

FAIRY PAINTING IN NINETEENTH CENTURY ART AND LATE TWENTIETH  
CENTURY ART: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

by

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ABSTRACT

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The history of fairies has existed for centuries and will continue to exist as long as people remain who are fascinated by them and are compelled to put pen to paper and brush to canvas. During the nineteenth century, there was an explosion of fairies depicted in art. Nineteenth century artists like Fitzgerald, Dadd, and Doyle used their art to express the societal influences of theatre, ballet, sex, drugs, and technological advances brought about by the industrial revolution. The late twentieth century artists like Brown, Froud, and Law also drew inspiration from literature, advances in societal norms allowing for open expression of sexuality, technological advances which provided access to information, and from each other. However, unlike the nineteenth century artists, the late twentieth century artists openly expressed through their art the influence of sex.

This research compares selected late twentieth century artists depicting fairy illustrations with selected nineteenth century artists. Influences that had a direct effect on fairy art were theatre, ballet, literature, technology and society as a whole. Because these influences were not stagnant, it is necessary to discover whether the depiction of fairies has evolved or remained the same.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

For centuries, storytellers, artists, and poets have been fascinated by the idea of a secret, separate race of beings existing close to humans on another plane. The belief of fairies has mainly survived in the rural areas of Celtic lands like Ireland and Isle of Man, with their many tales of fairy happenings. Many artists and authors ranging from Chaucer and Shakespeare to the present time have imagined who fairies are and what they may have looked like. “Faery folk have been distorted and misunderstood by those who never bothered to know them properly” (McHargue, 1972, p. 31). As early as the sixteenth century, artists and authors had so many ideas of what fairies should look like, that they almost erased the images of fairies that were created by folktales and myths. Over time, the images of fairies have been distorted and exploited to such an extent that they are now the small cute beings, such as Tinkerbell from the story *Peter Pan*, that appear in art and fiction today.

Although fairy depiction had existed prior to the nineteenth century, it was not until then that a movement began, which concentrated on fairy painting. When describing this movement, Jeremy Maas (1997) states that:

“no other type of painting concentrates so many of the opposing elements in the Victorian Psyche: the desire to escape the drear hardships of daily existence; the stirrings of new attitudes towards sex, stifled by religious dogma; a passion for the unknown; psychological retreat from scientific discovery; the latent revulsion against the exactitude of the new invention of photography.” (p. 11).

Like Maas, Nicola Brown (2001) has a similar theory that Victorians tried to escape modernity through fairies and imagination. Similarly, Christopher Wood (2000) suggests Victorian art gives way to reveal sex, drugs, and nudity all under the title of art.

The three artists chosen from the nineteenth century for this study, John Anster Fitzgerald, Richard Doyle, and Richard Dadd all have one thing in common; they have painted fairies. Each artist illustrates fairies with different mediums of color and texture.

Late twentieth century artists, Amy Brown, Stephanie Law, and Brian Froud also illustrate fairies. They, like the nineteenth century artists, illustrate fairies in their own technique; each person pulls inspiration from different sources.

According to her personal website (2004), Amy Brown's influence for painting fairies has been Brian Froud and Micheal Parkes. She also has been inspired by the urban fantasy stories of Charles Delint and haunting music of Loreena McKinnitt.

Stephanie Law's inspiration stems from mythology, legend, and folklore. She has also been inspired by the art of Impressionists, Pre-Raphaelites, and Surrealists. Stephanie, as a young girl, was first introduced to fairies and fantasy by a friend through the books *Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis.

Brian Froud is the author of two fairy books titled, *Faeries*, and *Good Faeries/Bad Faeries*. Brian states his illustrations are not drawn from specific stories or folklore texts; rather they are images painted by intuition and visions ( Froud, 1998).

#### *Statement of the problem*

This research compares selected late twentieth century artists depicting fairy illustrations with selected nineteenth century artists. Influences that had a direct effect on fairy art were theatre, ballet, literature, technology and society as a whole. Because these influences were not stagnant, it is necessary to discover whether the depiction of fairies has evolved or remained the same.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study was to research the influences and motivations on nineteenth century and late twentieth century paintings and depictions of fairies in order to determine whether they were similar or divergent. Art historically keeps impacting future generations. Nineteenth century artists drew inspiration from theatre and ballet. Sex, drugs, and advances in technology were hidden in the background.

In the late twentieth century sex, drugs, took a huge leap into the open and great advances in technology took place. Drugs were illegal but widely used, and sex was used to sell, especially in advertising. Artists no longer drew inspiration only from theatre and ballet but from the historical artists themselves.

### *Research Objectives*

The objectives of this research were to:

1. Select illustrators who have produced visual representations of fairies which were painted in the nineteenth and late twentieth century.
2. Compare selected fairy paintings of the nineteenth and late twentieth centuries.
3. Interpret influences and motivation on the nineteenth and late twentieth century artists' depictions of fairies.

### *Limitations of the study*

1. This study was limited to selected artists who illustrated fairies during the nineteenth and late twentieth centuries.
2. In this study, the artists chosen were limited to six, three from each century.

3. This study is subjective in nature. Even though the writer has researched others' and their analyses of fairy illustration, the evidence chosen could easily be skewed to match the writer's viewpoint. The writer has attempted to be as objective as possible when comparing selected paintings.

*Definition of terms*

*Fairy* – A mythical being of folklore and romance usually having diminutive human form and magic powers (Mish, pg 417).

*Nineteenth Century* – Years dating between 1800-1899, a time when fairy lore and depiction was widely celebrated.

*Late Twentieth Century* – Years dating between 1960-1999.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will discuss fairies in general, influences from theatre, ballet, and literature and other societal influences, followed by information regarding fairies in nineteenth century art by Fitzgerald, Doyle, and Dadd. In addition, late twentieth century art by Brown, Law, and Froud was studied and evaluated. Literature from the nineteenth and late twentieth centuries discussed a number of great fairy artists. The artists were chosen for this study according to who held the greatest popularity in fairy art literature.

#### *Fairy History*

The word fairy, according to Froud (1998), was originally derived from the Latin word *fatum* which means destiny or enchantment. From there, the word *fatum* turned into *Fee* in French then into *Fay* or *Fae* in English. Froud (1998) stated that by the seventeenth century there were many different kinds of fairy words like: *faire folk*, *fairfolks*, *farefolkis*, *pharie*, *pheries*, *farie*, *fairy*, *fairie*, *fairye*, and *faery*. There are many spellings of the word fairy as well as many myths of origin. An Icelandic version of fairy origin from Froud is as follows:

“Eva was washing her children by the river when God spoke to her. In her awe and fear she hid those children she had not already washed. God asked if all her children were there and she replied that they were. He then declared that those children who hid from him would be hidden from man.” (Froud, 1978, p.4.).

This myth describes one reason why humans can not see fairies, which in turn makes fairies magical and fascinating to many.

In Ireland, fairies are called the *Tuatha De Danann* and it is interesting to note that in ancient Irish manuscripts, the gods of the pre-Christian Celts had the same name (McHargue, 1972). The theory of fairies living underground could have come about when old beliefs were no longer accepted. Many fairy folk stories have survived mainly in the Celtic lands.

### *Fairies in Theatre and Ballet*

Fairies were popular subjects of the theater, art and music of the nineteenth century. The center of the Victorian subconscious was fairy painting (Maas, 1997, p. 11). Fairy painters of this era loved theatre and ballet. Theatre and ballet created an illusion of life so people could escape from their everyday lives. Nudity in fairy painting ranged from the grotesquely erotic to idealized visions (Maas, 1997). Shakespeare's plays, especially *A Midsummer Night Dream* and the *Tempest*, also helped influence the Victorian fairy craze by describing the fairies in his plays. Shakespeare made great use of fairy literature and traditional English folklore (Wood, 2000). Nineteenth century literature provided subject material, but the visual impact of pantomime, ballet and opera is apparent in the fairy paintings from the nineteenth century.

Spiritualism, another nineteenth century stimulus, gave the artist and his public a common ground to share. The first mediums, individuals who communicated with the spirit world, surfaced during this time. High society ladies invited others to "tea and table-turning", where a medium was invited over for tea and to communicate with the spirit world for the guests. The Society for Psychical Research was also founded, with members including a bishop and a minister of the crown (Maas, 1997).

The romantic movement in ballet created more imagination because during the nineteenth century one of the main themes "was the supernatural, in which a spirit forms a relationship with a mortal" (Wood, 2000, p 13). Fairies have always been associated with music and dancing. It was from ballet that nineteenth century painters drew their imagery (Wood, 2000). People were astonished by the ability of one being able to walk across the floor on ones toes which in turn, affected the way human movement was represented by artists. New inventions in stage craft and

set design also increased the public's appetite for spectacle and illusion. The same elaborate staging continued to characterize theatre until the end of the nineteenth century (Wood, 2000).

### *Fairies in nineteenth century literature*

Fairy tales written in the nineteenth century were for the enjoyment of children, yet because fairies were so popular, it is said that adults also read them (Trimpe, 1997). The books titled *Grimm's Fairy Tales* and Hans Christian Anderson's *Fairy Tales* helped create the nineteenth century fairy craze. Hans Christian Andersen's book, *Fairy Tales* was not published until the 1840's. Hans Christian Andersen and Grimm's stories became the most popular of all nineteenth century children's books, endlessly republished and illustrated by many different artists. After the nineteenth century, "it was as though artists had become reluctant to exercise their former willing suspension of disbelief and had banished fairies to their domain, the nursery. The fairy kingdom was more and more linked to children's fairy tales, to the world of *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Water Babies*, and *Peter Pan*" (Maas, 1997, p. 21). Studies in psychology on visual perception and the invention of photography and moving pictures threatened the reality of fairies (Gere, 1997).

### *John Fitzgerald (British 1823-1906)*

Fitzgerald's paintings are indeed spectacular and full of color. He devoted most of his art career to fairy painting, he was known as 'Fairy Fitzgerald' (Wood, 2000). All Fitzgerald's fairy paintings are dated 1850-1860. According to Maas,

"Fitzgerald's fairy paintings, at their best, present us with a world of vivid yet harmonious colors. They are inhabited by beautiful fairies with translucent wings and diaphanous garments, wood sprites with glittering hair, goblins with fantastic heads, sleeping, walking, dreaming, or tormenting mice or birds. Deep sunless forest glades or bathed in moonlight, they are framed by honeysuckle, cowslips and morning glory, 'nodding violets', 'sweet musk-roses' and wild thyme', entwined with writhing branches. Any eroticism is discreetly veiled and transmuted into suggestions of love and marriage" (Mass, 1997, p. 18).

Wood (2000) considers Fitzgerald to be one of the greatest and most prolific of the nineteenth century fairy painters. Fitzgerald opens a window into the nineteenth century subconscious with all its dark secrets through his art (Wood, 2000).

Another factor of fairy appearance in nineteenth century art is the availability of opium, morphine, cocaine, and chloroform (Gere, 1997). These drugs were used in the nineteenth century by many people. The sensation the drugs produced could have given artists like Fitzgerald the feeling of an out of body experience where they were looking at themselves while painting or dreaming in the drug haze, imagining the fairies and creatures floating in the air above them. People from this age were of the opinion that the pleasures of smoking and inhaling different kinds of drugs were no more wrong than smoking tobacco (Gere, 1997). The use of drugs to explore ones' more creative side came to a halt around 1868 with the Pharmacy Act. Pharmacists could no longer buy as much opium as they wanted because of legal limitations (Wood, 2000).

Fitzgerald did not use Shakespeare as inspiration. He used his imagination and subjects from folk tales to show pure spectacle from the stage. He usually painted nocturnal environments, brilliantly lit, clearly inspired from the invention and use of gaslight in the theatre. Fitzgerald's pictures hint at erotic symbolism. His paintings do not supply nude fairies like Dadd's *Come onto these yellow sands*, yet show seductiveness. Even more, he shows a secret place where drugs influenced his series of dream paintings. The use of drugs gave colors more intensity; fantastic dreams came from an opium induced sleep (Maas, 1997).

*Richard Dadd (British 1819-1886)*

Richard Dadd's story is unique. He was regarded as one of the most promising artists of his time, liked for his cheerfulness and good nature (Kimmelman, 1998). While Dadd was

traveling, a companion noticed he was having delusions and sent him home. His father, on advice from a doctor, thought taking him to the country would help him get better. While in the country, Dadd stabbed and killed his father and then fled to France. He had intentions of murdering the Emperor of Austria, but ended up stabbing a fellow traveler. He later confessed that he thought his father was the devil and that he had a duty to perform from the God Osiris to “exterminate the men most possessed with the demon” (Wood, 2000, p. 81). He was later diagnosed with bipolar manic depression. During his stay in mental institutions, encouraged by his doctors, Dadd painted two of the finest nineteenth century paintings. The last painting Dadd finished before he went mad was called *Come onto these yellow sands*. The painting’s name comes from an excerpt in Shakespeare’s play, *Tempest* (Blakemore, 1997, p. 1667).

Ariel’s first song in “The Tempest” says:

‘Come unto these yellow sands  
 And then take these hands:  
 Curtsied when you have, and kiss’d  
 The wild waves whist:  
 Foot if featly here and there,  
 And, sweet sprites,  
 Hark, hark!’ (Shakespeare )

After Dadd went mad, he continued to paint, finishing a total of eleven paintings. The two finest paintings of this time were called *Contradiction: Oberon and Titania* and the *Fairy feller’s master stroke* (Wood, 2000).

*Contradiction: Oberon and Titania*, took 4 years to paint and is actually oval. The main figures are life size in contrast to the fairies and other strange beings. Puck is dressed like a jester and stands on Oberon’s right side. Dadd drew inspiration for this painting from his middle-eastern travels. Oberon, dressed with a helmet and dark beard looks like a Syrian Sheikh, whom Dadd met on his travels. Behind Oberon stand many followers including ‘a group of

bacchanalian travelers' and a satyr (Wood, 2000, p 82). Many fairies appear amongst the foliage at the bottom of the painting. One fairy is trying to stop an arrow from being shot at Titania. There is also a lone butterfly on a leaf at the center bottom of the picture. The butterfly is a recurring theme in many fairy paintings by many artists.

The *Fairy feller's master stroke* is another complex painting created during Dadd's insane period. This particular painting took him nine years to paint. Dadd's paintings' after he was committed to the insane asylum are very detailed, however, they vary from his earlier paintings in that they can be characterized by a certain degree of obsessiveness (Wood, 2000 ).

*Richard Doyle (British 1824-1883)*

Like Dadd, Doyle portrayed fairy land as a miniature world where fairies of all kinds could be found under leaves, mushrooms, and behind blades of grass. Doyle is best known for his book illustrations, large fairy landscapes in water color and oils. His paintings usually had many figures in them. Doyle's painting *Fairy tree* has over 200 fairies sitting on the bare branches of a tree with a boy gazing in wonder (Lambourne, 1999). In this painting, the king sits on a tree limb and is having his moustache combed by many female fairies sitting on either side of him.

According to Lambourne (1999), Doyle had a fondness for drawing "luxuriant tresses being braided and plaited into sinuous and convoluted intricacies." (p. 205). Doyle's paintings are very original and Victorian, yet they also gave way to the nineteenth century need to fantasize about the existence of extraterrestrials; this need recurs in twentieth century science fiction films and stories. Some of the figures in his paintings resemble how twentieth century artists depict aliens.

Unable to cope with the demands of a large family, Doyle became an alcoholic and lived in a lunatic asylum he called 'Sunnyside' (Mass, 1997). At Sunnyside, Doyle described his life through his sketch books, producing watercolors with a disturbing hallucinatory quality. Maas calls Doyle's world 'a world of fantasy rather than that of Fairy' (1997).

#### *Fairies in Late Twentieth Century Literature*

In the late twentieth century the fairy genre is revitalized by artists through book and comic illustration. When the exhibit *Victorian fairy painting* toured the world, the art and critic world began to stir (Kimmelman, 1998). Critics like Mass, Lambourne, Wood and Trimpe were trying to figure out exactly what fairy painters of the nineteenth century were trying to convey within their paintings.

Fairy art from the nineteenth century was widely used in illustrating children's books of the twentieth century. In the early twentieth century, English author J. R.R. Tolkien included fairies and other creatures in his works, *The hobbit* and the three volumes of *The lord of the rings*. Tolkien describes a race of wise and gifted elves that live in the Undying lands, a place where nothing ages or dies (Dundes, 2000). It is possible that written descriptions of fairies influenced and inspired late twentieth century artists helping them visualize and create the fairies in their paintings.

#### *Amy Brown (American 1972-present)*

Brown was born in Bellingham, Washington, in 1972. Since childhood, Brown assumed she would be an artist. She did not take her art seriously until she started working with a custom picture framer at a local gallery. The gallery exposed her to a wide range of art in all media (Riche, 2003). Brown's employer handed her an empty frame and said maybe she could paint a little fairy or something in it. Earlier she had received the book titled *Faeries* by Froud from an

aunt, but had never thought of painting a fairy. That evening she painted a little fairy beside a cluster of Foxgloves; the painting was displayed in the gallery and sold a couple of days later. Brown decided to test the market with laser prints of her paintings. She sold her prints at street sales and at shops run by her friends. Eventually she expanded her market; her husband created a web site with multiple galleries and nearly 150 images on display (Riche, 2003).

According to her personal website (2004), Amy Brown's influence for painting fairies has been Brian Froud and Micheal Parkes. She also has been inspired by the urban fantasy stories of Charles de Lint and haunting music of Loreena McKinnitt. Most of Brown's illustrations have been simple, staging one strong figure. Her paintings tend to be no larger than 11x17. Brown has stated that she spends no longer than three days on a single painting and that she loves painting fairies because "anything goes"; there are no rules that have to be followed (Brown, 2004).

According to Brown (2004), a simple image has more emotion than a complex image. Brown would like the viewer to get an instant, emotionally raw reaction to her paintings. Her paintings are typically watercolor, like Doyal's, but with accents in colored pencil if needed.

*Brian Froud (British 1947-present)*

Froud was born and raised in Winchester, England. Froud's most cherished moments as a child were the solitary explorations he went on after school and on vacations in natural areas, building private worlds in the undergrowth. Froud attended art school but gravitated towards graphic design. He thought art school focused mainly on discussing the painting, rather than actually painting, whereas in graphic design he could open up his imagination. He was able to explore many aspects of the arts with less authority and boundaries. He drew, painted, and sculpted with a wide variety of materials to create the images that came to him (Sanders, 1977).

Froud has inspired many people including Charles de Lint, who in turn, inspired Brown. Froud also worked on the films, *The Dark Crystal*, and *Labyrinth*, both fantasy films filled with creatures created from his imagination. While working on the set of *The Dark Crystal*, he met his wife, Wendy. They married and had a child, Toby, who as a baby, acted in the film *Labyrinth* that Froud happened to be working on at that time.

Froud's strong sense of tradition, and passing knowledge down from generation to generation, and influences of other artists like the painter Dadd all have had a strong influence on his work (Sanders, 1977). Froud's paintings are very sophisticated, yet have a lot of sexuality in them, disguised by a childlike naughtiness. Froud commented that every book or story has a beginning and an end, like his paintings; you never know what is over the hill, or what will happen next.

A majority of Frouds' work is in monochrome rather than color. He tends to draw his conceptions loosely so the painting can develop as he works (Sanders, 1977).

*Stephanie Law (American 1976-present)*

Law was born in New York in 1976 and has lived in California since she was seven years old. Law received encouragement from an uncle who was an artist and she took extramural classes in art throughout her school days. A friend introduced Law, as a child of eight, to fantasy through the *World of narnia* collection by C.S. Lewis. Law graduated from the University of California – Berkeley in 1998 with a double major in Fine Arts and Computer Science. Influences from her hobbies of flamenco dancing and piano playing can be seen in her painting.

Law's influences include the surrealists, Pre-Raphaelites, Alphonse Mucha, Michael Parks, Daniel Merriam, Alan Lee, and Brian Froud. She also has been inspired by random formations of the clouds, or by the way a tree branches out and twists up towards the sky, and

how the sun streams through foliage or through a window pane (Riche, 2003). Law has drawn inspiration from other cultures such as Chinese, Celtic, Greek, Roman, and Indian. There are two things Law has tried to convey in her paintings, a sense of “sacredness” and the way images are created by stories passed down by the word of mouth (Law, 2003).

Law is unique, not only because she works in watercolor, but the computer program, Adobe Photoshop, has been used to flip and modify her sketches. Shadownscapes is the name of Law’s website which to her means “shadows of reality that are almost grasped, but at the same time dancing in a dream-world made of light and absence of light” (Law, 2004). She has produced work for role-playing games, magazines, and book covers.

In summary, the history of fairies has existed for centuries and will continue to exist as long as people remain who are fascinated by them and are compelled to put pen to paper and brush to canvas. During the nineteenth century, there was an explosion of fairies depicted in art. Nineteenth century artists like Fitzgerald, Dadd, and Doyle used their art to express the societal influences of theatre, ballet, sex, drugs, and technological advances brought about by the industrial revolution. The late twentieth century artists like Brown, Froud, and Law also drew inspiration from literature, advances in societal norms allowing for open expression of sexuality, technological advances which provided access to information, and from each other. However, unlike the nineteenth century artists, the late twentieth century artists openly expressed through their art the influence of sex.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Introduction*

Art historically impacts future generations. Nineteenth century artists drew inspiration from theatre and ballet as well as other societal influences. Sex and drugs were hidden in the background during that era. In the late twentieth century, sex and drugs took a leap into the open and great advances in technology took place. Drugs were illegal but widely used, and sex was used to sell, especially in advertising. Artists no longer drew inspiration only from theatre and ballet and current society but also from historical artists themselves.

Research objectives for this study were to select nineteenth and twentieth century artists who produced visual representations of fairies, compare selected paintings from these nineteenth and late twentieth century artists, and to interpret the possible factors that influenced these artists.

#### *Method of Study*

The researcher reviewed literature related to artists from the nineteenth and late twentieth centuries who painted fairies. Three widely known artists were selected from each century. Two to three paintings from each of these artists were chosen for analysis. Paintings chosen for the study had to show sufficient details for analysis. Analysis of paintings was undertaken in order to determine possible influences or motivations that may have affected the artist. Each painting was analyzed according to details like similar poses, clothing fashions, and differences in color. Paintings from the selected time periods were compared in order to determine similarities and differences that may have resulted from societal differences of those periods. Twentieth century paintings were analyzed to determine elements which may have been influenced by the nineteenth century paintings.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DISCUSSION

#### *Summary of Findings*

#### Nineteenth Century Artists

#### John Fitzgerald (British 1823-1906)

Fitzgerald's use of vivid bright colors brings his painting to life. Figure 1, *The stuff dreams are made of*, is from a series of paintings dealing with the dream state.



Figure 1, (Royal Academy of Arts, used by permission)

In this particular painting, a woman is on the bed sleeping. The pose appears to be seductive in nature. Her breasts are not bare but are clearly visible. The female figure tends to exhibit the idealized woman of the nineteenth century. She displays a round body, soft facial features, long hair, and long soft apparel.

Two kinds of fairies appear in this painting, those floating by the bed and those standing on the floor. Both groups contain grotesque figures. Within the floating group are what appear to be a man and a woman, possibly signifying a king and queen. From the apparent dream-like

state of the main figure in this painting, drug use may have influenced Fitzgerald during its creation.

It has been said that some nineteenth century artists used drugs in order to experience an out of body experience. Nineteenth century artists liked the way drugs made them feel, exposing the more creative side of one's self (Mass, 2000).

In Figure 2, *The captive robin*, the scene is quite different. Fitzgerald placed his fairies in the midst of foliage.

A bird is held captive by a flower leash around its neck. Some fairies look human, and some have strange facial features and are half animal, half human. The fairies' clothes and headdresses are made from leaves and flowers. The colors in this painting are also very bright. The three central figures seem to be illuminated by a bright light, like a spotlight from the theatre. The fairy holding onto the leash of the captive bird is sitting in a squatting pose. This painting uses vivid colors and is lit brilliantly, possibly influenced by the invention of gaslight in theatres of the nineteenth century. The female figures in this painting are beautiful whereas the male figures appear grotesque. In comparison to the foliage and bird, the figures appear to be quite small. Female figures tend to exhibit the idealized woman of the nineteenth century. They display round bodies, soft facial features, long hair, and long soft apparel.



Figure 2, (Phaidon Press, used by permission)

Richard Dadd (British 1819-1886)

Dadd has two very different kinds of paintings, those from before he went into the mental institution and those from within. The paintings that date from before he was institutionalized are romantic. Figure 3, *Come onto these yellow sands*, displays many figures both, male and female, dancing on the sandy beach. The figures' clothing is very revealing and sheer. The second group appears to be sitting and standing on a large rock arch or floating in the air. The central figure standing highest on the rock could possibly represent a queen. She is

surrounded by many other fairies. From the queen, the fairies seem to be floating down like mythical gods. The



Figure 3, (Phaidon Press, used by permission)

fairies on the beach are dancing around the rock that holds the queen yet they have to pass through an archway to get around the rock. It is clear that Dadd was influenced by nineteenth century ballet in this painting by the way the figures are dancing on their toes and wearing sheer apparel. Fairies have long been associated with music and dancing. According to Wood (2000), painters drew their imagery from the ballet. The name of the painting, *Come onto these yellow sands*, is taken from Shakespeare. The dancing fairies seem to be holding sticks or wands in their hands. The figures all appear to be human in size, both those dancing on the sand and those

standing on the rock. The female figures display round bodies and appear romantic in general. Both females and males display idealized bodies for the nineteenth century.

Figure 4, *Contradiction: Oberon and Titania*, painted during Dadd's stay in the mental institution, is very different from his previous work. This particular painting is painted in an oval shape.



Figure 4, (Phaidon Press, used by permission)

Within the picture, are two figures that possibly signify a king and queen with several human figures accompanying them. Behind the central figure is a band of followers of which some appear human and others half human. Many fairies are hidden in the foliage and

throughout the entire painting. This painting uses more earth tones than bright tones. In the right top of the painting is a green egg. One can only speculate about its significance. At the bottom of the painting is a leaf that looks like a lily pad, and on the leaf sits a butterfly with several circular patterns on its wings. Circular forms are very prominent in this painting.

The clothing worn by the central figures is draped like that of Middle Eastern nomads, people that Dadd could have encountered during his Middle Eastern travels. The central figures appear to be of normal human size but when compared to the foliage and other figures throughout the paintings they are either far in the background or smaller than human size. The central figures display the idealized body of the nineteenth century, the women have soft round bodies with softly draped clothing and the men appear muscular.

Richard Doyle (British 1824-1883)

Doyle's paintings have many figures in them. In figure five, *The fairy tree*, the figures on the tree limbs are of all shapes and sizes. Some have big heads with little bodies, others are more normally proportioned.

A young boy looks into the tree limbs from the bottom left corner. In the middle of the painting is the king sitting on a branch. His mustache is being combed by many maidens on either side of him. The other figures throughout the tree are dancing, sitting, and in various other positions. Two small horses with riders appear on the tree branches, one apparently a queen with a crown on her head. The clothing resembles that from a variety of different eras. Some figures are grotesque in appearance. Many activities are displayed throughout the painting, such as acrobatics, storytelling, dancing, and eating. Some of the faces appear fairly normal, but some  
selected figures

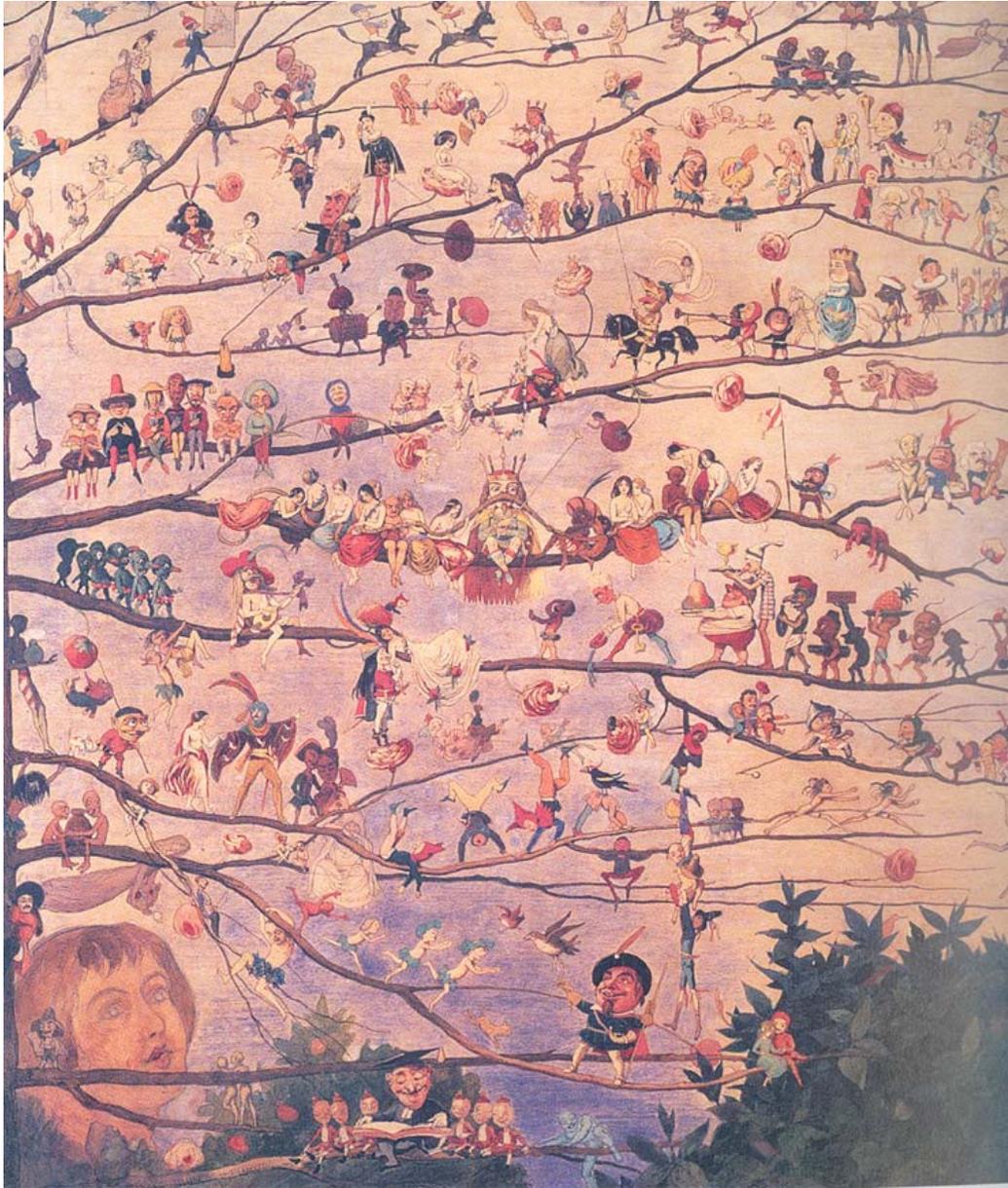


Figure 5, (Phaidon Press, used by permission)

are distorted, such as with long noses that resemble Pinocchio's. The painting has an overall jolly feeling and appears cartoon-like.

Late Twentieth Century Artists

Amy Brown (American 1972-present)

Brown's paintings use many different values of color. In Figure 6, *Doormouse's house warming party*, a mouse is sitting in the doorway in the trunk of the tree. Hidden faces appear within the tree trunk. Some of the female fairies are seductive in nature with the top half of their breasts visible.



Figure 6, (copyright Amy Brown, used by permission)

Some fairies also wear striped leggings. Two of the human like fairies' dresses are short, perhaps tunic length. Grotesque fairies are present but their gender is not apparent. Some of the

grotesque fairies resemble depictions of late twentieth century extraterrestrial beings. Some of the female fairies look like fashion magazine models of the late twentieth century with tall, slim bodies. The dress of the human type fairies is a representation of the fashions of the later half of the twentieth century. The circular shape of the ball is a recurring theme throughout late twentieth century art. Butterflies flying in the air and around the tree trunk are also a common theme in fairy paintings.

Figure 7, *The autumn court*, appears gothic in nature. The painting has one large center fairy with antlers on her head.



Figure 7, (copyright Amy Brown, used by permission)

She is dressed in a strapless dress with a very large cloak. The cloak has many drapes and is ragged on the bottom. The center figure is sitting on a throne apparently made of stone. Behind the throne is a tree with many branches. On top of, and all around the branches are smaller fairies flying and sitting, some resembling Tinkerbell from the story *Peter pan*. The fairies have pointed ears, pointed faces, and pointed feet possibly reminiscent of the ballet. All female fairies appear beautiful and dainty whereas the male figures appear grotesque. Hidden in the rocks behind the throne is a winged dragon. Butterflies are also found throughout the painting. Polka-dot toadstools, a recurring theme in Brown's paintings, are also visible.

Brian Froud (British 1947-present)

Figures 8, 9, and 10 of Frouds are very detailed. In figure 8, *The dressing of a salad*, there are many different kinds of fairies, none alike. Some of Froud's fairies have tails and some do not.

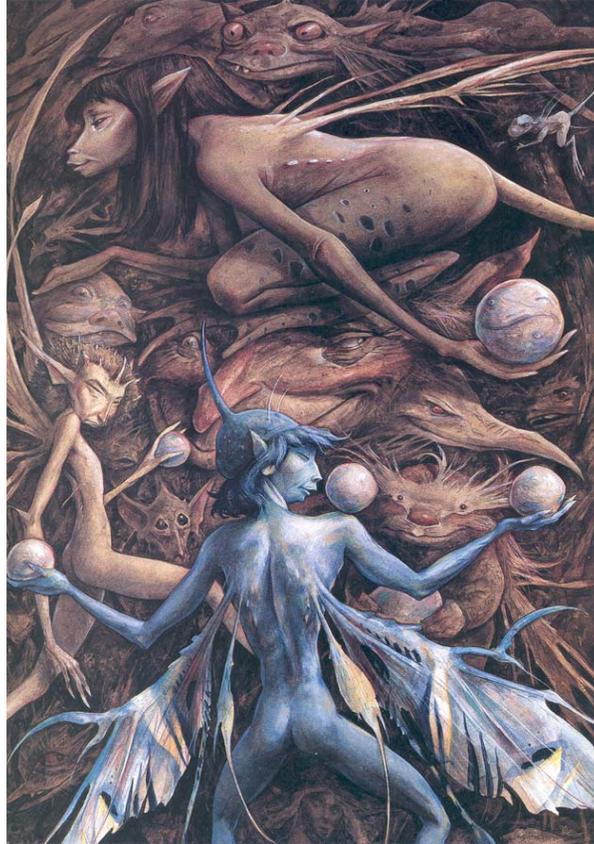


Figure 8, (from *Good Faeries Bad Faeries*, copyright Brian Froud, used by permission)

Some of the fairy legs in this particular painting bear a resemblance to frog legs. All kinds of faces appear in this painting, fish, birds, monsters, animals in general, and faces with snouts. Another recurring theme is pointedness – such as fingers, wings, feet and anything pointed in general. The wings of these fairies are not beautiful but ugly and tattered with many sharp points. There are also a number of hidden fairies which really have to be looked for in order to be noticed. Again balls, a recurring theme in fairy art of the late twentieth century, are scattered throughout the painting, one in particular resembles a face.

Figure 9, *Nippers in the orchard*, appears to be sensual in nature. The center fairy in Figure 9 is a sensual voluptuous woman with very large breasts.



Figure 9, (from *Good Faeries Bad Faeries*, copyright Brian Froud, used by permission)

Round fruits are found throughout the painting, possibly signifying breasts. In this particular painting most of the fairies are touching the round fruit. The center fairy has protrusions that look like two chicken legs or tree branches with hoofs coming out of her head. The fabric on the center fairy's arm is very tattered but appears to have a hidden fairy face within it. The expressions of several of the male fairies appear to be lecherous. This painting as a whole appears to have a very sexual nature.

A fairy holding onto a piece of fruit is wearing a very tight corset and skirt that resembles a woman's "hour glass figure" which has been idealized through many periods of history. The painting gives a feeling of ripeness and fertility.

Figure 10, *Queen of the bad faeries*, is a darker painting than Figure 9. Here, Froud also used a fairy woman for his centerpiece.



Figure 10, (from *Good Faeries Bad Faeries*, copyright Brian Froud, used by permission)

An evil hand with very sharp, long fingernails is in front of the center fairy's face. Like the other two Froud paintings, this one too has many fairies within it. Most of the fairies look like they are coming from the dark side rather than the good side of nature, hence the title *Queen of the bad faeries*. The grotesque male fairy above the center fairy is lying in a seductive pose across her head. Some fairies appear to have wings, but they are tattered. The hand that covers the central fairy's face seems to have a growth coming out of the wrist, possibly a pair of fairy wings.

In all three Froud paintings, select fairies bare their teeth. He also gave select fairies hair that is wild and wiry. Froud's paintings may have been influenced by movies of the time. His figures are scary and often nonhuman. Froud's figures appear in the fantasy films, on which he

has worked; such as the *Labyrinth* . Many movies in the late twentieth century depicted alien beings from which Froud may have had some inspiration.

Stephanie Law (American 1976-present)

Law paints in soft dark colors. Figure 11, *Seeking the mothqueen*, depicts a large rock wall where a fairy sits. She has a white glowing ball in her hand, a recurring theme in late twentieth century fairy art. The fairy has large grotesque feet, with really long pointed toes. Circular shapes can be seen throughout the entire painting. The main fairy is very beautiful with bright white antennas coming out of her head. This fairy appears slender, typical of the late twentieth century fashion ideal. Butterflies line the fairy's wings and dress. Large butterfly motifs are apparent in the rock on which the fairy is seated. Three innocent looking children below the rock are looking up at the fairy in awe. The children's clothing appears simple and reminiscent of the early twentieth century.

Figure 12, *And such is the way of the faeries*, is very detailed. Two main fairies, male and female, are mounted on two fantastic animals.

The two main fairies could possibly represent a king and queen. Glowing balls that could be made of glass are scattered throughout this painting. What appears to be a grotesque guard is hidden in the trunk of each tree. The guards resemble amphibians such as the frog. The female fairy seems to lying on her horse but is leaning toward the male fairy. In the center top of the painting, there appears to be an Indian dream weaving. The dream weaving has the skull of a large animal with long horns in the center of it. Above the skull, but within the second circle appear to be lines resembling a spiders' web. The arms of the two hidden guards appear to be supporting the dream weaving. Amphibian-like fairies are also hidden throughout the entire painting. The apparel worn by the two central figures seems to be soft and flowing.

## Summary

When comparing the nineteenth century paintings to the late twentieth century paintings, it is apparent that the female figures portrayed represent the idealized female body of their respective time periods. Nineteenth century female figures tended to be softer and rounder, while twentieth century figures are more slender. The fashions worn by the figures portrayed in the paintings are representative of



Figure 11, (copyright Stephanie Law, used by permission)



Figure 12, (copyright Stephanie Law, used by permission)

the fashions of their time periods, or in some cases, earlier eras, such as the middle ages. In the nineteenth century paintings, sexuality is displayed in a subtle manner whereas sexuality in the late twentieth century paintings is openly expressed. Both females and males in the nineteenth century paintings are typically fully clothed with only the skin of their face and hands displayed, representing the societal norms of that era. However, in the late twentieth century paintings, it is apparent that societal norms have changed and females and males are often almost, if not completely naked.

The figures of the late twentieth century are similar to those of the nineteenth century, but are more detailed in nature. Both centuries have figures that are not completely human. Most male figures in the nineteenth century appear grotesque as do the males in the late twentieth century. Late twentieth century painting figures display more pointed objects, i.e., pointed ears, noses, toes, fingers, than the nineteenth century figures. However, the usage of pointed objects exists in both centuries, but, the usage is more apparent in the late twentieth century paintings. The circular theme is noticeable in both the nineteenth and late twentieth century paintings, however, it is more visible in the late twentieth century paintings.

Theatre and ballet influences are strongly apparent in the nineteenth century whereas in the late twentieth century art it is not. In the nineteenth century the existence of extraterrestrials is alluded to whereas in the late twentieth century, figures bearing a strong resemblance to extraterrestrials are more apparent. The butterfly theme is widely used in late twentieth century art but the art of the nineteenth century only hints at butterflies.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### *Summary*

The history of fairies has existed for centuries and will continue to exist as long as people remain who are fascinated by them. During the nineteenth century, there was an explosion of fairies depicted in art. Nineteenth century artists like Fitzgerald, Dadd, and Doyle expressed the societal influences of theatre, ballet, sex, drugs, and technological advances brought about by the industrial revolution in their art. The late twentieth century artists like Brown, Froud, and Law also drew inspiration from literature. Advances in societal norms allowed for open expression of sexuality, and technological advances provided access to information. Twentieth century artists also got inspiration from nineteenth century fairy art and from each other. However, unlike the nineteenth century artists, the late twentieth century artists openly expressed through their art the influence of sex. The nineteenth and late twentieth century paintings, while somewhat different, maintain a similarity. They are similar in that many themes are recurring, such as sex, butterflies and round or pointed objects and a closeness to nature.

#### *Conclusion*

As a result of this study, one can conclude that the artists of the late twentieth century appear to have been influenced by aspects of the nineteenth century fairy art. This may be concluded because of similar recurrent themes which run throughout both nineteenth and late twentieth century paintings. These themes include: the idealized female bodies of their respective time period in both the nineteenth and late twentieth century paintings, the grotesque nature of the male figures and the subtly expressed sexuality of the nineteenth century paintings which led to the openly expressed sexuality of the late twentieth century paintings.

*Recommendations*

Further recommendations for study could include a study of fairy representation in theatre, children's literature, television, or movies within different time periods. Further study could be made of societal influence upon the expression of sexuality or other social behaviors in fairy art of selected time periods.

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