

The Gryphon



The Newsletter of the Friends of the
Osborne and Lillian H. Smith Collections

Spring/Summer 2025



FROM THE CHAIR

What is *your* favourite item in the Osborne Collection? The exhibit of staff picks that closed on February 23, *These Are a Few of My Favourite Things: Celebrating 75 Years of Osborne*, got me thinking about the books that enthrall me.

Perhaps my favourite, which I have only seen in digitized form, is *The school boy's holiday companion*, published in 1840. This can be seen at: www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/detail.jsp?Entt=RDM3063722&R=3063722.

The contrast between present-day attitudes and what was considered suitable for boys at the time is hilarious, as evidenced by the subtitle, which begins: "*Treasury of amusement: explaining the method of constructing air and fire balloons, parachutes, plain and folding kites, stilts, wire baskets, paper globes, stars, caps, bangs, bellows, boxes, boats, serpents...*" After various building projects, it goes on to "*many chemical experiments*"—most of them hair-raising.

Please let us know which Osborne treasures enthrall *you* by sending an email to the address in the sidebar at right. We'll run your responses in the fall issue.

We hope to see many of you on April 3 at the 21st Annual Albert & Clara Lahmer Memorial Lecture featuring prolific illustrator

Qin Leng. (Among Leng's many books is Rebecca Hainnu's *A Walk on the Tundra*—another one of my favourites in the Osborne Collection.) I'm excited to hear about her career and work.

On a sad note, in early January we lost Jane Dobell, our long-time member, donor, Executive member, and general champion of the Osborne. Jane's obituary appeared in *The Globe and Mail*:

www.legacy.com/ca/obituaries/theglobeandmail/name/constance-dobell-obituary?id=57303183.

We still have a few published copies of Jane's special 2005 lecture "Memoirs of a Cover Girl," which she gave during the exhibit *My Little Bookroom*, featuring many of the books she donated over the years. Copies are free and can be picked up at the Osborne. Read more about Jane on pages 14–15.

Welcome to the Osborne Collection!

The Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books has four main areas of concentration. The Osborne Collection itself contains literature published before 1910. The Lillian H. Smith Collection comprises books of literary and artistic merit published in English from 1910 onward. The Canadiana Collection is a selection of 19th- and 20th-century children's books in English, related to Canada, or whose authors, illustrators, or publishers are associated with Canada. The Jean Thomson Collection of Original Art has over 5,000 illustrations for children's books in watercolour, pen-and-ink, woodcut, and many other media.

As part of the Toronto Public Library system, the Collection is open to all.

facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Osborne-Collection-of-Early-Childrens-Books-177552168943174/ * osbornecollection.ca
www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/osborne/

Email the Friends at: FriendsOsborne@gmail.com

Lillian H. Smith Branch / Toronto Public Library, 239 College Street, Toronto, ON, M5T 1R5, 416-393-7753. See the website for hours.

See page 16 for membership and donation details.

In 2024, the Friends of the Osborne were delighted to celebrate 75 years of this superb collection and its many treasures, and to fund extra programs to mark the occasion, including our June 2024 lecture by Margo Beggs and the Illustrator-in-Residence program (see pages 6–7).

Watch your email for information coming soon on our spring Annual General Meeting.

As always, thank you for your ongoing support of the Osborne Collection.

—Gillian O'Reilly

Book Club for Grown-Ups

Next meetings:

Sat., March 8: Carroll/*Alice*

Sat., April 5: Sachar/*Holes*

Time: 2:30–4:00

For details, phone us or visit www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/osborne/.

SPRING / SUMMER EVENTS

21st Annual Albert & Clara Lahmer Memorial Lecture

Qin Leng: Drawing Stories—15 Years in Illustration

Thursday, April 3, 6:30–7:30



Photo by Lian Leng

Qin Leng is an illustrator and author of children's books. In 15 years, she has published over

70 titles, including picture books, chapter books, and graphic novels. In this lecture Leng will describe her journey as an author and illustrator, beginning with her early childhood and the artists who have inspired her, and then looking at the evolution of her visual approach.

She will delve into the unique challenges each project can bring, from the classic picture book to wordless picture books and French bandes dessinées, examining what happens between that first doodle on a piece of paper and the final published book.

Leng illustrated *Trèfle* (written by Nadine Robert), winner of the Governor General's Literary Award for best picture book. *Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin* (written by Chieri Uegaki) was a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award, and received the APALA Award for best picture book.

Exhibition

Child Friendly Cities

March 9–June 1

In this exhibit, we explore a child's experience of the city in its many spaces, both public and private.



From *My City Speaks*, by Darren Lebeuf, illus. Ashley Barron. Courtesy of Ashley Barron. Kids Can, 2021.



The Little Match Girl, trans. H. L. Braekstad. Sampson Low & Co.'s International Series of Toy Books, 1875.



Wow! City!, text and illus. Robert Neubecker. Hyperion Books, 2004.

Exhibition

Trickster Tales

June 15–August 31

This exhibition celebrates the tricksters and mischief-makers of children's literature. From Anansi the Spider to Reynard the Fox, these clever and cunning characters are at the heart of many beloved tales.



Reynard the Fox, A Wonder Book of Beasts, ed. F.J. Harvey Darton, illus. Margaret Clayton. 1909.



More Tales of Uncle Remus, told by Julius Lester, illus. Jerry Pinkney. Dial Books, 1988.

These are in-person events. The lecture will be held in the lower-level auditorium, and the exhibitions and book club will be on the fourth floor, all at the Lillian H. Smith Branch, 239 College Street. Free. Everyone is welcome.

FROM THE COLLECTION

As I write this in late 2024, I have temporarily taken on the role of Senior Department Head at Osborne Collection. Having been with the Osborne for five years as a librarian, I have been enjoying supporting the collection in this new capacity. Sephora, our permanent Senior Department Head, has also taken on a new challenge. She is serving as Senior Services Specialist for the broader Special Collections at Toronto Public Library through the end of 2024.

The staff at Osborne have spent the final months of 2024 celebrating some exciting anniversaries, the 150th anniversary of Lucy Maud Montgomery's birth and Osborne Collection's own 75th anniversary.

We have worked on two exhibitions in honour of Montgomery: *Maud's World: Celebrating 150 Years of Lucy Maud*

Montgomery at Osborne Collection and *Patterns and Puffed Sleeves: Costume Design Through Anne of Green Gables* at Toronto Reference Library's TD Gallery. Staff have also been mounting Montgomery-themed programs, including Benjamin Lefebvre's Stubbs Lecture, *L. M. Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables Through the Years: Texts, Covers, Readers*, our own Lucy Maud Montgomery Book Club, and numerous tours of our exhibition.

We have concluded an amazing year of Osborne Collection anniversary festivities with *These Are a Few of My Favourite Things: Celebrating 75 Years of Osborne*, an exhibition running from December 15, 2024, to February 23, 2025. Often, visitors to Osborne Collection ask staff, "What is your favourite book in the collection?" This exhibition attempts to answer

that question, but of course, it is impossible to pick just one favourite with a collection like ours.

It has been a joy to host many learners at Osborne Collection over the past few months. Staff have given tours to students from University of Guelph, Toronto Metropolitan University, University of Toronto, George Brown College, and Seneca College. In addition, many learners have passed through our doors to attend events hosted by our first Illustrator-in-Residence, Salini Perera. Salini's fabulous contributions to Osborne Collection are detailed more fully on pages 6–7. Interacting with budding children's literature scholars and illustrators is always a two-way street for staff. We impart information about our collections, but also gain new knowledge from our visitors.

—Myrna Scully-Ashton

VISITORS TO THE COLLECTION

University of Guelph Students

In September 2024, 19 University of Guelph students visited Osborne Collection with their professor, Jennifer Schacker. The group was a mix of graduate students and honours seminar undergraduates taking

classes entitled Children's and Young Adult Literature: The Fairy Tale, and Special Studies in English: Fairy Tale History and Children's Literature, respectively. The visit focused on

Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) tale-types 510A, *Cinderella*, and 510B, *Donkey Skin*.

Osborne Collection staff members Myrna and Jennifer curated



Cinderella's carriage, *Adventures of the Beautiful Little Maid Cinderilla* [sic] (c. 1820), chapbook printed and sold by J. Kendrew.



Donkey Skin, *The Grey Fairy Book* (1900), ed. Andrew and Leonora Lang, illus. H. J. Ford.



Cinderella tries on the glass slipper, Walter Crane's *New Toy Book* (1874).

a selection of more than 20 *Cinderella* and *Donkey Skin* retellings or related toys for the students. Items ranged from a 1697 edition of Charles Perrault’s *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé* to Jessie M. King’s *How Cinderella Was Able to Go to the Ball* (1920), a Cinderella story which doubles as a batik fabric how-to guide.

After hearing about the books and toys, students selected a collection item that interested them and spent

hours examining and researching the artifacts. Back in Guelph, students used their research to inform an oral presentation assignment. In addition, Dr. Schacker reported that the experience ended up inspiring several final essays on Osborne Collection materials.

—Myrna Scully-Ashton

ROVING REPORTERS: FALL 2024 LECTURES

17th Annual Sybille Pantazzi Memorial Lecture Fan Brothers: Unboxing Creativity

The Fan Brothers—Terry, Eric, and Devin—truly lived up to the title of their talk, “Unboxing Creativity.” Each brother spoke about a different aspect of his work and gave us a look at not only his inspirations and creative process, but also the technical aspects. The audience members, whether professional artists or enthusiastic readers, were given a fascinating and accessible glimpse at the technology (Photoshop; the Procreate app for iPad) that allows the brothers to work in layers, manipulate

individual elements, and bring everything together. The Fans also talked about their constant interaction during the creative process and the role each sibling plays in developing their powerful art and award-winning books. Thanks to the Fan Brothers’ publisher Tara Walker (of Penguin Random House Canada Children’s Publishing Group) for her generous introduction. The lecture was followed by a reception at the Osborne Collection, with book signing, much more discussion, and a chance for everyone to look at the current exhibit.

—The editors



Spirited socializing after the lecture, at the reception on the fourth floor.



The Fan brothers: (left to right) Devin, Terry, Eric.



(left to right) Theo Heras, Linda Granfield, Mary Anne Cree.



Signing books and chatting with an attendee.



The Fan brothers in discussion.

Photos from the Pantazzi Lecture are by Kirsten Brassard.

36th Annual Helen E. Stubbs Memorial Lecture Benjamin Lefebvre: L. M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* Through the Years: Texts, Covers, Readers

Benjamin Lefebvre's talk certainly paid homage to this prestigious Canadian classic. I enjoyed how Lefebvre included Montgomery's response to film versions made of *Anne* and, for more recent audiences, the reach of *Anne* in stage and screen adaptations.

I learned about how Lefebvre found Montgomery through *The Road to Avonlea* and his fascination with *The Simpsons* and *Twin Peaks*, and the audience particularly appreciated that aspect of his lecture. I liked how he was 15 when he bought himself a copy of *Anne*. And I was very interested by his questioning of his suitability, from a scholarly perspective, to study Montgomery and her famous red-headed heroine as someone outside of what he suggests is the target audience of the novel. His discussion of how *Anne* is a role model for young girls but that early editions ignored this aspect of the novel, especially if we look at the cover art of some of the many editions of *Anne*, was extremely interesting. His slides offered us an opportunity to see how that has changed with more recent editions that aim at either an adult audience or child readers but not both, and he noted it is only with *Anne of Green Gables* that this happens.

It is interesting to consider how *Anne* scholarship might have played a significant role in pigeonholing this novel as a work of children's literature and is perhaps also responsible for the notion that Montgomery is a children's writer and therefore children are the only audience for her work. I expected Lefebvre to challenge that assumption because, even with my limited experience as a Montgomery reader, it's pretty clear that there is a problem with this assumption. As is the idea of who actually reads *Anne* now—Lefebvre clarified that university students are a key audience and that publishers presume children are as well. However, as anyone who is connected with children's literature is aware, adults read *Anne* and they love *Anne* whether their first introduction was as child readers; as fans of the film, television, or stage versions; or by any other pathway.

It was very clear in the lecture that, for a quarter of a century now, Montgomery, and *Anne* in particular, have been key to Lefebvre's life and work. Perhaps leaving me with more questions than answers was his game plan? After the lecture, the audience gathered on the fourth floor for refreshments and more discussion.

—Jeffrey Canton



Benjamin Lefebvre speaking at Osborne.



Lefebvre chatting with guests after the lecture.



We had a full house for this engaging talk.

Photos from the Stubbs Lecture are by Kirsten Brassard.

New Merch!

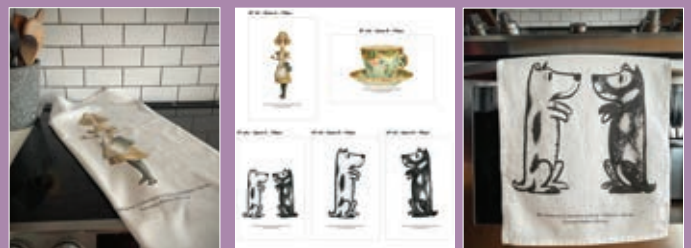
We are excited to present our line of five new tea towels!
Each towel is made of 100% organic cotton.

One tea towel: \$20.

Any combination of three tea towels: \$50.

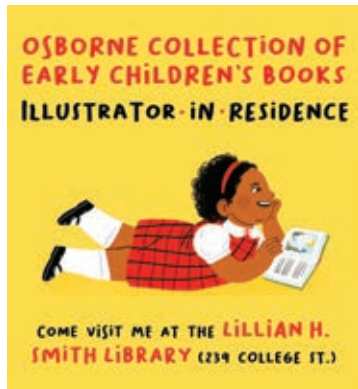
All proceeds benefit the
Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books.

The tea towels are available for sale
at the Lillian H. Smith Branch. See larger images at
www.osbornecollection.ca.



75TH ANNIVERSARY ILLUSTRATOR-IN-RESIDENCE

Lively Programs and Sharing Experience



In late 2024, we hosted our first Illustrator-in-Residence program with Salini Perera. This initiative was generously sponsored by the Friends of the Osborne Collection as part of our 75th anniversary celebrations.

Salini is a Canadian illustrator specializing in children's-book and editorial illustration. The eight workshops offered during the two-month residency allowed attendees the chance to learn more about an illustrator's career.

I had the privilege of attending Salini's programs, which covered topics such as demystifying the publishing world for emerging illustrators, developing your artistic style, navigating work/life balance as a freelance illustrator, representation in children's books, and more. I observed a tremendously positive response from attendees who took in Salini's invaluable and honest personal experiences. While the experiences she shared are her own, the program topics covered were universally relatable.

The residency provided enriching opportunities to those starting their careers. Salini truly embodied the title of her latest book, *It's Okay, Just Ask* (Toronto: Owlkids, 2024) authored by Monique Leonardo Carlos. Salini was forthcoming in her responses and approach to program topics, fostering a welcoming environment for attendees to ask questions related to the field.



We hosted an interactive activity with the Everything's a Doll: Spoon Doll Workshop, in which participants created their own wooden spoon dolls. Most participants designed dolls modelled after their loved ones.

Representation in children's books is a deeply personal and important topic for Salini, who did not see herself or other people of diverse backgrounds in the books she read growing up. Now, as a children's-book illustrator, she takes the opportunity to add representation



to connect with readers. I was personally delighted to learn that Salini actually drew herself in Laura Alary's *All the Faces of Me* (Toronto: Owlkids, 2023). Salini shared that she did not initially plan to literally include herself, but as she was developing the illustrations for the

book one thing led to another and one of the characters started to take on Salini's characteristics. She also took the liberty to include illustrations of herself based on actual childhood photos. I encourage you to read the book and try to identify them!

Salini's residency included portfolio-review meetings with emerging artists. I was involved in helping with setting up the sessions, and could tell how desirable and vital these were to the community. It was delightful to see how beneficial the meetings were for each artist, and

I could tell how natural it was for both Salini and each artist, as every booking ended beyond the appointment time: a true testament to how each party did not notice the time and kept the conversation going.



Author of *It's Okay, Just Ask* Monique Leonardo Carlos (on-screen), Salini's friend Anna Rolek, Salini Perera, and Salini's husband, Michael Collins.

—Jennifer Yan

An Interview with Salini Perera

When I was asked to interview Salini Perera for the Friends, I first took a look at her work online (www.instagram.com/salini.banana/). I admired her warm, down-to-earth style and focus on diversity. Logistics made it difficult for us to meet in person, so we had our “chat” by email, which, although it sounds impersonal, still allowed for an enjoyable and engaging conversation.

Karri Yano: How did you get started as an illustrator?

Salini Perera: I initially attended Toronto Metropolitan University, but after four years of film school, I realized it wasn't for me.

After graduating, I worked at a movie theatre, where I often found myself doodling while working at the box office. I made a list of potential careers I might like to pursue, and top of the list was illustration, which I had been passionate about as a child, but gave up on, as I didn't think I'd be good enough. I enrolled in Seneca College in 2010, graduated in 2012, and got a job at an art store. It felt like old patterns were repeating themselves but this time, I stuck with illustration. I honed my skills and submitted work to zines and start-up publications, displayed work with coworkers at local galleries, worked on in-store demos, and created window displays, until I got my big break with the Zodiac feature in *The Globe and Mail* at the end of 2016. I worked on more editorial work for the next two years until I signed my first contract with Kids Can Press in 2018 for “Her Epic Adventure.” But my first published book was with Rebel Girls (www.rebelgirls.com) for *Madam C.J. Walker*, which leap-frogged the Kids Can Press project.

Karri: How would you describe your style?

Salini: I'm not sure if I have a signature style—or at least, I don't see it. Others tell me I do, but it's hard for me to pinpoint. When I approach a book project, I like to start fresh, almost with a blank slate, and let the text guide me. It's not just the story, though—it's also the memories and emotions it evokes. Those are what shape the final look of the illustrations.

So it changes from book to book. And each one maybe takes some things I've learned or experimented with in the previous title and expands on them. Perhaps that is the root of a style, a signature style. All I know is that the work always has to serve two purposes: it has to suit the story and the writing, and it has to feel new.

If I had to re-create the look of a previous book, I think I'd find it unbearably dull.

Karri: Who was or is your main influence?

Salini: I love vintage illustration, especially the work of Alice and Martin Provensen and Gordon Laite. As a child, I was influenced by Phoebe Gilman, Vlada Krykorka, and Faith Ringgold. Among contemporary illustrators, I admire Jillian Tamaki, Christian Robinson, and Carson Ellis.

Karri: How did the Portfolio Reviews go?

Salini: The portfolio reviews were my favourite part of the whole thing—I met a lot of people, from students, to new graduates, to people switching careers. They were all so interesting.

Karri: How did the topics for the Talks/Events come about and why were they organized in this way?

Salini: The topics were my idea, and I organized them, more or less, autobiographically: from developing a style (or not), to dealing with fear and the difficulties of freelancing, and navigating the industry not only as a WOC (woman of colour), but also as an artist who came to illustration a little later than most.

Karri: What did you like least about this experience and why?

Salini: I least appreciated the time crunch—if I had the opportunity to do it again, I would take some time off school and make sure there was more time available for planning.

Karri: What are you currently working on?

Salini: I'm working on another book with Owlkids! I also have a new book with Orca that will be coming out in 2025, and I will preview some of that in my last presentation for the Osborne Collection residency program.

—Karri Yano

The Friends of the Osborne Collection were delighted to support the Illustrator-in-Residence program as part of the 75th Anniversary celebrations. I had the pleasure of attending two of Salini's thoughtful and interesting presentations and seeing how engaged her audiences were. Thanks to Salini and to all the Osborne and TPL staff who helped put this together.

—Gillian O'Reilly

BOOK REVIEW



The Haunted Wood: A History of Childhood Reading

Sam Leith

Sutherland House Books

October 2024

hardcover, 602pp

9781998365098

\$45.95

Sam Leith's *The Haunted Wood* could have been brilliant but it's not. There hasn't been as big a history

of British children's books since John Rowe Townsend's *Written for Children* (1965), which was last revised in 1989, but Leith offers us a book that is disjointed, uneven in what books he has included (and how much time he's wasted on author biographies rather than the books themselves) or not included because ultimately he just doesn't know the breadth and depth of his subject.

There are, despite this reviewer's overall disappointment, some marvellous chapters on writers like Kenneth Grahame, Edith Nesbit, T. H. White, Alan Garner, and Philip Pullman; and his chapters on Malorie Blackman and Jacqueline Wilson are excellent. But he wastes too much time on mediocre writers like Enid Blyton and J. K. Rowling (the 26-page chapter on the latter is the longest in the book and Leith is a fierce apologist for Rowling despite the fact that this is supposed to be a book about childhood reading and her child readers are finding her more and more disappointing). And worse, he omits some of the great authors who deserve to be in this tome, giving short shrift to Tove Jansson, Alison Uttley, and Diana Wynne Jones, and ignoring Joan Aiken, Leon Garfield, Rosemary Sutcliff, Geoffrey Trease, Mary Norton, and Michael Bond, to name just a few.

But what is most troubling is that he's failed to really imagine what the history of childhood reading looks like. He's so focused on slamming those nasty Puritans, for example, that he disregards the power of Bunyan, Swift, and Defoe—adult writers whose books were taken over by child readers. He overlooks British poetry (not to mention Iona and Peter Opie) and his chapter on fairy tales leaves out French fairy-tale tellers like Madames d'Aulnoy and de Villeneuve, while he doesn't even bother to identify those women like Marie Hassenpflug and Dorothea Viehmann, who provided the Grimms with the stories they rewrote.

He leaves out the English fairy-tale tradition—Joseph Jacobs and Andrew Lang must be turning in their graves. A fine chapter on picture books mainly looks at books from the 1940s through to contemporary books without even a nod to British greats like Caldecott, Brooke, or Greenaway. He doesn't seem to know that there were children's-book crazes before *Harry Potter*; he misses out on the *Oz* mania of 1900, for example, as well as the crazes around *Alice*, *Peter Pan*, and *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. It would also have been useful to make a note of books like Melvin Burgess's *Doing It* and Patrick Ness's *Release* when talking about Judy Blume or to note that a writer like Jamila Gavin was writing about diverse characters a decade before Malorie Blackman.

Perhaps the biggest problem with Leith's book is that he's decided there's a dark side to all children's literature: the haunted wood referenced in the title is from W. H. Auden's poem "September 1, 1939" (see the fifth verse at: <https://poets.org/poem/september-1-1939>).

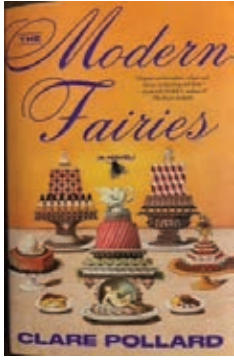
But that isn't the point of children's books and childhood reading. Not all children's books are dark and dangerous. Not all woods are haunted. Not all children are afraid of the night. Leith tells us his ambition is "to discuss the books and writers that I think are important—whose influence has been unignorable or whose quality is unimpeachable—and the ones I think have something original, something special, something magical about them. I wanted, in the role of literary historian, to see how these books have shaped each other; in the role of literary critic to ask whether they're any good, and why; and in the role of social historian to understand how these books are involved with the story of childhood itself in Britain." But calling the calibre of the work of G. A. Henty, Blyton, or Rowling "unimpeachable" is totally missing the mark.

I have to note that this book is so full of typographical errors as to be an embarrassment.

My suggestion is to skip Leith and instead revisit Townsend for readability; Matthew Grenby's *Children's Literature* or Kimberley Reynolds's *Children's Literature: A Very Short Introduction* for a nice tight overview; and then settle down with some much more enjoyable and engaging accounts of childhood reading like Seth Lerer's *Children's Literature: A Reader's History, from Aesop to Harry Potter*, Francis Spufford's *The Child That Books Built: A Life in Reading*, or Lucy Mangan's *Bookworm: A Memoir of Childhood Reading*.

—Jeffrey Canton

MARIE-CATHERINE D'AULNOY, "QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES"



I recently read Clare Pollard's wonderful new work of historical fiction, *The Modern Fairies*. This bawdy, witty novel, set in Paris during the reign of Louis XIV, centres around French fairy-tale writer Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy's literary salon, where she and her fellow "conteuses" (female storytellers) gathered to converse and recite fairy tales. Charles Perrault, author of the best-known version of *Cinderella* and other "classic" stories, is another main character, as are fairy-tale writers Charlotte-Rose de la Force, Henriette-Julie de Murat, and Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier.

Much of d'Aulnoy's life remains a mystery. Pollard takes existing facts and fills in the blanks to create an enchanting story, full of danger and intrigue. Along the way she makes clear the oppressive conditions faced by women, even elite women, in France at the time.

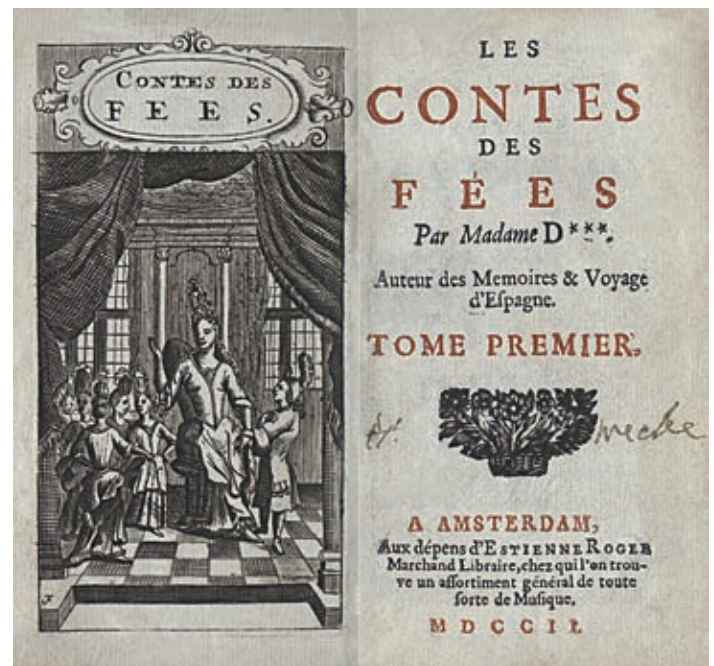
Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville was born in 1652 to an aristocratic family in Normandy, France. At age 13 she was married off to a man 30 years her senior, François de la Motte, Baron d'Aulnoy, a notorious libertine. She gave birth to four children before the age of 18. In 1669 she allegedly conspired with her mother and two male accomplices in a plot to have her husband convicted of treason. The plot backfired when the baron was able to prove his innocence. Her mother fled the country, the accomplices were executed, and Marie-Catherine was jailed for a short period. Upon her release she may have travelled to Flanders, England, and Spain. Back in France she was confined to a convent, first in Blois, then in Paris. After leaving the convent she ran a fashionable literary salon in her Parisian home on the rue St. Benoit. She died in 1705. During her lifetime she was a popular and bestselling author. In addition to her two extraordinary collections of fairy tales (*Les Contes des fées*, vols. I–IV, 1697–98; and *Contes nouveaux ou les Fées à la mode*, vols I–IV, 1698), she wrote devotional works, novels, short stories, and travel narratives. With the title of her first collection, she famously coined the term "conte de fées" which gave rise to the English "fairy tale."

D'Aulnoy's stories are lengthy and replete with exaggerated descriptions of jewelled palaces, extravagant costumes, and other luxuries (in other words, plenty of bling). In modern times she has been overshadowed by

Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. Nonetheless, she was exceedingly popular in the 18th and 19th centuries and highly influential in the development of the genre. She was nicknamed "La Reine de la Féerie" (Queen of the Fairies). Her stories feature powerful female characters, both good and bad. Her heroines are more active than Perrault's. Many of her characters struggle against forced marriages. She does not shy away from violence in her tales.

Renewed interest in d'Aulnoy's life and work by feminist scholars, literary historians, artists, and others has led to new discoveries and interpretations. Two recent titles I highly recommend are: *The Island of Happiness: Tales of Madame d'Aulnoy*, illustrated by Natalie Frank, introduced and translated by Jack Zipes (Princeton University Press, 2021) and *The Lost Princess: Women Writers and the History of Classic Fairy Tales* by Anne E. Duggan (Reaktion Books, 2023).

Here are a few highlights from Osborne's extensive d'Aulnoy collection. Most are available through the Toronto Public Library's digital archive.



Les Contes des fées. Par Madame D***. 2 vols. in 1. A Amsterdam. Au dépens d'Estienne Roger, 1702.

D'Aulnoy's tales were first published in Paris in 1697 by Claude Barbin. The frontispiece of this (likely unauthorized) 1702 edition (above) depicts an aristocratic storyteller and her audience of children.



The Young Lady's and Gentleman's Library: Consisting of Voyages, Travels, Tales and Stories, Carefully Selected and Abridged for their Amusement and Instruction. 6 vols. Edinburgh: W. & J. Deas, 1809.

Five of the 30 stories in this six-volume work are by d'Aulnoy. Fortunio (pictured above) is the English name for Fortuné, the heroine in d'Aulnoy's "Belle-Belle, ou, le Chevalier Fortuné," a tale that challenges traditional gender norms.

A lord's youngest daughter disguises herself as a knight to help save her impoverished father from ruin. Taking the name of Fortunio she travels to a nearby kingdom, acquires a talking horse and seven supernaturally gifted servants, and performs heroic deeds. Fortunio is so handsome and noble that both the king's sister, a malicious queen, and her confidante, Floride, fall in love with her. Meanwhile Fortunio falls in love with the king. Shown above is "Fortunio's combat with the dragon."



The Celebrated Fairy Tales of Mother Bunch. London: J. Harris, 1817.

Children's editions of d'Aulnoy's tales were often attributed to the fictional character "Mother Bunch," possibly in imitation of Charles Perrault's presumed narrator, "Mother Goose." This selection, which includes fairy stories by another French writer, Louise d'Auneuil, was first published by Francis Newbery, circa 1773.

"The Story of Finetta, or, The Cinder Girl" is adapted from d'Aulnoy's "Finette Cendron." Resourceful Finetta earns the favour of her fairy godmother, slays a murderous ogre couple, wins the heart of a prince (by way of her lost slipper), and restores her parents' kingdom.



Popular Fairy Tales, or, A Liliputian [sic] Library: Containing Twenty-six Choice Pieces of Fancy and Fiction, by those Renowned Personages King Oberon, Queen Mab, Mother Goose, Mother Bunch, Master Puck, and other Distinguished Personages at the Court of the Fairies. London: Sir Richard Phillips and Co., [approx. 1818].

"The Blue Bird" is a beast-as-bridegroom-type tale in which powerful fairies direct the fates of two star-crossed lovers. In this hand-coloured illustration, Princess Florine meets her suitor, King Charmant, at the window of her tower prison. He has been transformed into a bird for refusing to marry Florine's stepsister. The woman in the bed is a spy sent by Florine's wicked stepmother. After her release from the tower, Florine travels to Charmant's kingdom disguised as a peasant, in search of her beloved. This collection was originally published by Benjamin Tabart in 1804.

Anecdota

Volker Schröder, Associate Professor Emeritus of French and English at Princeton, has made important discoveries about the life and works of d'Aulnoy, which are outlined on his blog *Anecdota*: <https://anecdota.princeton.edu/on-madame-daulnoy>.



The White Cat. By Madame d'Aulnoy. Illustrated by Jemima Blackburn. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1847.

In *The White Cat* (above), a prince participating in a quest comes upon a magnificent castle. He is met by disembodied hands that lead him to a beautiful white cat who presides over a feline court. The cat wears a portrait at her wrist of a handsome young man who bears a striking resemblance to the prince. The second part of *The White Cat* is a Rapunzel-like tale of a princess who was transformed into a cat for refusing to marry a fairy king. This story was the subject of many pantomimes and theatrical adaptations in both England and France.



Fairy Tales by the Countess d'Aulnoy. Translated by J.R. Planché. Illustrated by Gordon Browne. London: George Routledge, 1893.

James Robinson Planché (1796–1880) was an English playwright of French extraction, beloved for his fairy tale “extravaganzas”—theatrical presentations combining music, comedy, elaborate costumes, and special effects. Fourteen of his 23 extravaganzas, produced from the 1830s to the 1850s, were based on fairy tales by d’Aulnoy. He was also a translator; this translation of d’Aulnoy’s tales first appeared in 1855.

—Martha Scott

A DONOR’S STORY

Classic Storybook Friends

I arrived at an inauspicious moment at the Lillian H. Smith Library one Tuesday in November. There had been a fire alarm. Staff and patrons of the library were standing outside until they got the all-clear from the fire department. It was a reminder of my days as the Children’s Literature Specialist at Lillian Smith and of what a day at the branch could be like. Anything could happen. When the doors reopened, I took the elevator to the fourth floor, to the Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Books, to take a look at the few special items I had donated.

Over the years, I collected a small number of storybook character dolls. They sat on my desk in the workroom, looking over my shoulder and making sure I wasn’t shirking my duties. In 2011, just before I retired, I left the dolls in the care of the Osborne. I’m pleased to say that some of them have since appeared in display cases as part of exhibits. My little Anne of Green Gables (all four inches of her), which I bought on a trip to PEI with my ten-year-old, red-haired granddaughter in 2010, was on display in fall 2024 as part of *Maud’s World: Celebrating 150 Years of Lucy Maud Montgomery*.

Let me look at the other dolls and see if they spark any memories.



Don Freeman’s Corduroy the Bear. H. A. Rey’s Curious George.

Four of the dolls are truly classic characters of children’s literature: The Cat in the Hat, Corduroy, Curious George, and Doctor De Soto. The last three appeared in the *Story Book Parade* exhibit in 2016.

The Cat in the Hat is the smallest of these at merely five inches high including his red-and-white-striped hat. He must have been an impulse purchase at a toy store. How could I resist? Dr. Seuss turned children’s publishing on its head when he began to write his rhyming, easy-to-

read stories. *The Cat in the Hat* has remained in print since 1957.

Doctor De Soto, William Steig’s book about the clever and courageous mouse dentist, earned the author/illustrator a Newbery Honor in 1983 as well as the 1983 National Book Award for Children’s Books. The diminutive Doctor De Soto, seven inches tall and replete in his medical garb, holds in his left paw the large tooth that he extracted from the wolf. Incidentally, both Dr. Seuss (Theodor Geisel) and William Steig were cartoonists, the former for *Vanity Fair* and the latter for *The New Yorker*.

Curious George, that most mischievous creation of H. A. and Margret Rey, has been a staple of children’s literature since 1941. Several books, innumerable translations, television series, etc., have extended the life



William Steig’s Doctor De Soto.



Max Velthuijs’s Frog.

of Curious George. There is a fascinating book in the Osborne Collection by Louise Borden called *The Journey That Saved Curious George: The True Wartime Escape of Margret and H. A. Rey*, about the couple’s perilous journey from Europe to the Americas during the Second World War. George stands eleven inches tall, not including his tail.

Corduroy, the huggable bear, is ten inches tall. His green corduroys are missing a button. Lisa, the young protagonist who buys Corduroy from the department store, will fix that. Don Freeman’s classic story of finding a home is as evocative today as it was in 1968. Freeman, coincidentally, was another cartoonist.

At the 29th World Congress of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), Max Velthuijs, author of 21 books about his beloved character Frog (e.g., *Frog in Love*), received the Hans Christian Andersen Award for body of work as an illustrator, the highest honour in children’s literature in the world. In his

acceptance speech, Velthuijs observed: “Drawing a Frog is not so difficult. But how do you draw a frog in love? Or a frightened frog? Are there rules or guidelines to help you? For this, talent alone is not enough. Now you need feeling. The essence of this profession is to share something with the onlooker.” Frog was part of the gift package delegates received at the Congress. It was very special to have Frog as part of my small collection, as Velthuijs died a year later in 2005. Frog (all five inches) appeared in the *Turtle Mania* exhibit in 2017.

As part of the 31st IBBY World Congress in Denmark, delegates were welcomed to the Hans Christian Andersen House. There, in the gift shop, I found Hans himself, a sombre-looking fellow, all in black, twelve inches tall including his stovetop hat, nose protruding and eyes drooping sadly, maybe not irresistible, but an



L. M. Montgomery’s Anne of Green Gables.



Mr. H. C. Andersen himself.

excellent memento of the trip. This doll was included in *The Snow Queen’s Palace* exhibit in 2016.

Revisiting these storybook friends sparked many happy memories. It’s a delight to know that they have become an indispensable part of the Osborne Collection.

—Theo Heras

Photos of the dolls on pages 11 and 12 are by Rochelle D’Souza.

In Memoriam

Dr. Barbara Michasiw, 1923–2024

Professor and scholar. Chair, Friends of the Osborne Collection, 1981–83; long-time member of the Friends. To read more about Barbara’s life and work, see:

www.legacy.com/ca/obituaries/theglobeandmail/name/barbara-michasiw-obituary?id=57142654.



CONSERVATION UPDATE



The Margaret Bloy Graham Archive

Work is underway on the re-housing of materials in the Margaret Bloy Graham archive. Although the majority of materials in the archive are on paper supports, there are a significant number of items with plastic supports.

Plastics can pose tricky (and sometimes even sticky) problems for preservation. Plastics that can negatively affect adjacent materials are called “malignant” plastics. As malignant plastics deteriorate, they can shrink, bubble, and produce gaseous by-products or sticky residues. If degradation hasn’t progressed very far, they may even look like the inert polyester that conservators use for re-housing!



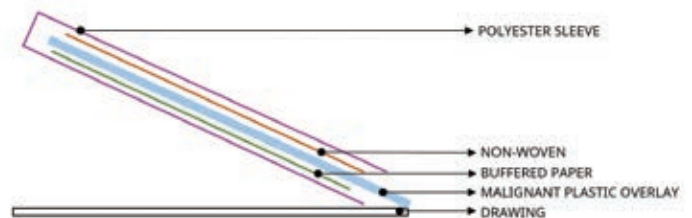
(Left) The plastic overlay on artwork from *The Meanest Squirrel I Ever Met* is cockled from degradation. (Right) The plastic has shrunk so much that the registration marks no longer align.

So how do conservators know what kind of plastic they’re dealing with? Some of it comes down to experience and being familiar with signs of characteristic deterioration. Conservation scientists can analyze tiny samples to accurately identify the plastic and all of its components, but conservators can also use simple tests to identify some plastics. At TRL, conservators have small film testers that can distinguish inert polyester from malignant plastics. Using the tester on the archive materials showed that Graham did use polyester for *The Storm Book* materials but not in other cases like *The Meanest Squirrel I Ever Met* or *The Sugar Mouse Cake*.



(Top left) Artwork with a transparent plastic overlay from *The Storm Book*. (Top right) Artwork with a transparent plastic overlay from *The Sugar Mouse Cake*. (Lower left) Interference colours indicate the plastic is polyester. (Lower right) Absence of interference colours indicate that the plastic is not polyester.

Because these plastics will continue to degrade, and because they still form integral parts of Graham’s work, they will be isolated from other layers during re-housing to prevent damage to other layers. Polyester sleeves are



New housings will isolate malignant plastic overlays from adjacent materials.

custom-made to slip over the plastic layers, isolating them from the other materials. Where sticky, oozing tape is present, a sheet of non-woven polyester is inserted to act as a non-stick layer. Sheets of buffered paper will also be added to the bottom of the sleeves to help counteract some of the acidic by-products produced as the plastics age. The sleeves still allow users to see the layered structures of the work and are entirely removable.

Stay tuned for more updates as the re-housing phase continues!

—Emily White

IN MEMORIAM: JANE DOBELL

Photo credit: Unknown



Jane Dobell (far right) with family, Osborne Collection, ca. early 2000s.

Photo credit: Maggie Knaus



This plaque, installed in 2019, has a permanent place at Osborne.

Photo credit: Maggie Knaus



Jane beside the E. H. Shepard drawings.

An Intrepid Collector and Connector

Jane Dobell (1929–2025) was a collector and a connector, a donor and a builder, an instigator and a doer. I will miss her very much.

Some years ago, I introduced myself to Jane at an Osborne event—my grandparents had known her parents and she and my father were connected through cousins. After a brief chat, she looked at me with a glittering eye and said, “Have you ever thought of joining the Osborne Executive? We need new blood.” A few years later I did volunteer for the Executive and, at my first meeting, Jane was there, beaming with delight. And the next thing I knew, I was organizing a trip for 20 people to New York City. (“Jane is very interested in having a NY trip,” I was told.)

Jane was often described as formidable, and she was, but I came to appreciate her pertinent questions, incisive analysis, occasional prodding, and wise counsel. And I realized that her rapid-fire queries (“Have you considered ... ? What are the ... ? If we were to ... ?”) were simply a vigorously Socratic way of arriving at correct decisions.

Jane began book collecting in the early 1960s, after her son was born, when she was living in New York. Her mother had given away many of her childhood favourites and she needed to replenish her shelves and also to discover newer American books.

Wearing her running shoes and armed with book bags, she set out weekly to explore the bookstores of the city. In her 2005 talk “Memoirs of a Cover Girl” she described going to the store of rare book dealer Walter Schatski: “I would stand by the door pretending to look at what he considered to be his most uninteresting books so that I could listen to his conversations with important collectors.”

Jane soon became a knowledgeable collector herself. At Schatski’s, she bought first editions of Winnie-the-Pooh books for \$15 each (about \$130 in today’s money). At that time children’s books were still unimportant in the book-collecting field and prices not so stratospheric.

Back in Ottawa in 1966, Jane got involved in politics, serving as a school trustee for 28 years. During this time, she advocated for and was involved in implementing a number of changes, including French immersion programs, adult and continuing education, and equity policies. (In “Memoirs of a Cover Girl” her comments on girls’ physical education classes in the 1970s are both pithy and terrifyingly accurate.) She and her friend Joan Askwith set up a highly successful book fair to support their local library—one that is still going strong. And when Joan opened The Bookery, an Ottawa store that sold new and used children’s books, Jane took on the task of hunting down good titles for the latter section.

And at some point during those years she also got an MEd from OISE and a couple of honorary doctorates.

Jane was involved with the Friends of the Osborne for over 40 years, joining after her cousin Sybille Pantazzi, an AGO librarian and book collector, introduced her to the organization.

Over her time with the Osborne, Jane was a discriminating collector and donor of books and book art. As then Osborne Head Leslie McGrath noted in her intro to “Memoirs of a Cover Girl,” Jane’s acquisitions included not only “mainstream, popular or beautiful books” but also “rare historical materials reflecting the political and cultural indoctrination of children.” She endowed the Sybille Pantazzi Memorial Lecture and was an advocate for the Collection within the library and externally, in Canada and abroad. She raised an eyebrow or two when she wore a Friends Harry the Dirty Dog T-shirt to the gala dinner of an international conference on children’s books in Oxford. But a Japanese collector sitting near her ordered hundreds of the T-shirts for his public library.

In 2019, in recognition of her lifetime contributions to the Osborne, the Friends honoured Jane with a plaque (on view at the south end of the Collection) and the purchase of two E. H. Shepard drawings. Next to the plaque are framed reproductions of those drawings for permanent exhibit—outward and visible signs of our appreciation and esteem for Jane.

What we particularly liked about these illustrations is that they seemed so appropriate. They are delightful drawings by a wonderfully talented illustrator for a work by a noted author. But they are also sketches with all the notes and markings, i.e., not only are they pieces of art, but also a revelation of the underpinnings of a book illustration. Jane didn’t want to just look at surfaces. She wanted to know about the thought behind a work of art—or a decision—and how we got there.

At the 2019 dedication, Jane said volunteering should be an opportunity to accomplish something, to learn something, and to have fun. She did all three with energy and enthusiasm.

—Gillian O’Reilly

Sometime Nemesis—and Dear Friend

Gillian O’Reilly has described Jane Dobell as a doer. I would add another role to the list: that of maker. Jane was a tremendous catalyst: she made things happen. Jane loved a challenge. She laughed at bureaucracy, charmed money (and action) out of total strangers, and used her considerable generosity to make our Collection one of the best in the world.

Jane was my friend, my tutor, and sometimes my nemesis. She could be formidable. The first time I spoke to her on the phone she made me cry. I was 20 years old and had been at the Osborne Collection for less than a month, and I had answered the phone to find Jane at the other end. Nobody had warned me about Jane. I did not know that I was speaking to the Collection’s main benefactor. All I knew was that the woman at the other end of the phone was firing questions at me at a rapid pace and that I had no answers to those questions. “I don’t know,” I said weakly. “Well, you don’t know much, do you?” said Jane with some asperity. Silently I handed the phone to a librarian and crept away, snivelling. Jane was quite right, I didn’t know much, and I never felt it as keenly as I did at that moment. But Jane’s good humour was as legendary as her generosity. That booming voice, those piercing eyes, that smile of a tigress: Jane in a good mood could knock you over with the sheer force of her personality. She wore us out and kept on going. The booksellers she dealt with

knew her as a serious and knowledgeable collector, and booksellers do not throw compliments around lightly. She wore them out too.

Jane and I were most closely aligned during the preparation of *My Little Bookroom*, the exhibition designed to accompany her lecture “Memoirs of a Cover Girl.” This was one of the most ambitious exhibitions the Osborne had ever mounted, encompassing 238 items, 18 cases, and 27 pieces of art. I had long since gotten over being afraid of Jane so we worked well together, although not without some clashes. Jane did not mind a little pushback: she saw it as a healthy exchange of ideas, but she invariably got her way. Arguing with Jane was like running headfirst into a brick wall of relentless positivity.

“Jane, we can’t possibly fit all those books into that case.” “Sure you can!” And we did: the cases were crammed and the case notes encyclopedic, as every item Jane had selected was significant and required a note that provided cultural context in addition to bibliographic details, but Jane was pleased, and that was what mattered. No other collection could have had a more dedicated champion. Not just through her gifts, but with her hard work and vision, our Collection gained immeasurably. In many ways the Osborne of today is the house that Jane built. I was lucky to know her, and I miss her already.

—Elizabeth Derbecker



The Origin of Our Gryphon

Maurice Sendak was a Life Member of the Friends. His connection spanned the tenures of three Collection heads: Judith St. John, Margaret Crawford Maloney, and myself. I recall with delight his cheerful call giving permission to use the gryphon logo he had drawn for Osborne in 1979. Our gryphon is witty and benevolent despite its fierce appearance. Gryphons are known for guarding treasure and are emblems of valour and magnanimity (Pseudodoxia Epidemica III in *Brewer's*). We owe a great deal to Maurice Sendak for creating such an evocative, inspirational logo.

—Leslie McGrath

OUT AND ABOUT

Rare Books School (RBS): Jill Shefrin

In July, Andrea Immel and Jill Shefrin will teach a course called Print for Children, at the (Virginia) Rare Books School. The course will introduce Western children's print, visual, and material culture and that of China. This course will be taught at the Cotsen, Princeton, NJ. See: <https://rarebookschool.org/courses/history/h200/>.



You are always welcome and encouraged to send ideas for *Gryphon* articles as well as general comments or questions to: FriendsOsborne@gmail.com.

If you would like to learn more about the Friends Executive and how you might contribute, feel free to contact us at the email address just above.

To join the Friends, renew your membership, donate, or learn more about what we do, visit www.osbornecollection.ca/.

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