

But for now, a magical bond unites the diverse, appreciative crowd, and the music and poetry continue until dawn.

*Lo vers dech far en tal rima,
Mascl'e femel que ben rim,
Quiieu trac lo gran de la palha
De sne qu'om no ss'I empalh.*

(I should compose a *vers* with such a rhyme scheme, masculine and feminine that it will rhyme well, for I separate the grain from the chaff so that no one of sense can be incommoded by it.)

—Anonymous

*N'Alaisina Iselda, 'nsenhamenz
Pretz e beltatz, jovenz, fescas colors'conosc qu'avetz, cortisia e valors,
Sobre totas las autras conoissenz*

(Lady Alaisina Iselda, I know you have learning, merit and beauty, youth, fresh complexion, courtesy and worth, more than all other knowledgeable women)

—Bieiris de Romans

Susanne Dunlap is the author of six historical novels for adults and teens, spanning periods and places from seventeenth-century France to twentieth-century Russia. While studying for her PhD in music history from Yale University, Dunlap became familiar with the medieval troubadours of southwestern France. Three as-yet-unpublished novels are set during this rich period of history. Learn more about Susanne and her work at susanne-dunlap.com.



Hildegard of Bingen:
Daughter of Light by Mary McMyne

“When I was forty-two years and seven months old, Heaven was opened and a fiery light of exceeding brilliance came and permeated my whole brain, and inflamed my whole heart and my whole breast, not like a burning but like a warming flame, as the sun warms anything its rays touch.”

—Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, 1151

I traveled to Bingen three years ago to research my upcoming novel, *The Book of Gothel*. The book follows a 12th century German peasant woman’s pilgrimage to visit St. Hildegard at Rupertsberg. Nervous about the prospect of writing a saint, I’d planned a pilgrimage of my own: to visit the modern-day Abbey of St. Hildegard that now sits across the river in Eibingen. I wanted to experience the world of the saint firsthand. Before my trip, I devoured several biographies and a translation of Hildegard’s correspondence. I bought copies of her books of natural medicine, her illuminated visionary texts.

Bingen today is a modern European city, with updated hotels that sit on the same blocks as medieval churches. Cobblestone walkways end in concrete parking lots. Railroad tracks run alongside ancient blue rivers. You can still cross the River Nahe on the Drusus Bridge, the oldest stone bridge in Germany. A wooden bridge going back to Roman times stood in its place before the stone was laid in the 10th century. Today, the sun doubles its arches in the mirror of the river, as swans float across tranquil reflections of clouds.

Rupertsberg, the historic abbey Hildegard founded at Bingen, is nowhere to be seen. Its ruins were demolished in 1857 to make room for the railroad station that now sits beside the Rhine. All that remains of Hildegard’s abbey are portions of the original cellar, which have been incorporated into the foundations of a few modern buildings. Yet Hildegard is everywhere. Her name is printed in bright white capital letters

on street signs. A long-running exhibit at the city museum dramatizes the daily details of her life in miniature. Outside, you can walk through an herb garden full of the plants she wrote about in *Physica*. Images of the saint, large and small, fix their stony gaze on you in church courtyards and residential gardens. They watch from the windows of restaurant bathrooms as you wash your hands.

Born sickly in 1098, the tenth child in a noble German family, Hildegard of Bingen was destined by birth order and tradition to devote her life to the church. In her *Vita*, she writes that she experienced her first vision at three, that she was given over to spiritual life at eight. There is little historical evidence of Hildegard’s childhood, but the women’s cell where she was first enclosed at Disibodenberg was probably small. An out-of-the-way monastery in the woods, Disibodenberg primarily housed monks. There wasn’t much room for a women’s enclosure. Hildegard biographer Fiona Maddocks describes the ideal monastic life for nuns at this time as a kind of living burial. Imagine a girl entering a stone-walled cloister with no access to the outside world.

The woman with whom Hildegard was first enclosed, Jutta of Sponheim, believed in the spiritual benefits of extreme fasting, deprivation, and self-inflicted wounds. Despite being enclosed in that cell with Jutta for decades, Hildegard didn’t tell her—or anyone else—about her visions. She would not speak of them until she was forty-two, when the Living Light commanded her to write them down.

Hildegard’s visions are startling in their strangeness.

Inspired by the Living Light, which she described as speaking to her “inner ear,” the visions seem at times more aligned with modern New Age spiritual thought than medieval Catholicism. There is something almost psychedelic about the illuminations she supervised for her first manuscript, *Scivias*. In the illumination dramatizing the moment God revealed Himself to her, Hildegard shows the Almighty enthroned on a mountain in neon glory, above a meditative tableau of eyes. In the illumination for another vision, she depicts the universe as a fiery, mandalic egg.

Looking at these illuminations, I feel awe at the mystery of their inspiration. The images are so strange, they seem to require belief in an otherworldly source. It doesn’t surprise me that a half-finished copy of *Scivias* inspired Pope Eugenius III to give his blessing for Hildegard’s visions. Or that Hildegard’s fame grew so much as a mystic, she had to ask for permission to move her growing community of nuns. Disibodenberg, the abbey where she was originally enclosed, had become overcrowded. After Jutta’s death in 1136, Hildegard had taken over as leader of the women’s enclosure. She had become quite famous by this point for her visions and skill with spiritual healing, receiving visitors from as far away as Gaul.

All her life, Hildegard was prone to bouts of a sudden and intense mystery illness, which blinded her and caused intense pain that prevented her from leaving her bed. Over and over, as Maddocks notes in her biography, there is a coincidence of the onset of this illness with serious life events. The story of how she came to ask for permission to move her nuns is no different. In her *Vita*, Hildegard writes that the Living Light told her in a vision to move her nuns to a new monastery. The ordained location of the new monastery was Mount St. Rupert, in modern-day Bingen, about a day’s travel from Disibodenberg, at the intersection of the Nahe and Rhine rivers. When Hildegard did not act on this information, she grew sicker, unable to see, suffering intense pain. Eventually, the abbot accepted that her vision was divinely inspired.

I can’t help but wonder about Hildegard’s mysterious ailment, the way it often seemed to rally others to her cause. Her symptoms included sudden and intense pain, sensitivity to light, nausea, drowsiness, and inability to get out of bed. In his 1999 book, British neurologist Oliver Sacks argues that Hildegard’s visions were the result of migraine headaches.

By the time Hildegard moved her growing community of nuns to Rupertsberg, the abbess was well-known for her powers of spiritual healing. During the second half of her life, she would write two books of natural medicine. Many of the practices Hildegard advocates in these books are obviously medieval. To cure jaundice, she recommends tying a dying bat to the patient’s stomach. To cure epilepsy, she recommends sinking an agate in water for three days while the moon is full.



The ruins of Disibodenberg monastery, where Hildegard was first enclosed.

The remedies Hildegard recommends for headaches seem a little more reasonable: wetting the forehead with zedoary powder, drinking a draught of wormwood or absinthe mixed with warmed wine. Hildegard also advocates boiling water before you drink it—useful, scientific advice—and historians like Guggenheim fellow Victoria Sweet see her writing as invaluable to understanding the roots of Western medicine.

As my trip drew closer, I delved deeper into Hildegard’s spiritual writing. I felt drawn to her because of the strangeness of her visions, the unexpected power and wildness of her ideas. If anyone ever tapped into the Divine, I thought, she did. In New Age circles, Hildegard is beloved for her embrace of the concept of *viriditas*, a Latin word that translates literally as “greenness.” Hildegard refers often to the *viriditas* of Nature, its Divinity, its power to transcend dualism. In one vision in *Scivias*, she writes of Eve’s innocence, seeming to blame Adam and the devil for the Fall. She was criticized by her contemporaries for encouraging her nuns to dress in fine white vestments and gold crowns, adorning themselves as brides of Christ, in defiance of traditional monastic teaching.



The modern-day Abbey of St. Hildegard in Eibingen, Germany.

In many ways, Hildegard seems to have been an individual whose ideas are startlingly modern. And yet, as I read her work more closely, it became clear to me that no matter how inspired Hildegard was, she was very much a medieval person, with a medieval worldview. In one letter, translated by Joseph L. Baird, Hildegard confirms that she only accepted noblewomen into her abbey, revealing her clear belief in a social hierarchy based on class. “Who would gather all his livestock indiscriminately into one barn,” she wrote, “the cattle, the asses, the sheep, the kids?” In Mother Columba Hart and Jane Bishop’s translation of *Scivias*, Hildegard writes often of the sins of the flesh, the pit of human pleasures, and man’s wickedness. She glorifies virginity and argues that women cannot be priests because they are “appointed to bear children.” Nor should men and women wear one another’s clothes; God will punish anyone who contaminates their body “with perverted pollutions.” By the time I packed my bags for Germany, my trip to Bingen had become a quest to understand Hildegard, to reconcile these less appealing parts of her personality with the parts I loved.

Arriving in Bingen, I stumbled out of the train station into the bright street, squinting, exhausted from the reading I’d done the night before. The wheels of my giant suitcase clicked noisily over the sidewalk. The walk to my hotel was uninspiring. There was a concrete overpass, a highway. I was very nearly hit by a car.

I had booked a room at this particular hotel a few days before because it advertised itself as being built on the historic site of Hildegard’s abbey. My room was a simple affair: a bed, a desk, a place to plug in my laptop. It had everything I needed, but I was a bit disappointed as I set down my things. I had tried to make a reservation at the modern-day Abbey of St. Hildegard across the river in Eibingen, but an email misunderstanding with the sister in charge of reservations had lost me the room.

Sprawling across the hotel bed, I looked over my notes. It was already mid-afternoon, so I decided to visit the sites in the immediate vicinity of the hotel: the Drusus Bridge, the St. Hildegard Parish Catholic Church. I wanted to see some of the abbey cellar I had read about online—you could supposedly visit it at someplace called the Wurth-house—but I hadn’t been able to find an address.

I found the places I wanted to visit on an internet map, sketched the map out in my travel diary, and headed outside. Looking up the street, I saw a sign for RUPERTSBERG directly outside my hotel. Following the arrow, I stumbled across a square white building down the street, close enough that I could see it from my hotel room window. The sign outside the building was in German, with a few long words I didn’t recognize. I did recognize “museum” and “Hildegard” and “Rupertsberg,” however, so I went in.

The first thing I saw inside was a tapestry with an embroidered map of the abbey and Bingen in the 12th century. Next were several signs in German, which I’m embarrassed to

admit my vocabulary was too limited to read. On the other side of the room was a scattering of Celtic statues and a staircase leading down.

Descending the steps, I began a difficult conversation in German with the docent, a kind elderly woman who did not speak a word of English. We talked in circles, neither of us able to understand the other. I understood a few words, here and there, but was unable to piece together what she was trying to tell me.

After a few minutes, the woman shook her head, frustrated. She walked over to a stereo in the corner and turned on some music that I recognized as Hildegard’s immediately. She smiled, watching realization dawn on my face. Turning around, I realized that the door I’d just walked through was an actual historic door from the abbey. I was standing in one of the surviving portions of the cellar. Smiling back at the docent, I burst into tears.

When I recovered, she led me to a statue of Hildegard in the corner. The look on the saint’s face was joyful, compassionate. I lit the candle beside the statue and prayed, transported by the ancient stone walls of the cellar and the relics around me. Then I wandered the exhibits, purchasing several maps of the historic abbey—two superimposing its buildings over modern-day Bingerbrück, which would prove invaluable in writing my novel—a few postcards, a CD.

When I finally left the dimly lit cellar and walked—blinking—into the bright summer street, what I really wanted to do was find a grassy hill to sit on, to clear my head and think. But the year was 2014. Bingen was a tangle of concrete and railways. There was no such hill anywhere near me. Instead, I walked to the St. Hildegard Parish Church, which was supposed to have a few of the relics I wanted to see and some Hildegard-related art. The heavy wooden doors jangled when I pulled on them, locked.

My heart sank. I had arrived too late.

With a heavy feeling in my chest, I wandered the church grounds until I saw a large statue of Hildegard with a bench beside it. Comforted, I plopped down on the bench and pulled out my travel diary, weary, looking up at the statue’s face. The setting sun glinted against the stone, making it appear almost golden. Her expression was much like the statue in the museum: compassionate, understanding, without a trace of arrogance or judgment.

And when I looked up at her, she spoke to me.



Mary McMynne is the author of the award-winning poetry chapbook, *Wolf Skin* (Dancing Girl Press, 2014) and the recipient of the Faulkner Prize for a *Novel-in-Progress*. Her upcoming novel, *The Book of Gothel*, follows a 12th century peasant woman to Hildegard’s abbey, the court of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and the legendary tower of Gothel.



Hildegard's first illuminated vision in *Scivias*,
“The One Enthroned”



Hildegard's third illuminated vision in *Scivias*, “The Universe”

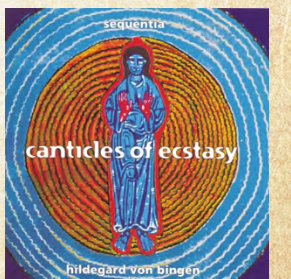
HILDEGARD’S MUSIC

In addition to her visionary and natural writings, Hildegard wrote the first musical morality play, *Ordo Virtutum*, without formal training, and sixty-nine other innovative musical compositions.

Her liturgical songs are considered notable by music scholars for their haunting melodies and fluid style, which asks singers to stretch syllables over multiple notes.

Sequentia has released a number of historically accurate arrangements of Hildegard’s music. The most widely loved album, perhaps, is *Canticles of Ecstasy* (Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, 1994), which sold half a million copies worldwide and won Sequentia a Grammy nomination and contract with BMG to record Hildegard’s complete works.

Listening to these songs 900 years later, you can easily imagine Hildegard singing with her sisters in the candlelit convent chapel, their voices sliding up and down strange stairs of melody, building haunting architectures of praise.



Gowned in Samite and Gossamer

THE EXQUISITE FABRICATIONS OF THE SEAMSTRESS OF ROHAN

by Stephanie Stewart-Howard

One of the greatest draws for modern people to the Romantic past is a fashion aesthetic dramatically different from our own. It's true for everyone, though women typically more readily admit they adore the idea of flowing silks and wools, rich brocade skirts, and hats trailing epic yards of linen gauze veil. With that understanding, the Seamstress of Rohan has become not only a sensation on Instagram but a coveted maker of historically inspired clothing through their online store.

The Seamstress is two designer-tailors, Maite Pizà and Emerita Martínez, who also incidentally serve as their own exquisite models. The gifted pair met in their native Mallorca, where they created their business and larger artistic project. Now Martínez is based in the UK, where she studies clothing and costume at Huddersfield University in West Yorkshire. Pizà, who studies English literature, also teaches English in Mallorca. While Martínez learned and honed her craft at university, Pizà started sewing with her mother at home. Both are additionally self-taught through personal dedication.

Together, they conjure glorious couture creations spanning centuries in time, from the mystic, medieval swish of houppelandes à la the *White Queen* to *Poldark*-influenced 18th century British shorelines and hemlines and beyond. Patterning is one skill requiring mastery, sewing another; building an aesthetic on their level and taking it to the next step is artistry—a gift that can't entirely be learned.

Martínez and Pizà, in one voice, spoke to *Faerie Magazine* about their work and inspiration.

Faerie Magazine: Tell me about the locations you've used to photograph your medieval images.

Seamstress of Rohan: We are lucky we can shoot in a great variety of places with amazing historical heritage. To us, if the location doesn't communicate the feelings we're looking for, then the project isn't complete. We select very carefully where we shoot: It wouldn't make sense to us to shoot a Renaissance costume in an obviously Rococo setting. Our medieval pictures in the magazine were shot in the north of Catalonia, in the city of Girona, whose cathedral has an amazing witch legend—and there's an abandoned chapel in the woods. Also, we've shot in the south of France in an abandoned château and the woods; in forests and castles in Mallorca; in Loch Ness and the Eilean Donan castle in Scotland; and in the magical town of Sintra, Portugal.

FM: What inspires your designs?

SR: It can be as simple as a painting or a drawing, or an old novel triggering a whole lot of feelings and ideas. Then we do a rough sketch; think about possible fabrics, textures, and colors; and the whole project starts to take shape. What we think is important is our artistic point of view in the designs—the pictures must absolutely tell a story. Fashion photography is not enough to portray the atmosphere we want to share.

FM: Do you find the patterning and construction an enjoyable challenge?

SR: It depends on the period. Medieval clothing is simpler in terms of pattern shapes, although more complex when it comes to handwork. It's also difficult to re-create, in the sense that there are a very small number of extant pieces of clothing. We also love more structured looks from the Renaissance and 18th century periods, which can be a huge challenge. All in all, each period has its own appeal, whether it's patterning, construction, layers and layers of fabric ... we love it all!

FM: How did you develop your aesthetic—your sense of color, texture, and mood?

SR: We'd be lying if we didn't mention the enormous influence of Pre-Raphaelitism in our work. The Pre-Raphaelites, together with Romantic values, have shaped the way we choose colors and like to emphasize the female figure against the landscape. Of course, it also depends on the photographer behind the lens, but we normally end up working with artists who share similar tastes.

FM: You serve as your own models too?

SR: We mostly model ourselves because it's easier to fit clothing to our own bodies than arrange fittings with other models. Additionally, it's difficult to find people with no obvious, easily seen modern stuff (piercings, tattoos, multicolored hair). Not that we're in any way against that—it just wouldn't look right. Also, even if we've given instructions, sometimes other models won't wear the proper period underwear to get the correct shape and so on. So we prefer to have total control over how our designs are worn. Incorrect underwear can cause an outfit to look terrible.

FM: The Pre-Raphaelite artists are important to you—which artists and paintings are your biggest influences?



Gowned in Samite and Gossamer

Stephanie Stewart-Howard

SR: We love the very early and medievalist watercolors and drawings by Dante Rossetti and Elizabeth Siddal. They look so authentically medieval if you don't look carefully. But we also love later art like Waterhouse's, which has a modernist touch to it. Marie Spartali Stillman's depiction of clothing is so very interesting.

FM: TV and movies are clearly big inspirations as well. Are there any medieval films that you've re-created?

SR: We did a more historically faithful and accurate rendition of the White queen and Red queen from *The White Queen*. We are really into the Wars of the Roses and enjoyed the series, but we wanted to make our own version of the dresses. We did some stuff inspired by *The Borgias* and also last year's film *The Witch* (even though that's Renaissance). The red kirtle with the belt is inspired by a Waterhouse painting.

FM: If your team had to choose a single time period in which to work, what would it be?

SR: Probably the 16th century, from early Renaissance—as in paintings by Raphael, going through Tudor and Elizabethan, and to later Elizabethan dresses with those wheel farthingales.

FM: Are there particular favorite garments you have created?

For Maite, it has to be the black Elizabethan silk dress with linen ruff and everything. For Emerita, it is her emerald green Tudor dress in silk, inspired by Anne Boleyn.

FM: How much time and effort goes into your sourcing, buying, and selecting fabrics?

SR: Quite a lot! As you can imagine this is something you can't just make in a day or two. If you're starting to work with an era you are not acquainted with, you have to soak in that period and start learn about the shapes, fashionable colors, and fabrics, and dig into patterning and techniques used. Then obviously finding fabrics that look period or are the right materials is quite difficult, since there's polyester in almost everything. One could literally search the net for online fabric shops for days!

FM: Can you share any favorite sources for fabrics or other materials you use in your designs?

SR: We're in love with silks, damasks, and brocades from India. They have a very period look and luxurious feel for upper classes. It's funny—IKEA actually has some duvet designs that are perfect for later 18th century clothing (and 100 percent cotton). And also natural gray and beige linen from IKEA is great to custom-dye for the lower classes. Historical cottons for quilting have great colors and patterns, but you have to be lucky to find enough yardage. Also for shoes, American Duchess, which was featured in your Autumn issue, does an amazing job making the

most comfortable, beautiful, period-correct shoes!

FM: Does working with these settings and clothes constantly influence the choices you make for what to wear every day?

SR: Yes, in the way that we are super practical in the way we dress for everyday life. We are jeans, trainers, and sweaters kind of girls. So we dress completely differently from what we sew, partly because modern clothing doesn't have the same appeal to us.

FM: What's the hardest part of getting a costume just right?

SR: Details such as headdresses, hairstyles, and foundation garments—corsets especially. They are key to looking as if you stepped out of a painting. Sometimes people forget that back in the day, you wouldn't throw a hoodie on and go out with your hair down as we do today. And corsets have particular shapes for each period. A 1900s dress doesn't look the same with an 1840s corset, for example.

FM: Can you describe the whole process, from coming up with an idea to finishing it?

SR: Normally, when we get inspired—by a film, story, painting, even a location—we get really obsessed about making that particular thing. We constantly research it, look for materials. We even visit flea markets looking for the right vintage prop. We normally scale or draft our own patterns, but getting readymade patterns makes things quicker.

When constructing a gown, it's great to have the right atmosphere—for example, listening to medieval music when making a medieval gown. A favorite is Jordi Savall, an amazing music historian. Sometimes we make a project on our own, other times it's born from the beginning in conjunction with a photographer. For example, with Helena Aguilar Mayans, we start with some ideas in mind—witches through the ages, the Brontë sisters—so we have a better idea of how it's going to end up.

FM: Can buyers commission work from you?

SR: Absolutely yes, we do custom dresses—especially *Outlander* dresses lately!

FM: What costumes do you dream of making?

SR: All the 1830s and 1840s dresses that look like they came from a Victorian novel. Also, this is something almost impossible, but a Fortuny Delphos dress is up there on our wildest dreams list.

FM: Why do you think people are so excited by and in love with the fashions of the past?

SR: Because they were made with love and care and they were completely custom, made in sturdy and durable fabrics.



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Mason Photography



“Of course, magic is everywhere! In every herb that heals us, in every tree that provides shade, in every creature that manages to come into this world and survive—even if humans make it difficult for them. We can find magic in perfect seams and well-fitted sleeves.”



© Alex Kle Photography



© Viktor Pihov

Nowadays, we just buy stuff made industrially and will last a few years. Period clothing was truly a work of art and craftsmanship. Now it is just a way to make money.

FM: You've got a lot of images that are inspired by the supernatural—like your pictures inspired by Geillis from *Outlander*. Do you believe in magic?

SR: Of course, magic is everywhere! In every herb that heals us, in every tree that provides shade, in every creature that manages to come into this world and survive—even if humans make it difficult for them. We can find magic in perfect seams and well-fitted sleeves.

FM: What do you want the people who look at your photos to know about the process that goes into creating them that they might not be able to guess or imagine?

SR: That every time you have to fit something you're making, you have to put on all the under layers each time! If not, you're not *really* seeing how it will look with all the correct supports. You even have to calculate your hem with the shoes you will be wearing on. Each project is a learning process, you always learn from your mistakes, and each new dress is an opportunity to show or practice a new technique. We love to keep learning!

Stephanie Stewart-Howard is a journalist, costumer, artist, actor, and scholar, happily tech writing for a multi-national gaming company. Formerly an editor with Gannett, she's the author of The Nashville Chef's Table, Kentucky Bourbon and Tennessee Whiskey, and myriad articles on art, fashion, travel, and nerd culture.

Dressing Medieval

So you want to add a little mythical and medieval flair to your daily wardrobe? Here are a few ideas.

- ✦ Check out your local thrift stores and estate sales for vintage Ren Fest–inspired dresses from the 1960s and '70s. Look for Gunne Sax by Jessica McClintock, for example.
- ✦ Head to Goodwill after prom season for full-length gowns you can convert.
- ✦ Shoes and boots make things perfect—brands like Clarks, Born, Wolky, and sometimes Ugg have great fit, super comfort, and very medieval styles. Everything from a pointed Mary Jane that hints at a 14th century poulaine to shearling-lined Viking boots. For literal medieval re-creation shoes, try Boots by Bohemond. I wear a cute pair of slippers by them all the time, boots-by-bohemond.myshopify.com.
- ✦ It's all about hair: If you have long hair, creative braids, Princess Leia side buns (inspired by 14th century style), or wavy Pre-Raphaelite curls, top them with a flower or leaf crown (try using a garland from Michaels or JOANN Fabrics) or perhaps have a great rhinestone necklace pinned in. If you have short hair, Amazon and eBay offer easy hair pieces to add at reasonable prices.
- ✦ Tiaras! You can find wonderful tiaras online for less than \$25 if your budget is small. Search wedding accessories for the best selections. If you want to order something epic, JP Cole (Master Aethelstan) makes the most lovely things. etsy.com/shop/jpcolestudios.
- ✦ Gentlemen: boots, medieval patterned vests and ties, and smaller inexpensive medieval buckles for both men and women. quietpress.com
- ✦ Mathew Gnagy, the brilliant costume designer for *Blue Bloods*, has a splendid pattern for a man's dress jacket based on a 17th century doublet. He's bringing medieval and Renaissance sexy back for menswear. Follow him on Facebook at facebook.com/themodernmaker
- ✦ Outerwear with flair? If you sew, try the Kinsale cloak pattern from Folkwear. I made one in college in a warm spring green wool and have worn it for twenty years. folkwear.com/products/207-kinsale-cloak
- ✦ If you don't sew, look for jackets with deep hoods and an elegant drape. Pixie Cove's solstice coat stands out in a crowd (order a size up). pixiecove.com/products/solstice
- ✦ If you want a costume element, check out ArmStreet for stunning medieval-esque clothing at moderate prices: armstreet.com/store
- ✦ If you're shopping online, retailers such as eShakti, Zully, and Holy Clothing offer dresses with historic lines that look grand on a wide variety of bodies. All of them have deals if you sign up for their email blasts.
- ✦ Medieval jewelry is always perfect. I buy medieval reproductions at Crafty Celts (craftycelts.com)—they do the jewelry for the *Vikings* TV show—and Etsy stores like Feed the Ravens (etsy.com/shop/feedtheravens), Master Ark (etsy.com/shop/masterarks) and Elegantly Eccentric Designs (etsy.com/shop/elegantlyeccentricva).
- ✦ Sew? Simplicity, McCall's, and Butterick produce some easy-to-make medieval-style costume patterns that can be altered for modern wear. My vote for most versatile? Butterick 4827, which is (loosely) based on a 12th century bliaut. For more accurate patterns, check out the Tudor Tailor (etsy.com/shop/thetudortailor) and her 16th century deliciousness.
- ✦ And of course, smell like a princess. I love Jo Malone London, especially their Wild Bluebell. At a more moderate price point, try Demeter Fragrances (demeterfragrance.com), Black Phoenix Alchemy Lab (blackphoenixalchemylab.com), and Perfume Dragon (perfumedragon.com), a favorite of Renaissance Fair shoppers for decades.

OTHER VOICES, OTHER TIMES



SPANNING THE REIGNS OF QUEENS WITH THE MEDIAEVAL BAEBES

By *Laura Marjorie Miller*

Photography by *Karla de Silva*

The Mediaeval Baebes are part of my Yuletide rotation, their album *Mistletoe & Wine* a staple of my—and many a—Christmastime playlist. As surely as a warm mug of mulled wine, listening to them puts my heart right on this hinge of the year, celebrated throughout the Earth's ages.

But the Baebes are far more than carol singers. On an array of albums beginning with 1997's *Salva Nos*, the Baebes' impressive catalog draws from texts from the 11th through the 15th centuries, which their founder, Katharine Blake, sets to music. These encompass every season, facet, and emotion of medieval life—including raunchy fabliaux, hissing curses, plaintive love laments, and erotic odes.

They can do bare a cappella, crystalline voices resounding off the cold stone curvatures of cathedral arches and vibrating the stained glass. Or they can be accompanied by early-music instrumentation such as psalteries, ouds, citterns, quattros, hurdy-gurdies, and recorders, as lively as a Renaissance fair. They can cascade from ethereal to earthy, from graceful to raucous, one moment sounding like an exaltation of the heavenly host, and the next, like a tree full of taunting fairies.

You may have heard the Baebes' voices quite recently, hymning the “Gloriana” theme to the new ITV series *Victoria*. For this project, the ensemble revisited their collaboration with composer Martin Phipps, initiated twelve years ago for the BBC series *The Virgin Queen*. It's a collaboration that has earned them an Ivor Novello award and an Emmy nomination. “People love the theme tune, so it's done us a lot of favors, that,” reflects Blake. “Bring on the queens!” she laughs gaily.

Founding member Marie Findley finds it appropriate that the Baebes are being associated with these portrayals of Victoria and Elizabeth. When Phipps first approached the group, she recalls, he told them it was because they didn't sound as polite as a traditional choir. “We sounded more raw

and real, and I think that met his needs. It's fitting that these two shows are trying to get to the person behind the paintings, and the way that we sing matches the portrayals in these series," says Findley. "Our range can be dainty and delicate, or raw, angry, and passionate, and you don't hear that so much from a traditional choir. The drama of these shows lies beyond the steely idea of the monarch and power, which is often the male perspective of history, and instead looks at these individual characters and the problems they faced. Despite being queens, they also have a flawed and fragile beauty, just as our music can have."

Mediaeval Baebes were familiar to me even before they *were*—from Blake's first a cappella project Miranda Sex Garden, whose *Madra* (1991) was the first album I ever bought on CD. That was the reason the Baebes sounded so familiar, as both groups arose from the same imagination. Blake, who had trained at the Purcell School of Music, a full-time school for musical prodigies, was stretching her wings to find something more rewarding: "I had very intensive classical music training. But I wanted to take that experience outside of that world, which I found quite boring, to be honest. I knew I could have more fun and use the experience I've got doing something else."

Mediaeval Baebes were born in 1996, when Blake talked her friends into breaking into a north London cemetery, clad in flowing white gowns and crowned with ivy, to sing medieval songs. It was a recreational gathering at first, the organic informality of which is reflected in Findley's personal origin story of becoming a Baebe: "I met Katharine sitting in a field at a festival drinking cider. She was singing something to herself, just amusing herself as she does. I thought, That sounds rather gorgeous, and asked her, 'What are you singing?' and she replied, 'It's *medieval*.'" When Findley expressed her interest in the period, Blake asked her to join the band. "And that was it. She must have sussed out that I would make a good tour mate!"

Blake explains: "Miranda Sex Garden had started out as an a cappella group, and then it morphed into an avant-garde goth rock band, but that kind of burned itself out. We ended on a high. I'd got the yearning to do something organic again and not have to untangle leads and all that stuff, something that we could just do outside in a wood. I hadn't planned it to be a professional thing, but it took off, and twenty-one years later, it's still going."

Since then, the band's lineup has expanded and contracted in number ("You can tell that Katharine didn't have any professional ambition because it's crazy to have fifteen members in a band—you don't make any money!" laughs Findley), and



The Baebes' founder, Katharine Blake

the Baebes have made strong showings on the classical charts. "When I started out, classical crossover didn't really exist, so I suppose I was one of the vanguards of that," relates Blake. "Baebes and Miranda Sex Garden were among the first groups to present themselves in more of a Pre-Raphaelite way instead of a staid classical image. It's been much more fun to play with that."

The band's approach is not academic but *spired*, combining the romance, history, and mythology of the period, courtly choreography in live performances, with a few medieval bawdy jokes thrown in to announce the songs—a fusion that Findley calls "medieval cabaret."

To Blake, who conceives of herself in the folk tradition in which every transmitter adds their own, it's not so much

about getting the Middle Ages museum-perfect as it is about bringing the era to vivid life. Take for example the matter of past languages: If you're singing in Middle Irish, medieval Italian, or medieval Spanish, how do you get a past language "right"?

"How can anyone prove exactly how to pronounce it anyway?" Blake asks. "You can get *some* kind of idea that this word is supposed to rhyme with that one, so that gives you a clue, but at the end of the day, who can really prove it? I do take a lot of artistic liberties, and sometimes pronounce words in such a way that sounds good with the tune I'm setting them to. I do have scholars I consult with, but I don't have sleepless nights over it. 'Authentic' is quite a weird word anyway. How do you know what's authentic?"

The unfamiliarity of old language forms to a modern ear has been a gift to Blake's creativity as a composer and to the group for the effect their singing has on audiences. "Every language has a different rhythm to it, so that keeps your writing from falling into sameness—it's going to take you outside of the last thing you did, automatically," she observes. "Also the fact that something is so old, and you don't know exactly what it means, lends it mystery and charisma, and makes it more magical. It also makes the vocals more *instrumental*: If you don't know what all the words are, you can hear it as *sound* instead of just thinking of it as the words."

Blake's relationship with the period she gives voice to dates to her childhood. "Like most little girls," she relates, "I was obsessed with fairy tales—*really* obsessed, even more than your average little girl. Especially with the enigmatic mythological element of the medieval period." She is grateful that enthrallment has endured in her adult life: "I think the six-year-old me would really approve of my career choices. I've stuck

to my guns as it were!" she laughs. "I want to go back and tell myself, Don't worry, it's all going to be fine! You're still going to be dressing as a fairy princess, it's not going to go boring!"

Blake's performing influences draw from 1960s psychedelic folk bands like Pentangle and the Incredible String Band. And also—"Do you know the film *The Wicker Man*?" she asks excitedly. "Seeing that film when I was about twenty years old, I thought, I want my life to be more like that film—and guess what. It is! Maybe without the sacrifice ..." she trails off with a tonal wink. "But I think I'm mostly influenced by my child self, really."

Enlisting her classical training in service of her joy, Blake is the ensemble's main composer, doing the queen's share of the orchestration and arranging. A typical creative session for the Baebes involves an evening at Blake's house: "I tell the scores and the ladies come round, because I'm a single mum, so I can't get out very much. So they come round here, and we just start *singing* it. Their voices are my muse." One can sense the collective female solidarity of the band in their musicality and feel the strength and power of them together onstage.

The electricity of the band's performances is amplified by one of the environments in which they often find themselves singing—namely, old cathedrals. Findley describes a song she finds most powerful: "The Coventry Carol, because it's so emotional: It's about two mothers who have to say goodbye to their children because of Herod's decree that all children of a certain age should be slain. It's a very female perspective of that period of history. The effect when sung in the acoustics of a cathedral is incredibly moving." And since many cathedrals are built on pagan sacred sites, the connection is one that spans many eons of human life: "That line through history that you draw when you're standing in there, especially since we are singing historical songs, you really feel the pull of the past—it goes beyond the Christian era, and you feel that when you're in that space."

The band will be doing a Christmas Cathedral tour in the UK through December. They are also conceiving a tour in support of their new album, *Victoriana*, a compilation of work from their back catalog evocative of the 19th century, such as renderings of Keats and Byron. Jumping from a medieval to a Victorian timeline is not as hard as it sounds, according to Blake: "We have



The Mediaeval Baebes

Laura Marjorie Miller

a very Pre-Raphaelite image, drawing from the mythology of the medieval period and interpreting it in an updated way, as the Pre-Raphaelites and Romantic poets did.”

The group’s next project will also bridge medieval and Victorian epochs: an epic recording of nursery rhymes that is to appeal to both adults and children. “Many of these nursery rhymes are like the oldest, most famous folk songs we have, and they started out in the medieval period,” says Blake. “They are a folk interpretation of history, told through mothers to children. My interpretation is to go back to the original meaning, which in many cases is very dark, and I’m trying to bring that out in the arrangements.”

Blake revels in the singsongy incantatory quality of the rhymes (*The Wicker Man* is a major influence on the project) and their mixture of light and darkness. “They are like *spells*, and there is a very witchy element to them,” she adds with a gleam of delight.

“I see this album as an important musical document of musical folklore and history,” says Findley proudly. “Katharine is such a clever composer and arranger of music—she brings out the dialogue between sweet little ditty and dark subtext through her compositions and arrangements. It’s a phenomenal body of work.”

Perhaps in song and music we can find our kinship with medieval people and discover that all in common with them has

not been lost across time. “Obviously we are not as preoccupied by oxen,” Blake laughs merrily. “But there are all the same themes in their songs, of life and death and love and sex and God, just done in a folky old-worldy way.”

I ask Blake and Findley, What can we learn from medieval life? From both, I get a sense of this: that medieval music offers a restoration to an organic humanity that’s less addled by technology, still in tune—and even emotionally continuous with—the natural world. “In medieval song and poetry, there’s a sense of comparing experience to the seasons, or to nature,” says Findley. “Winter is compared to a time when you feel desolate, for example, or there’s some kind of loss—you lose a lover, or something is gone from your life. There’s a respect and regard for nature and also a sense that you are part of it.”

And also, it gives us a kind of relief from our modern selves. “Our lives are too complicated, aren’t they?” says Blake. “Quite a large part of me would like to go back to sundials and abacuses.”



Laura Marjorie Miller’s work has appeared in such places as Parabola, Utne Reader, Yankee Magazine, and the Boston Globe. Find her on Twitter @bluecowboyyoga and lauramarjoriemiller.com.



King René’s *Le livre du Coeur d’amour épris* (The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart) By Laren Stober

The very word “illuminated” comes from the Latin verb illuminare, meaning “to light up.” Painted with liquid gold more than 560 years ago, the illuminated manuscript of King René still shines vividly enough to brighten our hearts.

For nothing illuminates like love. Seeking the object of your heart’s desire is the eternal quest. So there is nothing more romantic than an allegorical love story, even should it end on a meditative melancholy note.

In the 15th century there lived a rather odd sort of king and being quite obsessed in his spare time with the idea that love is elusive, he wrote *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, an adventurous love quest about a disheartened man in search of his ideal lady love. King René was this author, and his biography reads like a fairy tale. In the introduction to *King René’s Book of Love*, Franz Unterkircher calls it “the festive life of a knightly dream world,” and it’s filled with chivalry, tournaments, mystery plays, tapestry-filled castles, frivolous fêtes, verses with the poet Charles of Orléans, battles with Joan of Arc, and a fair share of poetic musings on love. The young Duke René of Anjou even took up painting on glass while incarcerated at the tender age of twenty-two in a castle tower in Dijon for political reasons during the Armagnac-Burgundian Civil War.



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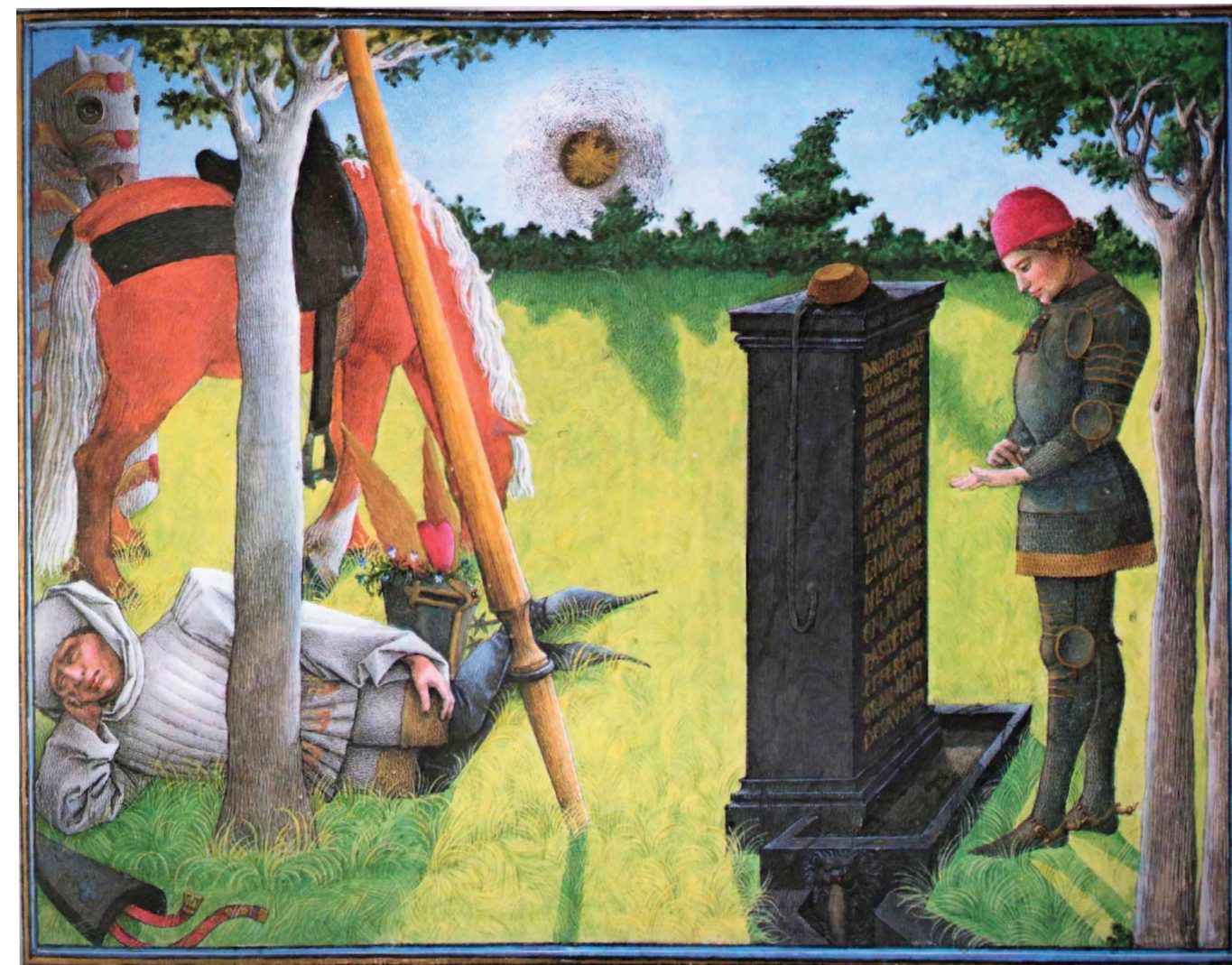


The second son of Duke Louis II of Anjou, King of Sicily, René was born on January 16, 1409, in the castle of Angers. Despite being just as, if not more, interested in fun and the fine arts than taking care of his kingly duties, he was affectionately called Good King René. He married young, as so often was the case with arranged marriages. (He was ten and she, Isabelle of Lorraine, was nine and later helped negotiate his freedom from the tower.) An eccentric romantic, he was even bit of a muse in later eras, with a cameo in William Shakespeare's play *Henry VI, Part I* as well as in Sir Walter Scott's 1829 novel *Anne of Geierstein*. An imaginary scene of René's honeymoon from that book was later depicted by the Pre-Raphaelite painters Ford Madox Brown, Edward Burne-Jones, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

René's biggest claim to fame, however, are his books—the writing of poetry and literature being an unusual occupation for a king—some of which he illustrated himself. They include a how-to on conducting tournaments, adventure stories, and two allegorical works: a devotional dialogue, *Le Mortifiement de vaine plaisance* (*The Mortification of Vain Pleasure*, 1455), and the above mentioned *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, 1457. The latter is considered his masterwork, the most endearing and luminous of all his works, a bittersweet allegorical romance inspired by a vision he had when he retired early one night. There in his bedchamber, Amour, the god of love, plucks the king's heart from his chest and hands it over to the page, Desire, who will keep it until it finds favor with his lady love, Sweet Grace. The heart, now personified as a knight simply called Heart, encounters the adversaries and obstacles of love, including Dame Melancholy, the Perilous Bridge Over the Stream of Tears, Lady Sorrow, Jealousy (a misshapen female dwarf), Denial, Wrath (his helmet has a golden dragon's head spewing fire), Sloth, and the Black Knight of Trouble and Anxiety. Even Hope, a beautiful blonde, turns out to be a deceitful siren.

It's an allegory in the tradition of the *Roman de la Rose*, written in the 13th century and one of the most widely read literary works of the Middle Ages. But Sandra Hindman, a leading expert on medieval and Renaissance manuscript illumination and professor emerita of art history at Northwestern University, explains that although King René's *Book of Love* is another allegory in the tradition of the *Roman de la Rose*, that's like saying the Rolls-Royce is just another car. It is, in fact, "the quintessential love allegory at the end of the Middle Ages and the dawn of the Renaissance," she says.

In King René's quest for love there is a hospital for famed lovers (there are always casualties and wounded in the game of love, so of course there is a hospital) with sickrooms filled with mythical heartbroken celebrities from Hercules and Paris to Tristan and Lancelot. It's where the good knight Heart, after Desire is mortally wounded, will eventually end up after stealing a kiss from his Lady Love, who was then tragically whisked away. There is also Love's Cemetery, where



we find the great poets of love from Ovid to Petrarch, and even a Château of Pleasure, with thousands of parrots warning that no lover's words, however sincere, can be more than a parroted speech the God of Love has heard infinite times before. The God of Love feeds on the hearts of parrots to keep his heart joyful—small wonder things don't go well for Heart with the God of Love and all he manages is a single kiss from his Lady Love. Unless someone writes a sequel (Yes, please, and save the birds!), poor Heart never makes it to the Château of Pleasure.

"The story is magical, the names of the persons totally captivating," says Hindman. "But, above all, the artist of the illuminations (presumably Barthélemy d'Eyck) has captured the otherworldly quality of the text with his remarkable mastery of technique." She also cannot think of another example where liquid gold (not gold leaf) is used with such shimmering effect. "It is called shell gold because it is held in suspension like tempera and painted with a brush onto the surface," she says.

There is a sunset flaming with gold, the sun misted in gold, the sky punctuated with dark clouds, and nocturnal scenes that are tinged with gilded luminosity—in one, Heart and Desire doze beneath a tree in the forest, Heart's helmet of golden wings and armor gleaming against a dusky velvet night

illuminated by clusters of barely visible golden stars. "The night scenes are not the first in medieval illumination—there are famous night scenes in the *The Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*—but they are among the most accomplished," says Hindman. "Many have noted the unusual lighting in these miniatures, but there has yet to be a scientific analysis of the pigments. This would surely shed insight on how artistic imagination can be fully realized through technical skill."

Some of us, however, are content to be enchanted without knowing the magic behind the technical wizardry of King René's story, and are thankful to have an illustrated manual of the enemies of love so that we know what to look out for!



Sandra Hindman is also president and founder of Les Enluminures, a global company specializing in medieval manuscripts and illuminations, with locations in Paris, Chicago, and New York, and representation as well in Boston and London.



THE TREE AND SHE

by Ronlyn Domingue

In her first memory of this life, she clutched two pecans in her small hands. Warm brown with tabby cat black stripes, dry and cool to the touch. She might have gathered an empty husk, too, its edges curled as if forced open by fire. Perhaps she heard a nut fall and, like any two-year-old creature, looked up into the branches where the autumn leaves rustled.

During the winter when she was three, one freezing night, in a place where snow rarely falls, white blanketed rooftops and yards. She doesn't remember building the tiny snowman, but when she was older, she saw a photo and recalled the carport where she crouched, the pecan tree bare and braving the cold at her back, out of frame.

Spring, then summer. She does remember the swing where she sat with her Mother Goose book, repeating the rhymes to herself, but she never felt alone. Close by, the pecan tree shaded her. He was not her favorite tree—that distinction went to the live oak, five centuries old, that grew next to the church where she was told to believe in angels and a holy ghost—but she loved the old gray fellow with the greenbitter leaves.

Under him, she played, read, picked flowers, and sat with Petunia, the doll made by her great aunt. She knew welcome and safety there. When her family moved from her great-grandmother's duplex before she turned five, she was torn from the roots of her comforting friend.

She would acknowledge the tree when her extended family

joined together for Christmas and stare at it over the fence when she visited her cousin, whose house was behind their great-grandmother's. The tree and she were not so much estranged as growing apart, her memory fading as adolescence, adulthood, robbed her of enchantment.

This magic would return decades later, when she was a writer and a girl named Secret came to her, a child with black hair, tawny skin, and eyes the colors of night and day who could speak to creatures and plants. She had no such gift, this writer, but she thought Secret chose her to tell the story because of their shared love of Nature and what cannot be easily explained.

She began to remember again—with her body, not her mind—the presence of the old pecan tree. Shelter, companion, protector, and something else. Something else. She had not been alone with him.

When the glimpse ripped through, she questioned whether it was real or true, but the tears confirmed what her heart knew.

Two years old, *ta-ta, ta-ta* (thank you, thank you) she said as she gathered flowers in her hands, offered by a fairy clothed in mist. The fairy—oh, she knew her, knew her well—vanished as her father shouted in anger and rushed across the yard to her.

In silent witness, the pecan tree stood his ground, the thin place where the fairies crossed thick with bark.



An arcane manuscript. A strange symbol. A 1,000-year-old family legacy. Secret Riven must discover the connections among them and confront her fate—to release a plague meant to destroy, and transform, the world as all have known it. *The Plague Diaries* illuminates the power of our choices, the scars they leave, and the wounds they heal. Fairy-tale fans will surely notice allusions to “Beauty and the Beast,” “Little Red Riding Hood,” and other favorites.

Ronlyn Domingue is the internationally published author of *The Mercy of Thin Air* and the *Keeper of Tales Trilogy*—*The Mapmaker's War*, *The Chronicle of Secret Riven*, and *The Plague Diaries*. Her essays and short stories have appeared in several print and online publications, including *New England Review*, *Shambhala Sun*, and *The Nervous Breakdown*. Connect with her on ronlyndomingue.com, Facebook, and Twitter.



THE WINTER CATHEDRAL

by Brittany Warman

In winter, when the world shimmers at twilight,
And the moon gazes shyly through her veils,
I walk to my church in the forest—
Here are the pews, brown and tangled ivy,
Here the carpet of snow where footprints
Mark the only pattern.
Here a rabbit curls into her new white coat,
Sighing her warm breath to the winds.
Here are the stained glass windows,
The bare trees cutting patterns into the purple sky.
Here are the candles, wil'o'wisps and early stars.
Here is the stillness of crystals, of patient deer.
At the center, an altar to Persephone,
Carved into a towering oak tree—
Offerings of ruby pomegranates,
Garnets, the torn wings of a butterfly.
Here is the iced silence of winter,
The interconnected nature of all things.
Here is the promise of tomorrow, of flowers—
Here I whisper my prayers.



THE LOVERS AND THE LABYRINTH

by Sara Cleto

(for Jared)

The city: metal skins cloaking thin, high stairs that step slyly to the side and flower into balconies or turn and twist into spires, piercing the sky to sip a heady blend of cloud and starlight.

The river: lapping stair-roots trailing from towers' crumbling skirts, chasing the long asphalt burn of main street and pooling beside the square to catch reflections of statues, cats, and students in its phantom glass.

The school: clothed in sleeping stones whispering words in languages lost and living, tucking secrets into thick volumes to be plucked anew each morning by hands gloved in dust.

The garden: roses riot into briars, burst and bud in orbs fuller than the moon, running with rabbits underfoot—a blooming music hums one poignant, silent note, and, on the arm of the wind, petals dance the tune.

The labyrinth: at the heart of the garden, a logical dream pieced into being with walls of leaves that promise movement even when they stretch and sigh fathoms into dirt.

The magician: laughter in the dark, hands that shape and spell with gentleness, rich in riddles learned from pages and the leagues that have passed beneath his boots—winding through city and river, school and garden, labyrinth.

The priestess: mistress of owls, fingers silver-warded, clad in cobwebs and crinoline, songs on her lips and in her hair, wending her way through roots and roses to meet the magician where the leaf-walls part.

The lovers: laughter catching in cobwebs, skin slick under crinoline, hands clasping, spells singing as they walk in step, roots below, stars above, whispering in the dark.

Sara Cleto is a Ph.D. candidate in English and folklore at the Ohio State University. She also teaches courses on fairy tales, legends, and more at the Carterhaugh School of Folklore and the Fantastic (carterhaughschool.com). Her poetry and prose can be found in *Liminality*, *Mythic Delirium*, *Uncanny Magazine*, *Goblin Fruit*, *Faerie Magazine*, and many more. You can find her at saracleto.com.

THE QUEEN OF THE ROSES SINGS TO HER SISTERS

by Brittany Warman

(for Shveta, Grace, Meenoo, and Sara)

Her names have been many and varied—
the faerie witch, the sleeping beauty,
the queen of the roses.
She is Persephone, a dream of cycles—
a cold winter's night
on which flowers still bloom.

She moves alone through her garden,
the ice crystals hanging from the trees,
meeting and making soft music in the dark.
The moon is a clear jewel,
the centerpiece of the chandelier,
and the air smells of snow.

In the sky she can see faint strings of magick—
glimmering, shy threads that dart and dance
and connect the sun to the sea,
the trees to her blood,
and all hearts to all hearts.
Somewhere it is spring, it is autumn, it is summer.

She calls out to her sisters
and her voice sings along the threads.
It is a kind of spinning, a kind of correspondence—
a song to those who understand.
Their names too are many and varied,
they too see the shimmers in the sky.

Brittany Warman is a Ph.D. candidate in English and folklore at the Ohio State University, where she is completing her dissertation on folk narrative and 19th century Gothic literature. Her creative work has been published or is forthcoming from *Uncanny*, *Mythic Delirium*, *Cabinet des Fées*, and others. Visit her at brittanywarman.com.

Alla Tsank's paintings explore the female form and its relationship to nature and the seasons, often generating contemplative scenes filled with emotional delicacy and tonal depth. See more of her work at allatsankfineart.com.





Create a Medieval Sanctuary

by Grace Nuth

Medieval decor may not be for everyone, but if dark womb-like spaces, thick velvet fabrics, and ornate details make your heart sing, pay attention. When we were brainstorming this medieval-themed issue of *Faerie Magazine*, we knew we wanted to include an example of a stunning, tasteful, and yet immersively decorated domestic space. We didn't we have to go far: *Faerie Magazine* art director Lisa Gill's home is an incredible example of bringing romanticized medieval sensibility into a modern space. And we are not the only ones to think so: A handful of photos Lisa put on Pinterest of her bedroom have all earned thousands of shares among those who admire these lush interiors.

I asked Lisa what inspired her about medieval decor. "I'm drawn to dark, rich colors and the medieval time period in general—or at least my idea of it. The furniture—often large, carved wood—is beautiful as well

as practical. Everything had a purpose, from the iron candelabra that illuminated the home to the tapestries that added warmth. I am reminded of the famous William Morris quote: 'Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.'"

Inspired by the stunning interiors of the Witchery bespoke hotel in Edinburgh, Scotland, the interior of Lisa's home could make a person believe they have stepped into an Arthurian story illustrated by Howard Pyle. Dress forms in two of the bedrooms wear medieval gowns in velvet and brocade, making the illusion even more complete. The beds are layered in velvets and brocades, too, and heaping piles of throw pillows in illuminated manuscript embroidery and unicorn tapestry fabrics. Every last detail suits the theme, from the thick candelabra on tabletops to the Gothic-spired mirrors around each corner. Even the raven-furred cat is named for Queen Mab.



TIPS AND TRICKS

So how does Lisa do it? What are her secrets? We asked her for a few tips and received some wonderful hints behind this Arthurian sorceress's interior spells.

- * Search your local flea markets, thrift stores, and yard sales. Craigslist especially can yield discoveries from people who have no idea what treasures they have. Search for keywords like “Gothic,” “church salvage,” “stained glass,” “tapestry,” “quatrefoil,” and of course “medieval.” Also try misspellings of words too: You might find a hidden gem that no one else discovered.
- * Most things here in America are “new,” so it’s about mixing and matching different eras to achieve a modern medieval concept. Don’t try to be a purist: Aim for the feel of the romanticized medieval era as represented by both genuine antiques and vintage items. No one needs to know that the carved wood architectural piece above your window is actually a reproduction made in the 1970s and picked up at your local Salvation Army!
- * Candleholders and decorative pillows are small items that quickly add ambiance. Tapestry-style wall hangings are also quick and easy accents that add drama.
- * Don’t be afraid to splurge on one or two big show-stopper pieces. My biggest purchase was my Gothic arch bed frame, but it is the focal point of the entire room. That was a special order from a High Point, North Carolina, furniture store.
- * Repurpose found objects. I have a gold-toned Gothic light fixture that I turned upside down and use as a small accent table. Garden statuary and ornaments can also be used indoors and make great embellishments for your mantle, hearth, or seasonal tabletop displays.
- * Painted walls are a quick way to change the mood of a room without long-term commitment. I chose a dark wine shade for my bedroom as the perfect backdrop for many of the gold-tone pieces. In other rooms, I’ve used parchment colors with hand-stenciled details. Stencil-library.com offers splendid ones from different time periods.
- * Think outside the box with your decor. I collect jewelry and crowns from Parrish Relics and make my own fantasy gowns, so I use these pieces as decor items when I’m not wearing them to the local farmer’s market. (Okay, I usually don’t wear my full costumes there, but I do still dress in velvets!)

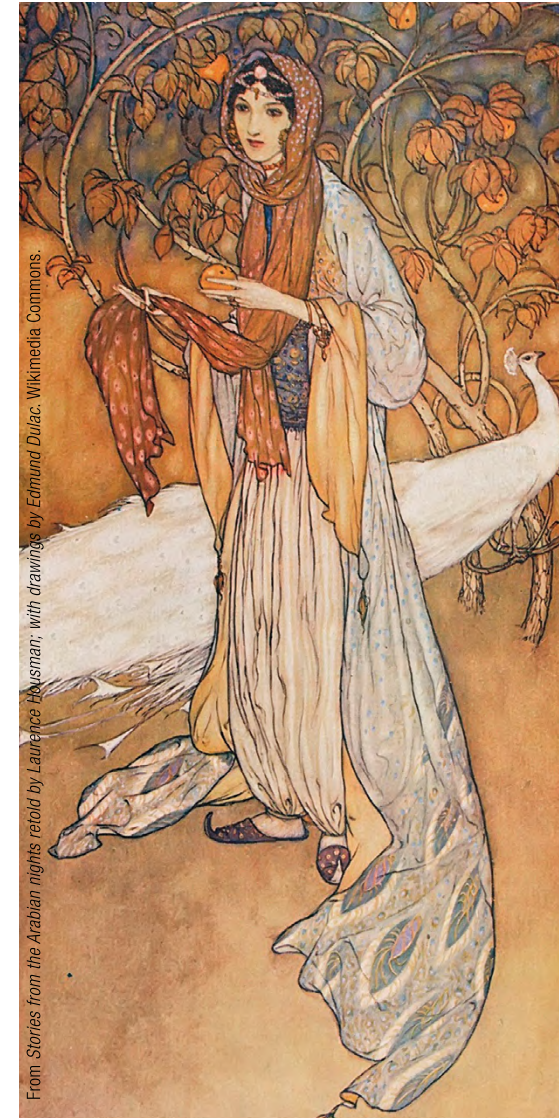


MY ARABIAN SUPERHEROINE by Alia Yunis

Every time my writing gets stuck, I ask myself, “How would Scheherazade get out of this?” Of course, she would know what to do. That’s how she survived for 1,001 nights and beyond: by knowing when to add to a story, when to wrap it up, and when to leave you waiting for the next one. Anyone who understands the power of a story is my kind of hero. Scheherazade was among the first to figure out that the keys to our survival are the stories we tell to ourselves and to others.

I started doing that early on. When I was a child in White Bear Lake, a small town in Minnesota, I used to dress up like Scheherazade for Halloween. I didn’t feel American enough to think the neighbors would let me get away with dressing up as the Bionic Woman or a Charlie’s Angel. But I wanted to be glamorous and gutsy like the women of TV and tabloids. And so I would put on a long dress that some relative I had never met had sent me from Lebanon or Jordan or Palestine and wrap my head in a colorful scarf with fake coins on it. Then I’d have Mrs. Swenson, the mom next door, put some heavy-duty makeup on me, and I’d top it off with gargantuan hoop earrings. Most people thought I was a fortune teller, but I wasn’t a mere soothsayer. I was Scheherazade, the Wonder Woman of the Middle East, the prettiest and most powerful person I knew.

Of course, I didn’t know Scheherazade at all. I certainly didn’t know that she seduced a king with sexually provocative and perverse tales, that she was at the center of a body of work that has kept scholars and historians busy for centuries, and that her collection of tales has become one of the most recognized frameworks in literature. All I knew was based on what my mother told me when I asked why my cousin in Chicago was named Scheherazade—Sherry in its Americanized form. My mother’s answer was the kind of answer a proud Arab woman



From Stories from the Arabian Nights retold by Laurence Hausman, with drawings by Edmund Dulac. Wikimedia Commons.

gives to a girl who cries, like her daughter, at beauty pageants on TV: Scheherazade was the most beautiful woman in the Arab world, which therefore meant the whole world. And she went about being beautiful by swirling around in lots of diaphanous veils and telling stories of magical people—stories that, my mother explained, Disney had stolen for its movies, like the story of Aladdin and Ali Baba and his forty thieves. Soon I also figured out that Scheherazade must have gotten everywhere on a self-chauffeur magic carpet. This last part I didn’t learn from my mother but rather extrapolated from TV reruns of *I Dream of Jeannie*, *Bewitched*, and Saturday-morning cartoons.

In reality, my mother didn’t really know anything more about the *Arabian Nights* than Walt Disney did. My mother was never one for magic carpets and fairy tales, Orientalist or otherwise. Her stories were always about reality—perhaps embellished reality, but rarely with forever-after happy endings. For her, Scheherazade was a woman who told stories to stay alive to protect her own life but, more important, the lives of her beloved sister and

other family members. That’s what made her worthy. That is how my mother hoped I saw her and my ancestors, and how she hoped I would be one day. The resilience and quick thinking of a woman was essentially at the heart of every story my mother told me about “back home,” as were the other stories told to me by the other Scheherazades I met when we moved there: Aunts, teachers, cousins, neighbors—all their stories were allegedly true tales of women who defied Mother Nature, the men in their lives, and invading armies to rescue their families, neighbors, and true loves from fate or from those with inferior cognitive skills.

Indeed, Scheherazade is what Middle Eastern women have been in my life—not the harem sexpots of old Hollywood

My Arabian Superheroine

Alia Yunis

or the black-enrobed, faceless blobs of today's mainstream literature and cinema, but rather women with strength that isn't dependent on a formal position in government or a *Fortune* 500 company. They claimed control in their own ways without asking for it. Arab women traditionally have, like Scheherazade, held power when they have used their imagination to take charge of their domestic world, and not necessarily when they conquered business, be it at the Al-Hamidiyah Souq in Damascus or Wall Street.

Scheherazade was a feminist centuries before the word became part of Western society. The influence Arab women had over the people they loved and/or married wasn't earned through bra-burning demonstrations but through generations of tradition, a tradition so old that I suspect Scheherazade was born out of it rather than being the trendsetter. Either way, Scheherazade understood, unlike the women sent to King Shahriyar before her, that her sexuality, her wit, and her intellect were a combination that when used properly served as a brilliant weapon.

Scheherazade's qualities of survival were manifest in the Arab women around me in my childhood and teen years—ingenious women in a way all their own and fierce in spirit, in a discreet, subtle way or in a backhanded way, depending on how you viewed the situation. They were smartly seductive, quick on their feet when it came to figuring out how to survive—the weight bearers of their homes and troubled nations. And always raconteurs. They didn't—still don't—do silence well and can fill any void with a story, whether it is to save a life, give advice, or pass the time. They lure their children into doing right and wrong through their stories, and they caution their men with tales that carry warnings of what will happen to them if they don't take their advice.

Today many Arab women live in patriarchal societies in which Western feminism has somewhat negated Arab feminism. Scheherazade would not have put up with this. She would tell today's women to embrace their womanhood with humor and foresight and create stories around it that will give them the life they want.

Mythical females of the West could not seem to be smart, wise, caring, sexy, and beautiful all at once. While Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Rapunzel were waiting around to be rescued, Scheherazade was hanging out in the Middle East, being smart, wise, brave, and imaginative. With only her human skills, Scheherazade was the first Arab superheroine. The jinn, afreet, and others in her stories had mysterious, otherworldly ways, but she didn't.

We are empowered by the stories we are told, and eventually many of us discover a way of making the world more defined for ourselves through creating stories for others—whether through music, art, poetry, film, dance, or most obviously literature.

Indeed, while Scheherazade is a mythical character herself, her storytelling powers embody all that writing students have

been taught from the time of Aristotle to today. First and foremost, she knew how to enclose her audience of one into her story circle, where he could not escape with a “happily ever after.” Rather, she left him every night asking, “What happens next, even after ever after?” She knew how to pace a story to build tension and sprinkled it with universal themes, sexual innuendo, and humor, and she wove together multidimensional characters, who all could eventually become protagonist of their own tale.

Every Halloween I still think of Scheherazade when I see little girls dressed up as the Catwoman, Lara Croft, or Spider Woman. There is a much more powerful superheroine out there, I want to tell them, one who doesn't need to kill anyone to reveal her strength. But perhaps they are getting to know a version of her through the stories their mothers and the other Scheherazades in their lives tell them. I hope that they have a lot of them.

Alia Yunis is the author of the critically acclaimed novel The Night Counter (2009). She was born in Chicago and grew up in the United States, Greece, and the Middle East, particularly Beirut during its civil war. Her nonfiction work includes articles for the Los Angeles Times, Saveur, Sports+Travel, and Aramco World. She currently teaches film and television at Zayed University in Abu Dhabi.



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BESTIARUM VOCABULUM

The Medieval Bestiary and the Beauty of the Beast

by Paul Himmelein

Animals have always taught us lessons. We look to them to help us describe our own behaviors and attributes: We are as sly as a fox, wise as an owl, busy as a beaver. Some of us are angry as hornets, or as proud as peacocks. We are told that our uncle was the black sheep of the family or that the woman down the street is a real cougar. Even our language reflects this reverse anthropomorphism: He can *weasel* out of anything, she really *badgered* me, tell them to stop *monkeying* around, we need to *outfox* them. From Aesop, the ancient Greek slave and author of *Fables* (sixth century B.C.), we remember tales of animals that supposedly help us live better, such as the tortoise and the hare and its message that slow and steady wins the race, or the lesson about karma in the story of the lion and the mouse.

There are other compendiums of animal parables: The *Physiologus*, an anonymous text written in ancient Greek in Alexandria between the second and fourth centuries, was a collection of forty-nine animal tales that served as instruction for correct Christian living. It was something of a best seller

second only to the Bible. The animals mentioned are described with little scientific observation, and mythical creatures are found next to conventional farmyard animals. The work's focus was on the alleged characteristics of these creatures that supported various Christian teachings, either morally or mystically. In Job 12:7, we read, “Ask the beast and it will teach thee, and the birds of heaven and they will tell thee.” This book set out to do just that.

Isidore of Seville (circa 560–636), a scholar and an archbishop, added to the wisdom about animals with his *Ethymologiae*, an early version of an encyclopedia compiling the knowledge of ancient Greek and Roman authors from Aristotle and Theophrastus to Pliny the Elder and Gaius Julius Solinus. Out of the twenty volumes, Book XII, *De Animalibus*, concentrated on the nature of beasts and birds. This, along with *Physiologus*, became the foundation of medieval bestiaries, the pseudoscientific and spiritually striving set of texts that mapped out the animal kingdom.

The medieval era was an age of faith and superstition, and it



is under this aegis that the bestiary was created. They combined material taken from classical sources with information from naturalistic observation and traditional folklore or myth. All was considered viable and valuable knowledge and held to be equally true. In a 12th century English bestiary we have entries of unicorns next to lynxes and griffins next to elephants, as if it were a zoological study of real animals that roamed the earth, a medieval *Where the Wild Things Are*. Added to this were allegorical observations tying creatures to particular Christian teachings.

Medieval bestiaries were written predominantly in England, in Latin, and in France in the Anglo-Norman or Norman French dialects. They reached an artistic zenith in 12th century England. These luxurious volumes were illustrated with jewel-tone colors and gold in the manner of illuminated manuscripts, and were usually penned by scribes in a religious order.

The bestiary fed our natural and spiritual understanding of the universe. We are told in a scientific manner, as if by objective observation, that unicorns are small animals, excessively swift, and have one horn in the middle of their foreheads. We learn that they cannot be caught by a hunter, yet are immediately given instructions on how to capture one. Bow, sword, and lance are useless; all it takes is a virgin. Who knew that unicorns can't resist jumping into a virgin's lap? The bestiary tells us that this is because the unicorn represents Jesus Christ and "by the sole will of the Father, he came down into the virgin womb." (Like the Christ figure, the unicorn is often depicted as hunted or "crucified." The Unicorn Tapestries at the Cloisters in New York City illustrates this perfectly, including the unicorn's ultimate resurrection.) The unicorn's single horn is also a metaphor for Jesus and the Father being one. The entry closes with a final fact to round out our knowledge of the beast: The unicorn often battles with elephants, killing them by piercing them in the belly.

The natural habits of the elephant are told quite plainly in scientifically authoritative language. The following is from a 12th century bestiary in Cambridge University Library, translated from Latin by the British author T.H. White and published in 1954 as *The Book of Beasts*:

"Elephants protect themselves with ivory tusks. No larger animal can be found. They possess vast intelligence and memory. They march in herds. They live three hundred years. Elephants remain pregnant for two years, nor do they have babies more than once, nor do they have several at a time, but only one. If one of them wants to have a baby, he goes eastward toward Paradise and there is a tree there called Mandragora, and he goes with his wife. She first takes of the tree and then gives some to her spouse. When they munch it up, it seduces them, and she immediately conceives in her womb. When the proper time for being delivered arrives, she walks out into a lake..."

To anyone living in Europe in the Middle Ages, this would be read as a metaphor for Adam and Eve, the Mandragora tree being the tree of Knowledge. This account also goes on to say that the male elephant will kill a dragon but is frightened of mice.

In a section on birds we learn that female pelicans, after killing their young, rip open their chests three days later and bleed over the dead offspring, thereby restoring them to life. The parallel to Jesus's resurrection on the third day after "He bled for humanity" resonated deeply with readers of the day. (Seeing adult pelicans feeding their young by regurgitating food from the mouth may have given rise to this bloody allegory.)

If looks could kill, we'd have a basilisk. One gaze from this creature and you're dead. And cover your nose; just one whiff and you're dead. Cover your ears, too. Even hearing its dreadful hissing can kill. Anything passing in front of it gets burned to a crisp and devoured. Thank god for the weasel, the only animal that can pursue the basilisk and destroy it. As the bestiary says, "God never makes anything without a remedy."

T.H. White reminds us that in its day "the bestiary was a serious scientific work. A serious textbook on biology." If it's difficult to understand how anyone could consider a unicorn or dragon a real flesh-and-bone animal, we must remember that most people in the Middle Ages lived their entire lives in small communities, never traveling further than the next shire. Long-distance travel was difficult, dangerous, and expensive. Stories that seeped in from the outside world were usually believed at face value, as there was no reason to discount them. If a villager in a small town in France or England knew someone who knew someone that claimed to have seen a camel-like beast with the spots of a leopard and a neck as tall as house (the camelopardalis, or giraffe—a real animal indeed) why should they not believe tales of a horse-like creature with a single horn? Both sound just as plausible and just as fantastical.

Written and oral descriptions of beasts abounded during the Middle Ages. Even German artist Albrecht Dürer created his famous rhinoceros woodcut (1515) entirely from a hearsay description and someone's naive sketch. Dürer's representation of an Indian rhinoceros was regarded as a true likeness of the beast well into the 18th century despite the fact that it is riddled with gross anatomical errors passed on from his source.

Even legitimate animals could look unrecognizable in the bestiary, as the artists or limners had probably never seen many of the creatures they illustrated and, like Dürer, relied on questionable descriptions or copied earlier erroneous sketches. Take the crocodile, for example; in one bestiary, it is the size of a cow with long legs terminating in feet resembling talons. It has a serrated back, long pointy ears that stand erect like horns, and dagger-like teeth. In short, the drawing of the crocodile looks as mythical as the griffin. Even illustrations of the beaver appear more doglike than beaver-like.

The facts communicated within the pages of the bestiary hold just as tenuous a grip on reality as the illustrations. We are told that hedgehogs collect fallen fruit, particularly grapes, on their pincushion prickles to bring back to their brood; that the griffin is a winged quadruped that has the body and legs of a lion and the wings and head of an eagle and is hostile to horses and will rip to shreds any human that it happens upon. A scorpion, we're told, won't bite you if it's in the palm of your hand. (Please don't try this!) It tells us that the Gladius, or swordfish, uses its sharp, sword-like beak to thrust into ships to sink them, and that the Nile River dolphin uses its dorsal fin to cut up the soft underbelly of the crocodile. It tells of the amphibena, a two-headed snake, one head at each end of its body, that can roll along like a hoop—it's the first serpent to come out of hibernation and the only one that can tolerate the cold water of a well.

Satyrs and sirens are incorporated into the bestiary along with other human-like creatures, such as the manticora, a creature with the head of a man, three rows of teeth, the body of a lion, a scorpion's tail, and blood-red eyes to round out its horrific physiognomy. It makes a hissing sound and is desirous of human flesh.

Some bestiaries detail animals more than once. The single-horned horse may be listed as a unicorn and then show up again as a monoceros. The crocodile in the Cambridge bestiary is discussed in the section on beasts as well as the part pertaining to fish. A bird we know as the hoopoe also makes two appearances, one for each of its various names: upupa and epopus. Bats and bees are listed in the bird section, and so are sirens, owing to their feathery lower extremities—fishtail in the illustration notwithstanding. Sea mammals such as whales, dolphins, and dugongs are, not surprisingly, found in the chapter on fish along with frogs and turtles.

As the Middle Ages progressed and began to transform into the Renaissance, the bestiary started to lose its metaphorical connections and focused primarily on the nature of beasts. Despite the advent of a new enlightened age and trust in the scientific method, we might still profit from the practical advice the bestiary has to offer: For example, if you see ants carrying their fruits and corn back to their tunnels, you know it will not rain. If an eel drowns in wine, anyone drinking that wine will get a loathing for liquor—a good cure for alcoholism. And anybody who rubs the blood of the aforementioned hoopoe over their skin as they ready themselves for bed will have suffocating nightmares. Well, you've been warned!



Top right: An elegant blue monoceros stands looking not so fierce. Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 764, Folio 22r.

All other illuminations from the Aberdeen Bestiary, Wikimedia Commons.

Paul Himmelein is co-author of Bohemian Manifesto: A Field Guide to Living on the Edge. The revised edition is soon to be published by Echo Point Books. He is currently completing his first novel.





The Holly King

By Grace Nuth

Illustration by Guinevere von Sneeden

Wassail, drink hail to the sleeping trees blanketed in a white cloak of snow, under the dark of night. Leave the warmth of the fire and sing to them through the dark of winter, promising that spring will return. The cold may seem to last forever as the night draws ever long, but the longest night is past now. Yule is here, and the Holly King who rules from Midsummer to this day will soon be defeated by the Oak King, who promises the return of the sun, the spring, the warmth.

Bedeck your rafters with sprigs of holly to show respect to the passing of the king who sees us through the days of growing shadows in the last few months of the year. Hang a star on the top of your Yule tree to show the darkest night of the year that you are not afraid. Light a candle to welcome the new king who, as he slowly gains his strength and power, will bring the longer days back to us.

And while you have to stay inside out of the bitter cold and long dark hours, fill your home with joy, with laughter, with aromas of cinnamon and clove, gingerbread, and orange slices. Tell stories and sing songs. Browse through seed catalogs and dream of summer gardens. Be still. Be patient. And do not be afraid, though the longest night of the year is here: The Oak King will return, and all will be well.



HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Our first Holiday Gift Guide brings you some of the most magical, enchanting, surprising, gorgeous, and unique gift ideas, guaranteed to delight everyone on your list this year. Have a brilliant and beautiful holiday season!



The delicious new **Sahajan Organic Ayurvedic Blend Ritual Body Oil** is loaded with richly moisturizing coconut, almond, and sesame seed oils to bring a silky softness to the skin.
sahajan.com



Nothing beats the winter blues like a sybaritic soak in a bath spiked with **Three Sisters' Apothecary Bath Salt Soak**. The Coastal Cedar with Menthol & Arnica flavor provides powerful relief for tired muscles and achy feet.
soapcauldron.com



Powerful vibrational beauty from the **Baiser Beauty Vibrations** collection combines the benefits of aromatherapy (essential oils of rose, lavender, eucalyptus) with vibrational energy (quartz and amethyst) to cleanse chakras and beautify the body.
baiserbeauty.com



Beauty takes flight, with these delicate **Under the Ivy** faery wing hair accessories, handmade in an ivy-covered cottage by an English artisan who guarantees that no faeries were harmed in the making of these lovely pieces!
undertheivy.bigcartel.com/category/hair-accessories



Farmaesthetics' Cinnamon Girl gift set feeds winter skin with organic Sweet Soy, Rose & Geranium Bath & Beauty Oil; Cinnamon Rose & Cornmeal Body Scrub; Rainwater, Cinnamon & Rose Bath & Beauty Bar; and Cinnamon Stick & Rose Petals for bath or tea. Formulated by a seventh-generation organic farmer.
farmaesthetics.com



A beautiful blend of land and sea, the **Kypris Glow Philtre Mask** will leave skin looking luminous, with pomegranate enzymes, sea fennel and sea algae, and silver ear mushrooms, all exotic ingredients known to smooth, soften, and bring radiance to the skin.
kyprisbeauty.com



This colorful mala by artisan **Chloe Alyson** is hand-crafted with semi-precious gemstones like citrine, amethyst, labradorite, and more to imbue the wearer with love and positive energy.
chloelyson.com



These captivating quartz-and-sterling-silver drop earrings from **Sihaya Designs** will remind the wearer to always keep reaching for the moon and stars! Enchanting and romantic, the quartz radiates a soft, iridescent glow.
faeriemag.com/collections/earrings



These heady **Lurk** fragrances, made with pure, wild-crafted essential oils by founder Anne Nelson Sanford, are utterly irresistible and impossibly alluring. Choose from blended notes like tuberose, lotus blossom, jasmine, blood orange, and sandalwood; each and every one is unique.
lurkmade.com



Great for a walk in the woods or a chilly day in the house, these cozy European-made **Giesswein Wool Boots** are colorful, comfortable, and magical. If we were elves in the winter, this is what we'd wear.
wooliscool.com

The breathtaking pieces from **Baba Studio World** are beautifully made and feature gorgeous colors and whimsical motifs like Mythical Beasts, Dragons Dancing, Hawkmoths at Dusk, and, our favorite, Rabbits Running.
baba-store.com





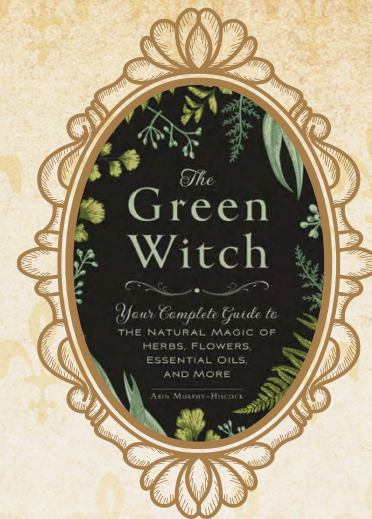
These pretty pink sheer hose from **Fiori Couture's Lana Fairy Garden Collection** are inspired by vintage stockings from the 1930s, with a fanciful twist. Each features a sexy back seam, embellished with a romantic garden bouquet and a sweet brass bee on the right side. Use the code "FAERIE" for 20 percent off! lafioricouture.com



This subtly scented organic Hand & Body Lotion from **Miss Doyle's Soapery** contains organic essential oils that work their aromatherapeutic magic by targeting different chakras—and feelings—in the body. Compassion, with grapefruit, ylang-ylang, and rosewood, targets the heart chakra. missdoylesoapery.com



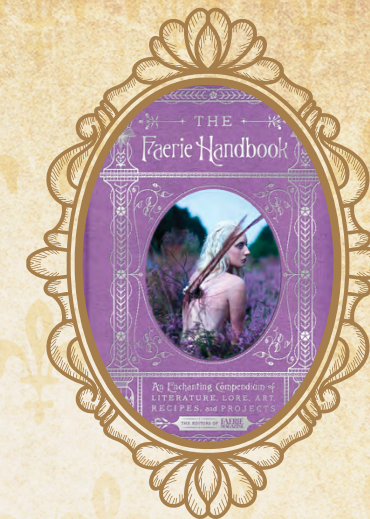
Live the dream with this **Thick White Pearl Unicorn Circlet**, which attaches to the forehead with a lovely silver filigree base and features a crystal droplet and silver chain. It fits to the head with an elastic loop. www.etsy.com/shop/fireflypath



In her new book, **The Green Witch**, author and herbalist Arin Murphy-Hiscock shows the way to healing through the natural magic of flowers, herbs, and essential oils. From recipes for rituals, lotions, and potions to lessons on communing with nature, this book is an indispensable guide to connecting with the energy of the earth and the power of nature. simonandschuster.com



Wake up your inner wisdom with the **Lotus Wei Flower Evolution** card deck, designed by flower alchemist and Lotus Wei founder Katie Hess. Choose the flower you're most attracted to, and the cards will reveal its meaning. Hess travels the world to extract the living essence of flowers for the elixirs and serums in the Lotus Wei apothecary. lotuswei.com



Of course, we must include **The Faerie Handbook: An Enchanting Compendium of Literature, Lore, Art, Recipes, and Projects** by the editors of *Faerie Magazine*! With a finely curated array of vintage and contemporary fine art and photography, literature, essays, DIY projects, and recipes, it is a lush compendium that traces the history of fairies from literature to pop culture, offering ideas on modern-day living and entertaining with a light-handed fairy touch. faeriemag.com and wherever books are sold



A beautiful holiday gift box from **Ren Clean Skincare, All Is Calm, All Is Bright**, decorated with hand-drawn exotic birds from Silken Favors, contains a potent Radiance Renewal Mask, Global Protection Day Cream, and an Instant Firming Beauty Shot to keep skin smooth and firm. renskincare.com



A perfect Secret Santa or stocking stuffer, **Aromatherapy Associates' Precious Support Time** offers an aromatherapy bath and shower oil formulated to help clear coughs, colds, and congestion. Comes in a beautiful ball that doubles as a bauble for the tree! aromatherapyassociates.com



The uber-talented Steve Parke was Prince's photographer and art director for over thirteen years, and in his new book, **Picturing Prince**, he has collected some of his most intimate, moody, playful, gorgeous—and never-before-published—images of the artist. The perfect gift for anyone who loves Prince, and that means it's perfect for everyone! faeriemag.com and wherever books are sold



Published by *Faerie Magazine*, **Walking Through the Landscape of Faerie** is a heart-stoppingly beautiful 108-page compilation of fantasy illustrations and writing from celebrated artist (and *Faerie* contributor) Charles Vess. A perfect read-aloud, with an introduction from Charles de Lint and additional poetry from Neil Gaiman, Ursula K. Le Guin, Gregory Maguire, Alice Hoffman, Delia Sherman, Terri Windling, Jane Yolen, Theodora Goss, Ari Berk, John Matthews, and more! faeriemag.com



This lovely **Knight of the Realm** journal, designed by Brigid Ashwood, features a cover image by Pre-Raphaelite artist Edmund Blair Leighton. The 200 six-by-nine-inch journal pages are blank on one side and lined on the facing pages, to create more freedom for them to be filled with one's deepest thoughts, musings, and drawings. Ashwood's inspiring journals come in a variety of beautiful designs, including The Seer, Faerie Ring, and more. brigidashwood.com



The MoonFlowerChild Stars Above the Forest Resin Bracelet is transportive. Each piece is handmade and captures a moonlit night in the forest. Wherever you are, whatever you are feeling, a glance at this piece will take you to a calm and beautiful starlit night. faeriemag.com/collections/bracelets



Our very own senior editor Grace Nuth created these pretty **Foxglove and Harebell Throw Pillows** from her original art print. Made from one hundred percent spun polyester poplin and individually cut and sewn by hand, the pillow measures 24-by-24 inches, features a double-sided print, and is finished with a concealed zipper for ease of care. Optional faux down pillow insert. society6.com/product/foxgloves-and-harebells_pillow



These adorable, all natural **Chocolate Snowmen** by Burdick Chocolate are hand-piped with dark chocolate ganache, dipped in white chocolate, topped with a roasted hazelnut, and finished with a dark chocolate hat. A box of nine is hand-stamped with a silver snowflake wax seal and tied up with a pretty ribbon. burdickchocolate.com



Handmade by Laura Kramer of LBK Studio, the **LBK Studio Glass Talismans** embrace the strength of spirit and ward off negative energy. Wrapped with natural bark, each piece is inspired by the magic of alchemy. abchome.com



The handcrafted **Coquille Bowl by Jess Panza** is made of crushed glass from New Zealand and rendered to look like the inside of a geode through a French technique called *pâte de verre*. Soft colors and sparkly layers create a fantastic jewel-like effect. abchome.com



The **Tea Leaf Reading Kit in Envelope** provides a modern twist on the ancient art of tasseography. The kit includes a short history, instructions, a dictionary of symbols, and a bag of loose tea to help you read the images that form in the bottom of your teacup! faeriemag.com/collections/kitchen



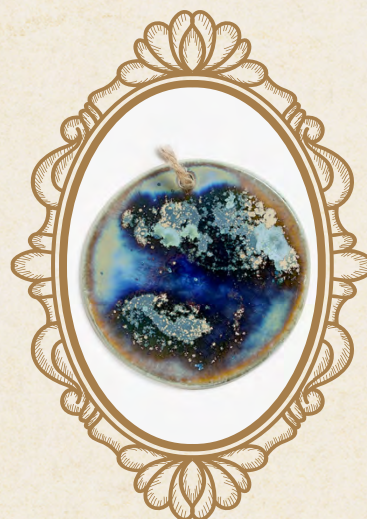
Let this lovely **Christmas Tree Candle** from Brooklyn Candle Studio, made from soy wax with a lead-free wick, burn beautifully during Yuletide festivities. Evoke the smell of an evergreen forest, with spearmint and pine over notes of cypress, moss, musk, and cedarwood. brooklyncandlestudio.com



Sculpted from a real scallop shell, our **Seahorse Salt Cellar** is made with American lead-free pewter and strewn with sparkly Swarovski crystals and comes with a coral-shaped spoon. A magical way to sprinkle on any type of salt! faeriemag.com/collections/kitchen



Fossil River Gourmet River Salt Flakes With Seaweed, from Selena Naturally Celtic Sea Salt, is mixed with wild-crafted seaweed from the coast of Brittany and imparts a delicate flavor, along with healthy minerals that the body needs. Other flavors include Rose Petal, Wasabi-Sesame, and Smoked. celticeseasalt.com



Handmade by a Nordic artist on the tiny Danish island of Funen, this **Small Ceramic Planet Ornament Galaxy Blue** stoneware is adorned with traces of the artist's fingerprints and glazed with colors that are one of a kind and create a magical effect on firing. abchome.com



The perfect gift for a tea lover, **The Republic of Tea Citizens' Favorites Tea Assortment** is a generous selection of fifty delicious unbleached tea bags in a reusable tin. republicoftea.com



The Marrakesh, a pour-over kettle with an exaggerated long slim goose-neck spout, is a stylish and precise way to pour a favorite hot beverage—tea, coffee, or cocoa. Made of stainless steel and designed to have a zero net impact on the environment. Sales help provide safe drinking water for people in need. globein.com



FROM OUR READERS

We asked our Facebook readers:
What is your favorite holiday tradition?

An unexpected snowfall on Christmas Eve knocked out our power, but my everwise Mom, not missing a beat, broke out a host of candles. We had never had such a deeply connecting Christmas as we did that night. So, opening gifts by candlelight became our family tradition.
—Teresa Price Bowen

In Australia it is summer, so storm birds singing means Christmas. Purple jacaranda trees as well. But the best is carols by candlelight—this tradition was invented in Australia.
—Peta Stockwell



After we send cards to friends and family, we take turns sending out the remaining cards to random celebrities and see if we get a response.
—Kimberly Chambers

Being Muslim, we do love the winter and everything that comes with it, including the tiny snow djinni that leave dreams in the air to catch, so to attract them we put up a glowing lit date tree. It is such a magical time of year!
—Zee Sunny Zeaiter



Illustrations © Guinevere von Sneeden

One of my favorite things to do for Diwali, or the Festival of Lights, is to eat sweets and walk through my house with all the lights off and the flame of a lit *diya* (a clay pot with a lit cotton wick) to chase out the shadows of the old year and ring in the new one. Another lovely thing is to do *rangoli*, where you create gorgeous, intricate colored-sand paintings on the floor.
—Shweta Thakrar



My grandfather used to wait until me and my siblings were sleeping, then he would drag a pair of boots through the ash in the fireplace and leave footprints all around the house. Now that I'm older I do this for my niece and nephew every year. They get the biggest kick out of it!
—Katherine Pariah Thomas

I love putting up my collection of vintage ceramic Christmas trees and placing all the little colorful lights and birds, flowers, and stars I've gathered for them. I have green trees and white trees, and my children love them as well. I have loved them myself since admiring my grandmother's ceramic tree as a wee child. She placed it on the piano top for ambience when she played holiday carols.
—Sarah Chisholm

When making the Christmas cake, every member of the household has a stir and makes a wish for the following year.
—Sarah Marshall

We dedicate the fall season to Tolkien. Every Thursday we watch one of the Tolkien movies and have a dinner that coordinates with the movie. We end this on Thanksgiving to go out with a bang. We call this ThanksGimli! We have re-created Bilbo's birthday cake, made lembas bread, "Smaug" dinner of roast duck on cornbread casserole, stuffed pumpkin "orc head," and this year, we have even done rabbit stew.
—Hannah Sweat

Listening to "classic" Christmas music (1950s, '60s, etc.) while decorating for Christmas. I also put some clementines, cinnamon, and cloves in water and simmer on the stove.
—Beth Ann Kleeman Buck

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"THIS DELICIOUS STORY WILL SEDUCE YOU AND LEAVE YOU DESPERATE FOR JUST ONE MORE PAGE."

—LEIGH BARDUGO,
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