Violet Evergarden

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Synopsis

After years of conflict, the war has come to an end and Violet wakes up hospitalised. She has lived most of her life raised as a soldier and from an attempt to write a letter to Major Gilbert (who she fought alongside in the war), it's clear she struggles to convey and understand the emotions which she is feeling.

Claudia Hodgins was a friend of Gilbert, and he gives Violet the chance to have a fresh start and lead a normal life. Hodgins is the owner of the C.H Postal Company which offers ghost-writing and mailing services, and was founded after the war when there was an influx of civilians who needed to send letters but couldn't write. Soon after recovering, Violet tries her hand at working in the mailing department under the guidance of Benedict who is a postman for the company. But, during her time working, it is clear Violet struggles to cope with the normalities of civilian life due to her military indoctrination and is desperate to reunite with Gilbert, unaware he has been deemed missing in action.

By chance, Violet comes across the Auto Memories Dolls who work for the Postal Company. An Auto Memories Doll is the name given to a ghost-writer who helps civilians write letters and convey emotions, thoughts and feelings they would struggle to put into words otherwise. Violet is introduced to Cattleya, Iris and Erica who all work as Dolls and she is fascinated by this line of work and thinks it could help her understand her feelings for Gilbert and his last words to Violet- "I love you". Hodgins offers her an apprentice roll as he sees this as an opportunity of self-discovery for Violet.

Violet Evergarden is then enrolled onto the Auto Memories Dolls training programme and in the beginning it's clear she has the mechanical ability of typing efficiently but her initial letters come off cold, emotionless and lack empathy- quite literally making her seem like a living doll. She barely passes, but her tutor sees potential and so begins her journey of travelling the country writing letters, continually growing not only as a writer but also a person, unbeknownst to her leaving significant, positive impact on those she scribes for.

Violet's career begins to flourish, and she becomes a well-known Auto Memories Doll. She goes on to ghost-write for academics, playwrights, families and even the Princess Charlotte- each client helping her continually learn more about expressing emotions and experiences from loss, to love. Little by little, this is what helps her go from an emotionless doll to someone who can put human feelings to paper better than anyone. She has learnt how to overcome and accept her grief for Gilbert through her work while also discovering how she impacted those she wrote for, seeing her clients' careers and lives flourishing in newspaper articles and posters- all a credit to her.

Concept

There are many themes that are a focal point within the story of Violet Evergarden and one of the main underlying topics is love. Violet is an orphan that grew up surrounded by war, so the concept of that emotion is foreign to her and in turn, has made her emotionless and confused on how she should express herself. Through her work as a ghost-writer, meeting countless different people, she learns about the different forms of love through her clients' experiences and how it can be a confusing yet impactful form of expression which helps her grow as a person. The story overall is an exploration of Violet's second chance at life, how although her colleagues initially thought it was a mistake to hire her, they saw her potential and how the experiences that come with working as an Auto Memories Doll could lead to self-discovery and healing for Violet.

Since the anime takes place in a fictional world, it doesn't directly link to a particular time or place in our world. But, through some characters' clothes and the context of the story, there are clear links to the late Victorian era. I want to streamline the style of the characters by focussing more on the late Victorian silhouettes within the stylisation and inspiration for the costumes. This will help my interpretation feel like a more coherent historical fantasy series. I want to focus on styles of the 1880s and 1890s as this is when the typewriter had a huge boom in demand and revolutionised the workplace for women, helping them grow a career in the working world. This is a nice parallel to the world of Violet Evergarden, where the Auto Memory Dolls are women who can establish a renowned reputation for themselves as skilled and talented writers, which is something I want to highlight through the costume designs. I want to play around with the social norms of fashion in the late Victorian era, exploring androgyny and stylising the ideal shapes and silhouettes of that time to bring out each character's personality and individuality, again to strengthen the fantasy and surreal feeling of the show while still showcasing clear historical roots.

To make the characters feel unique to the fictional world they reside in, I want to implement contemporary textile techniques, textures and shapes seen in runway fashion, seamlessly combined with late 19th silhouettes and textiles to create an otherworldly, yet familiar feeling. Visually I want the costumes to emit a post-war melancholy feeling that is fused and covered up by a sense of exuberance to reflect on the hope the Auto Memories Dolls are bringing the people of the city recovering from conflict. To create this feeling I want the costumes to have flashes of saturated colours within the designs merged with a drearier colour palette. Texturally, within the costumes of characters that work for the postal company, I'll explore how I can implement words and writing within motifs and print will help visually link their profession to their costume. I particularly want Violet, the protagonist, to stand out. When first meeting Violet, other characters point out her extremely doll like outfit, which matches her initially cold and emotionless demeanour. I can do this by focussing on textures and form in her costume, metaphorically making it seem as though a doll is coming to life and discovering herself to the audience.

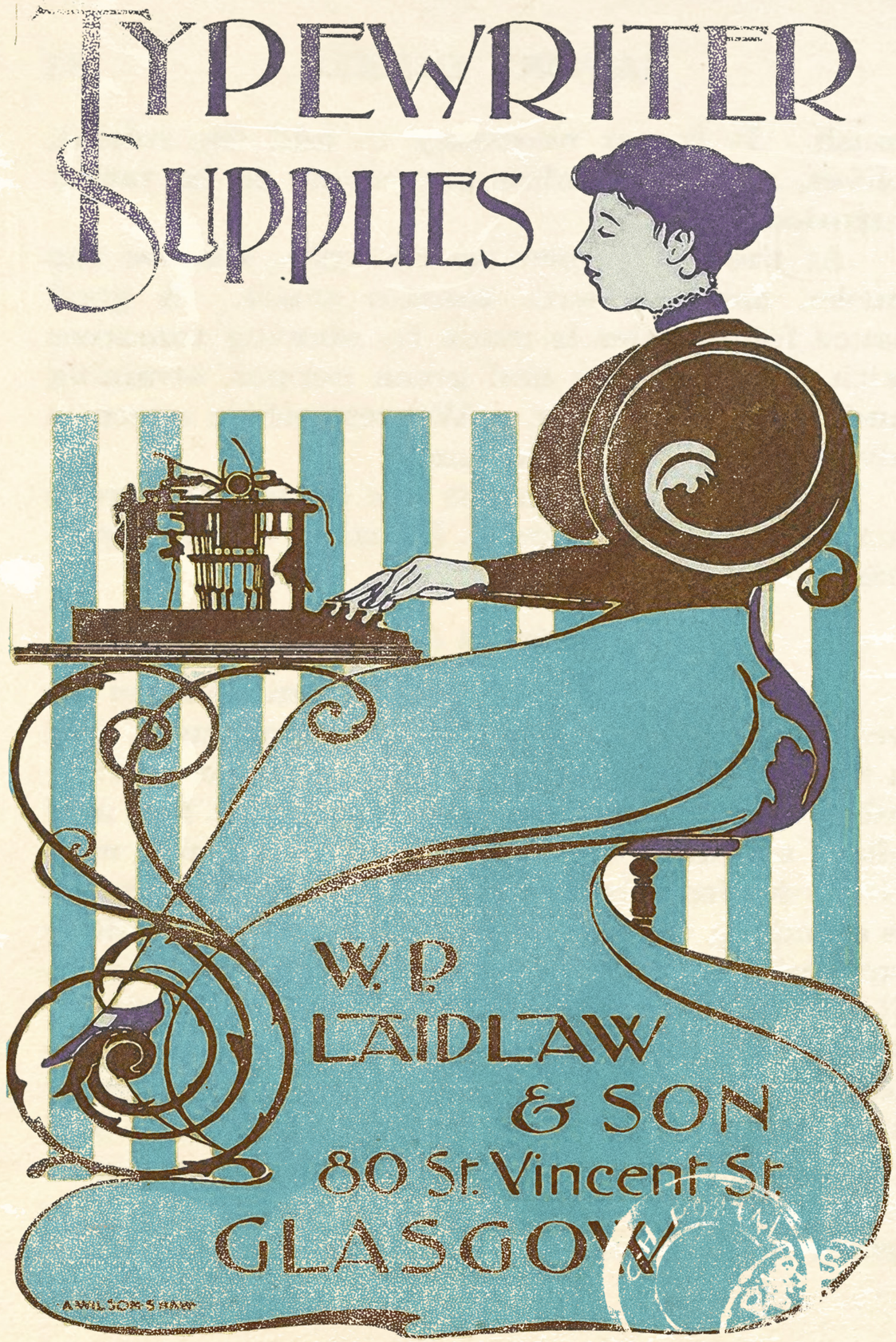
Research
Research

Typewriters & the rise of the Victorian working lady

After becoming commercially available in 1874, the typewriter was seen as a luxury device that would have been very much out of reach for the average person due to their price. People were weary of investing in this new technology, so it took some time before the typewriter was more mainstream and the role of typists and clerks were seen as a respectable career path. By the 1880s/90s, the demand for the typewriter was thriving and its value for modernising and streamlining the office workplace was finally recognised within the western world. Particularly in the UK, thousands of businesses and organisations invested in typewriters for their companies, opening a vast number of jobs for civilians in the roles of clerks and typists. This then completely changed what was originally a male dominated field of work when women began to be employed as typists in office environments. Working as a typist offered better pay and a safer environment for women to work in compared to other occupations that were socially acceptable, making it a more desirable field to go into. Nonetheless, women were still paid roughly half as much as men and were worked twice as hard but women taking on these roles was the beginning of fighting against the gender norms of the late 19th century. It was liberating for women to make a name for themselves in the working world, straying from the life that was expected of them at the time and overall, helping with the fight for women's suffrage and the gender wage gap.

The typewriter was also a valuable tool for women who were artists, writers, and novelists. On top of this, it opened opportunities for women to launch their own businesses, typing schools and societies. By building their own networks and communities, the typewriter continued to open doors for women, not only in terms of careers in the creative and working world but also fuelling the desire for political and social protesting as the years went on.

This impact of the typewriter on women's lives during the 1880s/90s all throughout the UK,US and Europe has a strong parallel to the world of Violet Evergarden and the typists also known as Auto Memories Dolls. The Auto Memories Dolls are well renowned and respected women who make names for themselves through their writing. It is such a respected career working as a Doll, reconnecting people and giving them voices, especially after the country recovers from a great war. I really like this connection that story makes with this point in history and how it puts the journeys of working women at the centre of the story. This is what motivated me to focus on this period of fashion within my designs, emphasising this revolutionary change for women in the working world during the last decades of the 1900s.



1880s & 1890s
WomenSwear

The 1890s was the beginning of fashion straying away from the moralistic ideals of the Victorian Era. Ready to wear clothes were becoming more available for men and women due to new technologies and electricity being introduced in clothing manufacturing.

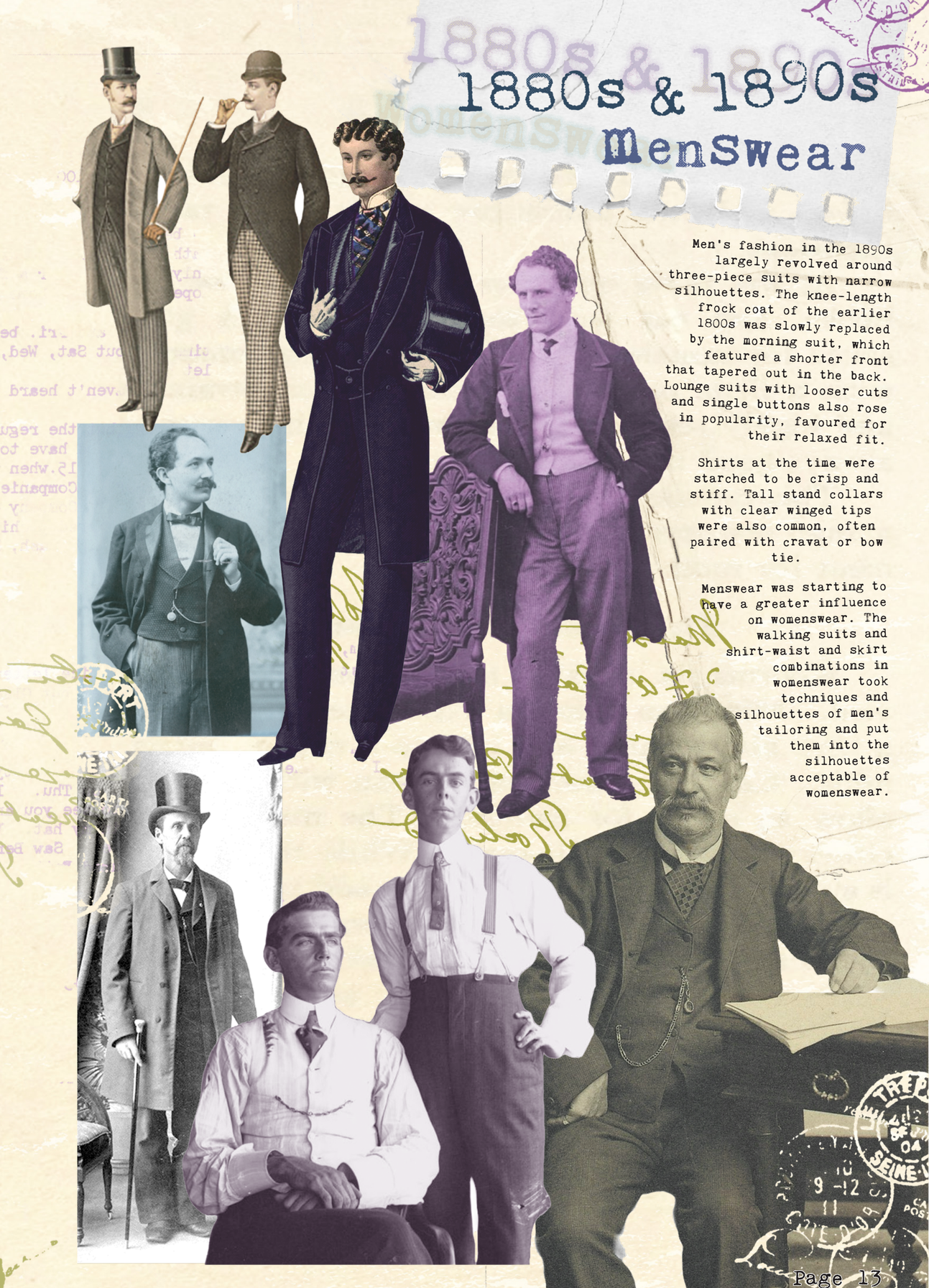
At the start of the decade, the shapes were still resembling the 1880s, the silhouette of the sleeves became more vertical and eventually grew wider by the middle of the 1890s, becoming the recognisable gigot or leg of mutton sleeve. The exaggerated bustles of the 1870s/80s were almost completely gone by the turn of the 1890s and transitioned into gored skirts that had volume in the back through pleats and extended trains.

1880s & 1890s
MenSwear

Men's fashion in the 1890s largely revolved around three-piece suits with narrow silhouettes. The knee-length frock coat of the earlier 1800s was slowly replaced by the morning suit, which featured a shorter front that tapered out in the back. Lounge suits with looser cuts and single buttons also rose in popularity, favoured for their relaxed fit.

Shirts at the time were starched to be crisp and stiff. Tall stand collars with clear winged tips were also common, often paired with cravat or bow tie.

Menswear was starting to have a greater influence on womenswear. The walking suits and shirt-waist and skirt combinations in womenswear took techniques and silhouettes of men's tailoring and put them into the silhouettes acceptable of womenswear.



Design Development

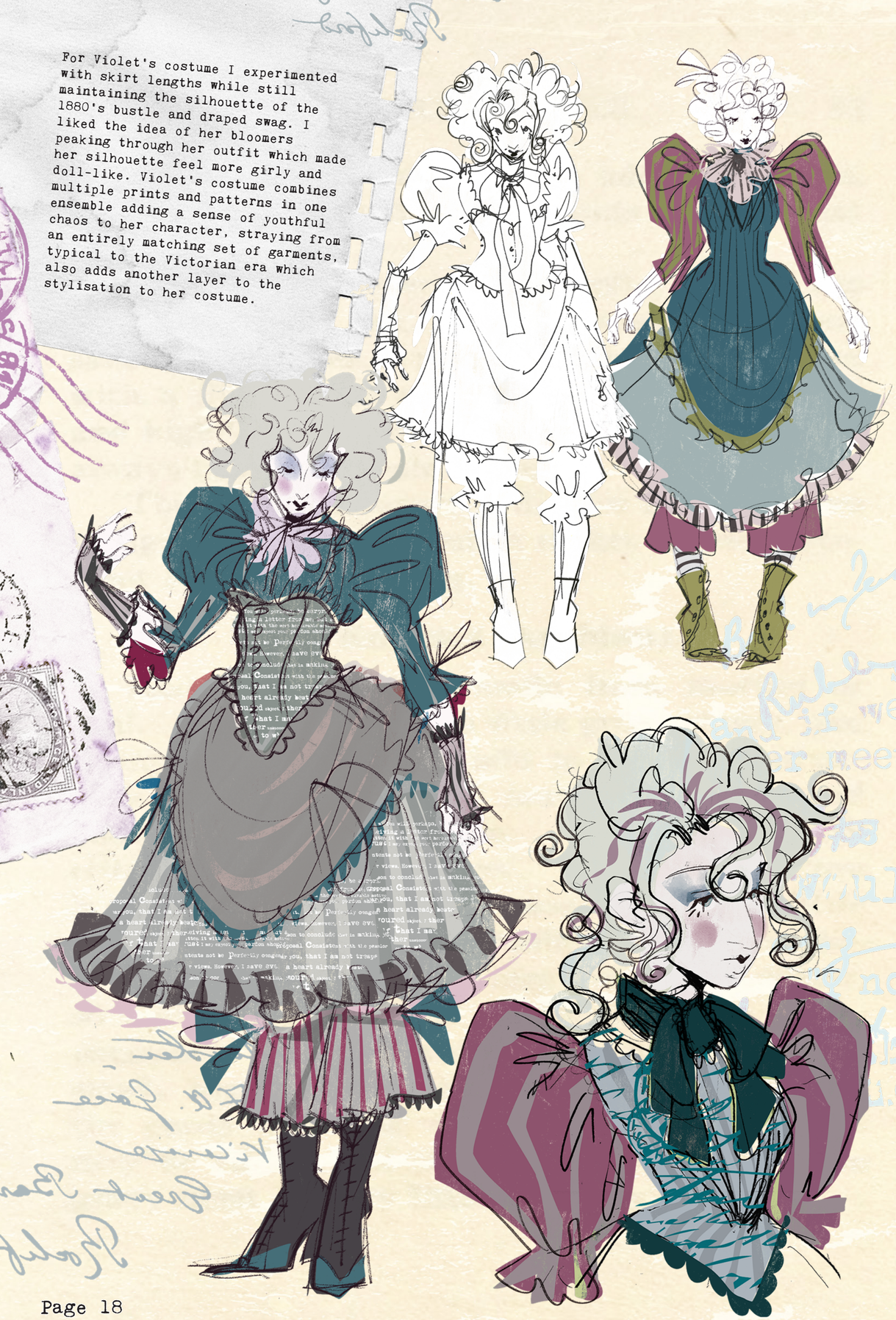
Violet

The costume I will be designing for Violet will be for Episode 2 when she finds out she will have the opportunity to train as an apprentice Auto Memories Doll, and Claudia gives her an outfit that will be her unique uniform that she wears whenever she takes on a new commission.

Because of Violet's background as a solider, she grew up to be someone who struggles to express themselves as well as understanding how to read other people's emotions as well as her own. After being taken in by Claudia and becoming a part of the C.H Postal Company as an Auto Memories Doll, her colleagues notice how she comes across as aloof and eccentric. After attempting to write her first few letters, it is clear she struggles to comprehend human emotions so comes off as blunt, but those around her know she is someone that is truly kind-hearted and only wants the best for those around her. She has a lot of determination to improve on her skills as an Auto Memories Doll which in turn helped her grow as a person and regain her humanity. These traits, and experiences through her work helped Violet thrive in her career as a typist, making a name for herself and going on to becoming a well-respected and highly skilled Auto Memories Doll.

At the start of the story when she first starts to train as an Auto Memories Doll, her co-worker's point out how she wear over the top, doll like outfits which match her doll like demeanour and personality. I want to translate this feeling into her costume, adding lots of frills and embellishment to personify her initial personality. The silhouette of her costume will feel very feminine, taking on more formal styles seen near the end of the 19th century but while style playing with the stylisation of her design, which will contrast her blunt way of expressing herself. I also want to explore traveling clothes from this period and see how I could implement aspects of those silhouette into her costume, since her profession means she has to travel the country to meet with clients.

For Violet's costume I experimented with skirt lengths while still maintaining the silhouette of the 1880's bustle and draped swag. I liked the idea of her bloomers peaking through her outfit which made her silhouette feel more girly and doll-like. Violet's costume combines multiple prints and patterns in one ensemble adding a sense of youthful chaos to her character, straying from an entirely matching set of garments, typical to the Victorian era which also adds another layer to the stylisation to her costume.



For Violet's textiles, I experimented with CAD embroidery onto velvet which created an embossed effect on the fabric. The print I designed was made up of typwritten words which were lines from the original script alongside handwriting taken from scans of vintage letters. The contrasting colour scheme for the emmbroidery inspired me to carry through more contrast into the rest of her textiles through striped fabric and subtle pops of colour to add a hint of life to her character. Lace trims and bows are layered over the main body of Violets textiles, again heightening her youthful presence.

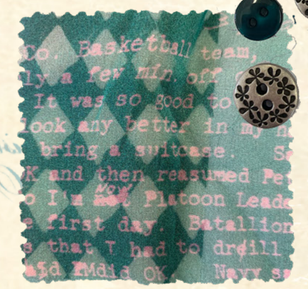
Hodgins

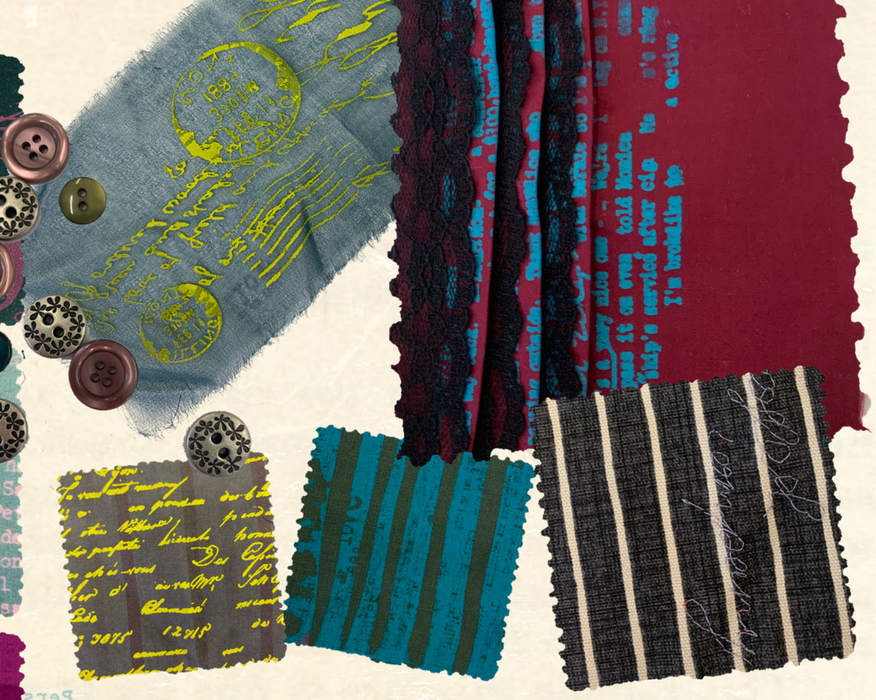
Hodgins' costume for Episode 2 will be his outfit for wearing around his company building, the C.H Postal Company. It will be formal yet have details that can bring out his charismatic personality and dandy and fashionable tastes.

Claudia Hodgins (who prefers to be called by his last name, Hodgins), was a former lieutenant-colonel in the army and after the war ended her founded the C.H. Postal Company and serves as its president. After Violet is discharged from the army and has no family to return to, Hodgins takes her in as her legal guardian under his friend Gilbert's past orders, who was also Violets first in command. Hodgins quickly catches on to how life as a war has affected Violet and gives are a second chance at life by giving her the opportunity to become an Auto Memories Doll which is lifechanging for Violet. He is someone who doesn't judge others and makes sure that if he's able to, he can give them the opportunities they deserve which is clear in this case with Violet. It is clear he values the fact the services his company provides can bring people together which shows his considerate and caring personality. Overall, Hodgins is an extremely positive influence on Violet as her boss and guardian, his maturity and morals are valuable traits that Violet learns from him.

I want Hodgins' costume to feel very smart and put together as he is the president of his company and is passionate about his job and what the C.H. Postal Company is doing to help the Civilians of Leiden to recover from war. Although, I still want his charismatic personality to shine through so his costume won't shy away from accessories, bold colours and motifs. To retain a level of maturity in his work outfit, his design won't be too over the top, just enough to make him stand out and not seem intimating.

Hodgins' silhouette doesn't stray far from the Victorian 3 piece suit to reflect on his calm and composed demeanour. I want a dapper feeling to be maintained throughout his costume but subtle ways of styling his clothes will play an important role in creating a relaxed atmosphere around his character. Cuffing or rolling up sleeves of Hodgins' blazer and leaving some shirt buttons undone will be a discrete way of heightening his personality without drastically straying from Victorian styles.





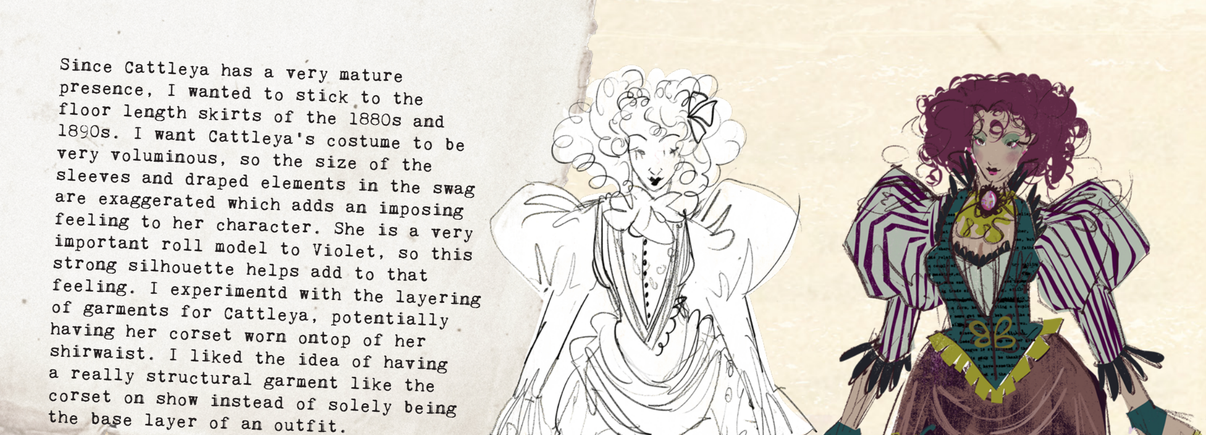
Since the cut of Hodgins' costume doesn't stray from typical Victorian menswear, the textiles are the main point of stylisation for him. Like the rest of the characters, I decided to use words and type as the central motif to link back to the Claudia Hodgins' postal company. For Hodgins, I experimented with including words in garments like his trousers in a manner that resembles pinstripes so up close you can see the lettering in the print. I wanted to include stamps as decoration for Hodgins as well, used as a patchwork detail in his lapels.

Cattleya

Cattleya has been working as an Auto Memories Doll with the C.H Postal Company for many years and she is one of the most skilled writers in the country and gets commissioned often. She often gets commissioned for jobs for lovesick clients and is a figurehead of the industry. She is passionate about the concept of love whatever form it may be in and how it brings happiness to people, which is why she values her role as an Auto Memories Doll. Cattleya is a really warm and caring individual, instantly warming up to Violet and felt protective towards her, wanting her to pursue her goals. She is very mature and a strong female role model for her colleagues, but has a fiery side to her, knowing her place and able to stand up for herself when the time comes. This is especially apparent when Hodgins reveals to Violet Gilbert's apparent death, she is sure to be by her side and support her when Hodgins revealed this information at a bad time. But. overall, Cattleya was someone who Violet often went to with her troubles and in the end, Cattleya was the pivotal reason for Violet understanding the meaning of love. The flower cattleya which she is named after symbolises love and admiration.

Like the other members of the C.H Postal Company, Cattleya's costume will technically be her 'uniform', but in the profession of an Auto Memories Doll, uniform is personal to the Doll and unique to them. I want to show Cattleya's maturity to show through her in her costume and I want her to have a strong presence, maybe exploring longer lengths of dress and creating more exaggerated silhouettes. Cattleya will still emit a feeling of warmth and love despite this, I don't want her to be intimidating as she almost takes on the role of an older sister figure to her colleagues. To achieve this, I want to explore embellishment, accessories and print that could help encompass her strong femininity and confidence in herself combined with bold silhouettes.

Since Cattleya has a very mature presence, I wanted to stick to the floor length skirts of the 1880s and 1890s. I want Cattleya's costume to be very voluminous, so the size of the sleeves and draped elements in the swag are exaggerated which adds an imposing feeling to her character. She is a very important roll model to Violet, so this strong silhouette helps add to that feeling. I experimentd with the layering of garments for Cattleya, potentially having her corset worn ontop of her shirwaist. I liked the idea of having a really structural garment like the corset on show instead of solely being the base layer of an outfit.



For Cattleya's textiles, I explored printing onto sheer fabrics with the same word pattern as the rest of the cast. I like how this allowed me to experiment with layering to add more depth texturally to Cattleya's costume. Thick wools and cotton velvets in deep saturated colours would be used for more structural elements such as her waistcoat or corset. I experimented with a lot of jewel tones for Cattleya's costume to create a bold and intense feeling to her character which greatly contrasts Violet's more delicate colour palette.

Iris

Iris Cannary is one of the Auto Memories Dolls that works for the C.H Postal Company. She is new to the profession and is still learning the ropes, but she is driven to make a name for herself and build her career. The ideal life in her parents' eyes is to marry and take on the role of a wife and not work, but Iris is determined to prove she can lead a successful life by working and building her career as a working woman, so she moved into the city to become an Auto Memories Doll. Iris really admires the Auto Memories Doll industry and looks up to the senior Dolls which motivates her to continue to pursue and grow in the industry and hopefully one day take on big commissions and write for important people. Iris first meets Violet when it is announced she'll begin her training as an Auto Memories Doll. At first Iris is slightly cold towards Violet, frustrated someone with little understanding behind the jobs got an opportunity so easily after she worked so hard to get to where she is. But she soon understands that she was in the same place as Violet once, the profession didn't come naturally to Iris either and notices how Violet has the same dedication to grow in the industry. Iris has a strong presence and personality, rarely afraid to speak her mind and doesn't like making mistakes since she is so determined to become a well-known Doll.

With Iris' costume, I want to show her strong, rebellious personality since she is someone who wants to stray from the ideal life for a woman. To portray this, I want to explore androgyny in her clothes, exploring fashion predominantly seen in menswear of the late 19th century, straying from the norm of an unmarried woman in society. I still want there to be feminine aspects of her clothes, maybe through accessorising or the cut and fit of her costume; but overall, still creating a presence that is completely unique to Iris and her rebellious nature.

For Iris I explored a more androgynous approach. I was inspired by cycling attire and sportswear for women during the Victorian era, particularly the style of breeches for these activities. By having Iris in trousers, it not only reflects her rebellious and bold personality, but is also a nod to the aspect of travel which is involved in her job and adds a level of practicality to her costume. I wanted a seamless blend of Victorian men's and women's fashion, combining stiff collars, neckties and waistcoats with the voluminous gigot sleeves seen in women's dresses and shirwaists.

In terms of print, I wanted to explore other motifs aside from typed words that still link to the postal company and ghost-writing. For Iris's print I took other aspects of typewriters such as the keys so there was more variety in the print for the characters working in the C.H Postal Company while still encompassing the importance of the theme of writing. Similarly to Cattleya, I wanted Iris to wear bold, deep and saturated colours to encompass her valiant personality.

Benedict

Benedict is a postman working for the C.H. Postal Company and he has known Hodgins and Cattleya since before the company was established. When Violet is taken in by Hodgins, he thinks that giving her a role within the company will help her find her find some purpose in life, so, he puts Violet in the hands of Benedict to show her the ropes of the mailing side of the business. Initially he comes of very blunt and stubborn, with a big ego, but after catching on to Violet's situation and find out that they both have a complicated history in the army in common he quickly befriends her and does his best to train her, despite that fact she struggles to get the hang of working life. Even after Violet finds her calling in the profession of an Auto Memories Doll, he continues to support her in her journey. This attitude contrasts how he interacts with his boss Claudia, who he shows a brusque attitude towards him and jokingly pesters him a lot of the time. He has a strong character and bold presence which is shown through him not hesitating to speak his mind.

I imagine his costume will be expressive, despite his role as a postman he still wants his strong personality to shine through in his clothes. To showcase his rebellious nature, I want to explore androgyny in his costume to make him stand out from others who might be in his line of work. Reflecting on his job role, adding details that make his clothes that feel more utilitarian will still hep his profession shine through and his seriousness towards his profession despite his self-expression.

Benedicts costume is more of a playful take on menswear in comparison to Hodgins' more modest costume. Benedicts character is a lot more laid back so his clothes will be a lot more slouchy. I played with the idea of Benedict wearing shorts and having contrasting, pattenred tights to experiment with a more andorgynous approach to hiscostume, again to reflect on his boisterous character.

I was set on the idea of stamps being a key aspect within Benedict's textiles more so than the other characters since Benedict works in the mailing department so it is a clear visual link to this element of his character. I treated the printed stamps link patches to create a worn down, more lived-in feeling to the fabric since his job is more laborious. For other aspects of his costume is still included subtle elements of words, but for Benedict specifically, I used the handwriting from old envelopes to create the screen print instead of typewritten words used for the dolls.

Luculia

Luculia is one of the first friends Violet makes outside of the C.H Postal Company while they are both enrolled on the Auto Memories Doll training program. She excels at the program and graduates with top marks and during their time training, Luculia often defended Violet and expressed how she had the potential to be great writer, despite not getting fair grades as she is someone that recognises everyone has their own challenges. Luculia and Violet bonded over having similar pasts, Luculia lost her parents during the war and lives with her brother and had to quickly adapt to be able to support herself. Despite a dark past, she radiates with positivity and is someone who always puts others first and looks to help those around her in whatever way she can. But her selflessness can sometimes mean she keeps her feelings to herself and struggles to express her hardships while keeping a positive demeaner. Befriending Violet meant she was able to open up about her past which in turn helped Violet understand the grief and suffering that the country had to go through because of the war.

I want Luculia's costume to feel a bit more modest compared to the rest of the cast, she is humble in her abilities and doesn't come across as very showy. To show this through her costume, there may be less embellishments or luxurious fabrics and textiles, her outfit may feel slightly more formal reflecting how she excels in her studies and her professionalism. I'll explore how I could use tailoring within elements of her costume to show this feeling of professionalism. I still want to showcase her sincerity and kindness in combination with more formal feeling clothes which will come down to textiles.

There is a sense of sophistication to Luculia so I decided to stray from adding too many layers to her costume in the same way as the rest of the cast. Instead I want to focus on the tailored, fitted elements, particularly Victorian waistcoats which create a sense of professionalism and formality to Luculia. Since Luculia is quite modest and shy, I want the silhouette to be slightly less exaggerated in comparison to the other characters, sticking to more authentic proportions seen in the late 1900s.

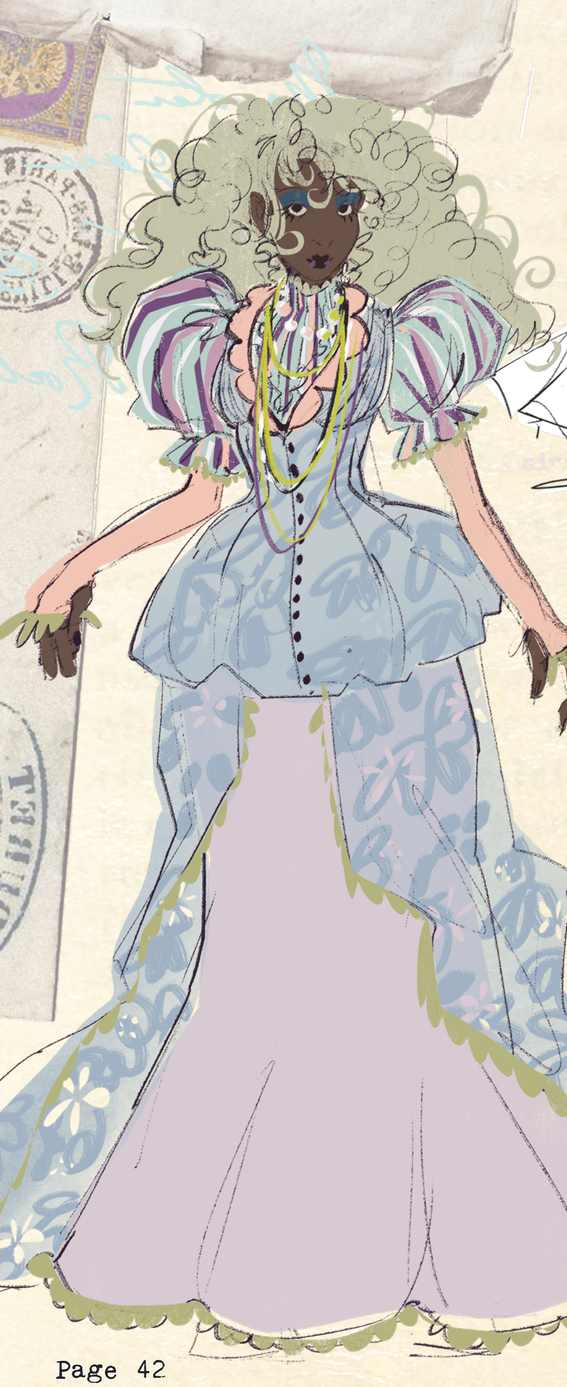
The colour palette for Luculia's costume will not be extremely high contrast, instead the fabrics will feel very harmonious and add to the softness of Luculia's character. I was particularly drawn to brushed wool fabrics for the tailored elements which subdues the stiffness of the Victorian waistcoats. I still wanted to involve the lettering and type into Luculias print, exploring how I could layer it on top of striped cotton which could be one of the layers in her skirt, again softening the graphic nature of the print while still linking to the rest of the cast.

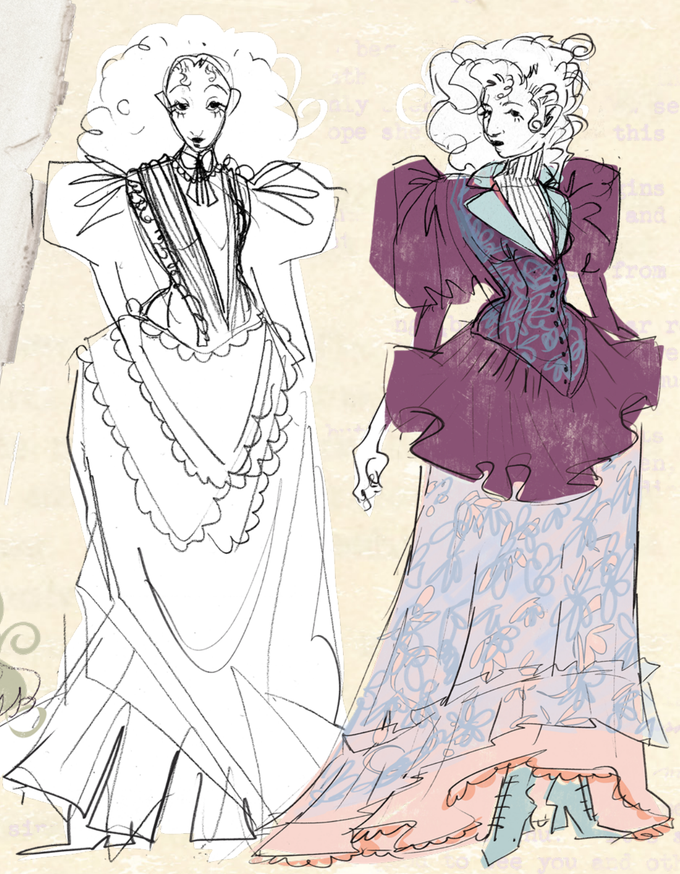
Princess Charlotte

Princess Charlotte is the soon to be heir of a neighbouring kingdom with a prince of the rival country in which the great war began because of. Their union will help seal the peace after the war ended and, in the lead up to the wedding, Violet travelled to Charlotte to help construct public love letters to play out the ordeal for the public. Since the main priority of Charlotte's marriage is to unite the two rival countries that began the war, Charlotte's feelings and emotions are played out and dramatized for the initial public love letters that Violet helps with. This meant that Princess Charlotte felt as though only her duty of uniting the kingdoms is what mattered instead of her own feelings, and she ended up losing herself in the midst of whole process of the arrangement, even though she truly loved who she was marrying. Princess Charlotte and Violet have the same experience in common where they feel as though their personal identities are overshadowed by their roles and it is all consuming, making them lose track of how they really feel in certain situations. Violet manages to come up with a solution for Charlotte in order for her to get her true feelings off her chest and speak her mind. Charlotte can initially come off as naïve and out of place in her role but upon opening up to Violet, it is clear she know when to act proper when she needs to and has high self-confidence.

I want Charlottes costume to feel over the top and excessive, which will help convey how out of place she feels. It will be very embellished to help show her royalty and exuberance but with a girly and feminine touch to show her youth and emphasise how big of a step it is for a young woman of her age to marry in order to seal the peace of war-torn countries.

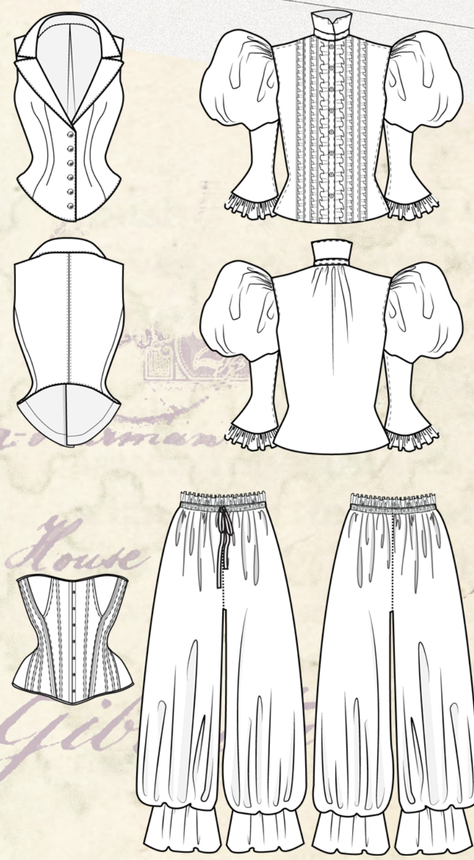
With Princess Charlotte's designs, I focussed on maintaining the grand silhouettes and structural shapes of the Victorian era similar to Cattleya. What differentiates Charlotte will be her textiles, which have an overpowering sense of femininity combined with volume and structure of 1890s fashion so the sense of maturity will juxtapose the youthful colour palette and textures. I liked the idea of layering to build up the shape of the skirt while also allowing me to combine and layer multiple fabrics.

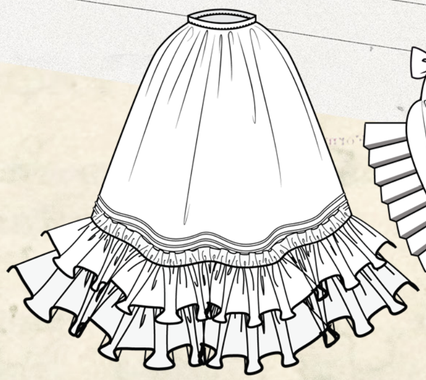


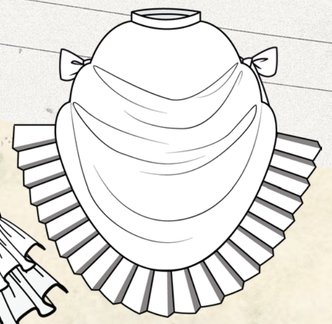


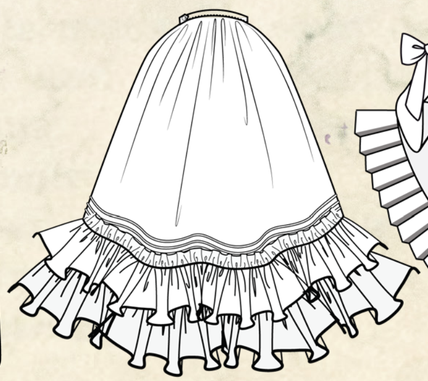
My approach for Princess Charlotte's textiles was to focus on colours and textures that were overtly feminine and girly to reflect her youth. I was inspired by Betsey Johnson's Spring/Summer 1999 collection which was texturally very busy, layering different laces and clashing prints but still had a delicate feeling overall due to a soft pastel colour palette. I then explore a similar approach for Princess Charlotte, combined with a print I made from scans of handwritten lover letters from museum archive which helps convey the situation she is in which involves her public marriage.

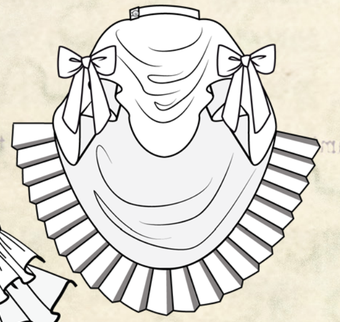
Final Designs

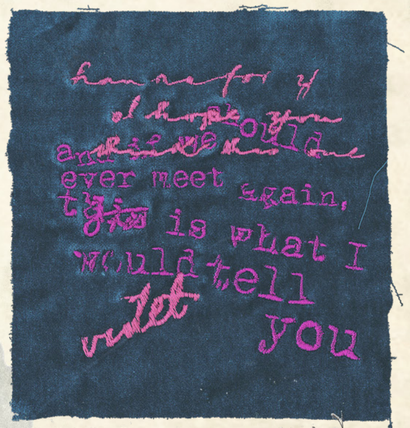


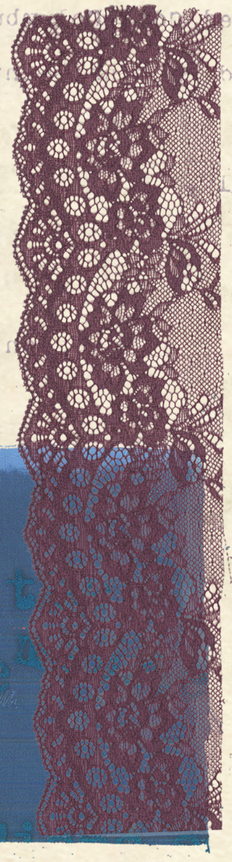


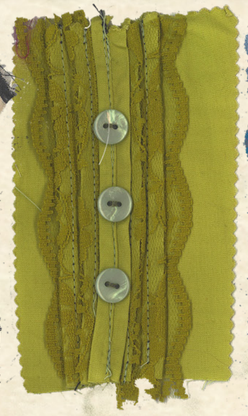







ever meet again,
is what I
would tell
you

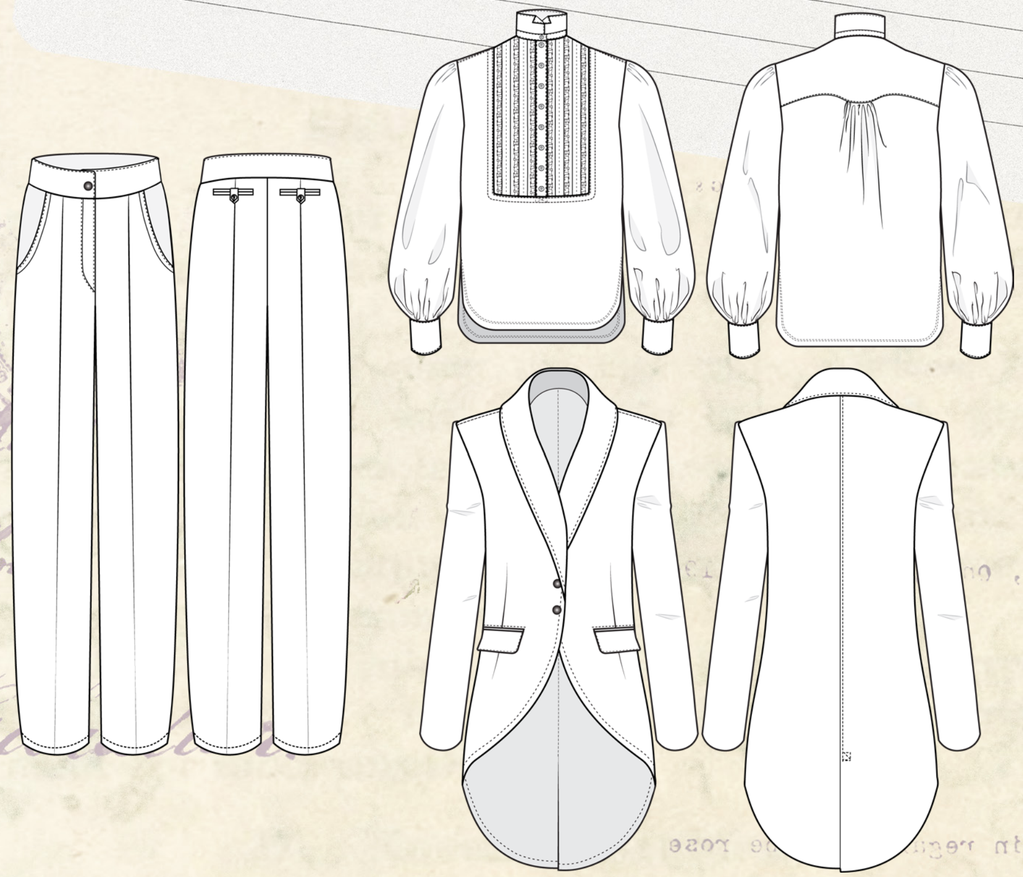


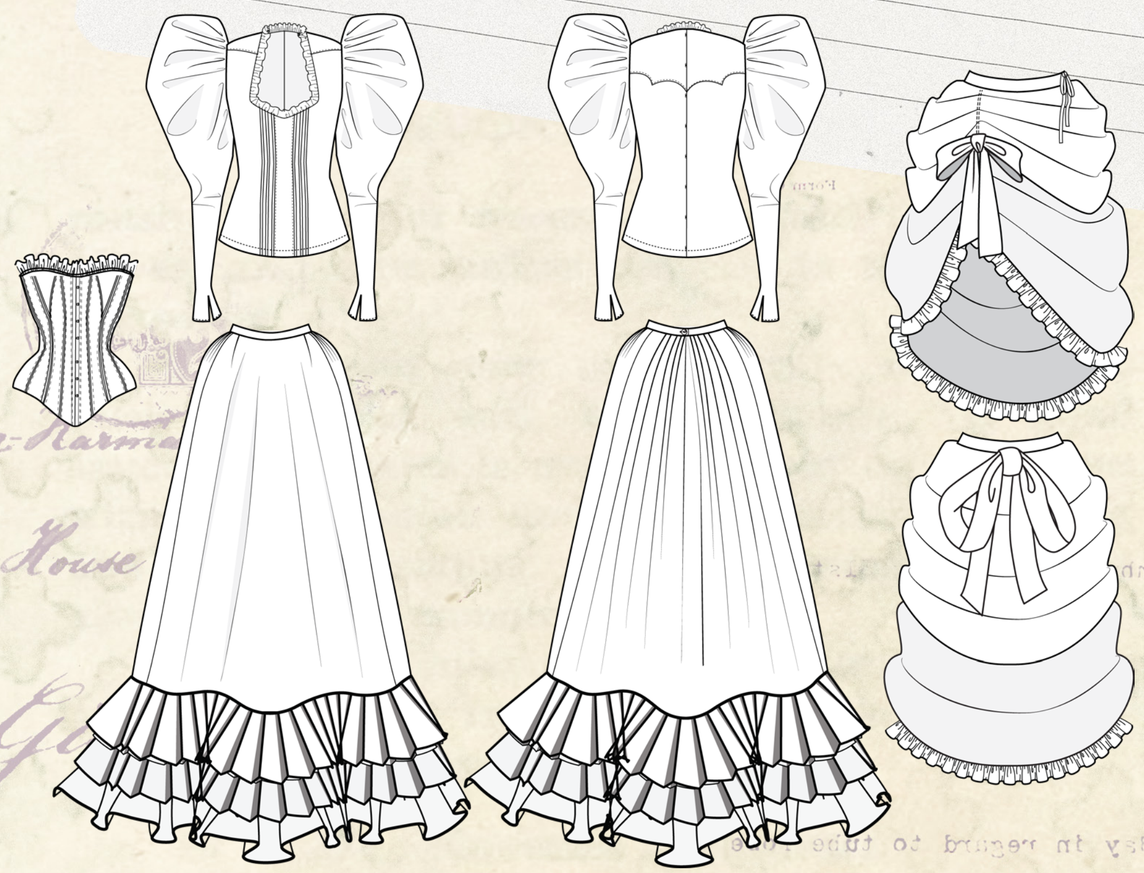


Violet

gone home but
It's pouring outside.
Finally I got dinner over
but Pierre other

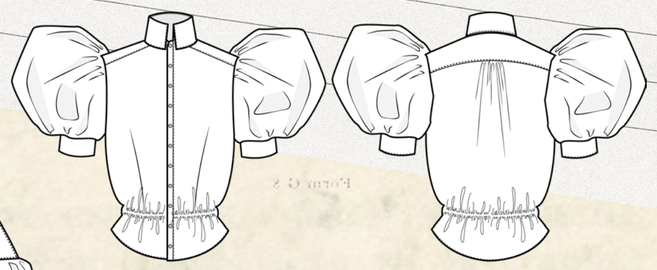
Hodgins

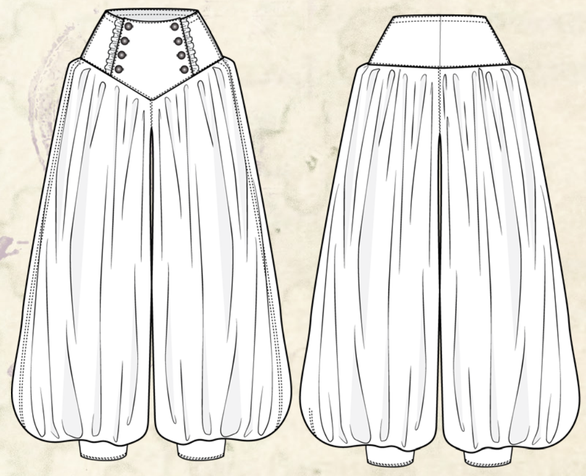


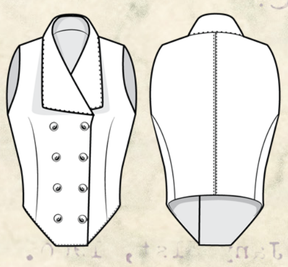


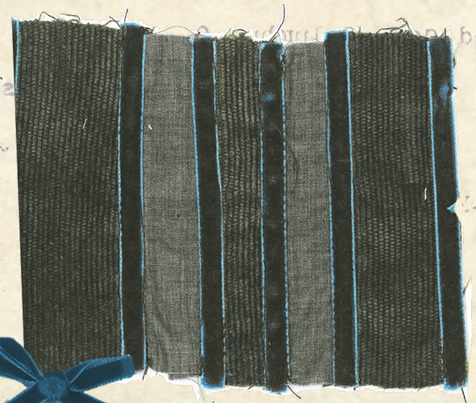
Cattleya

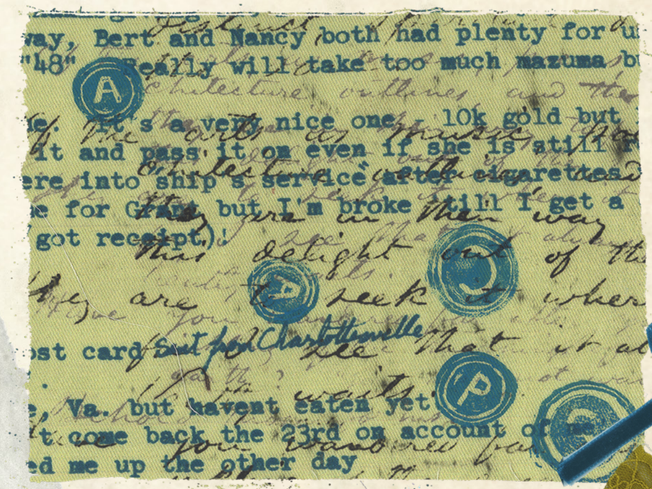
Iris

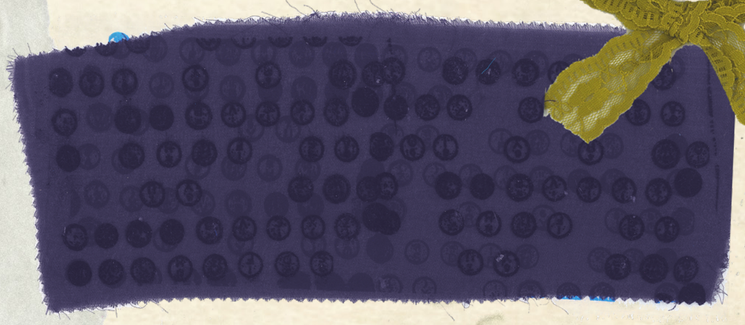


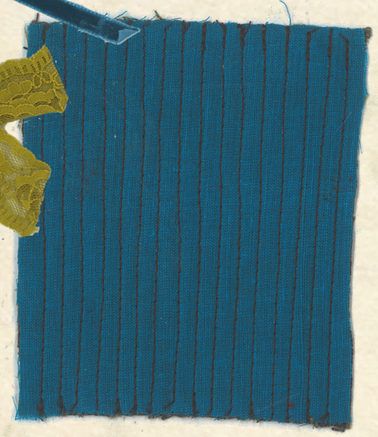


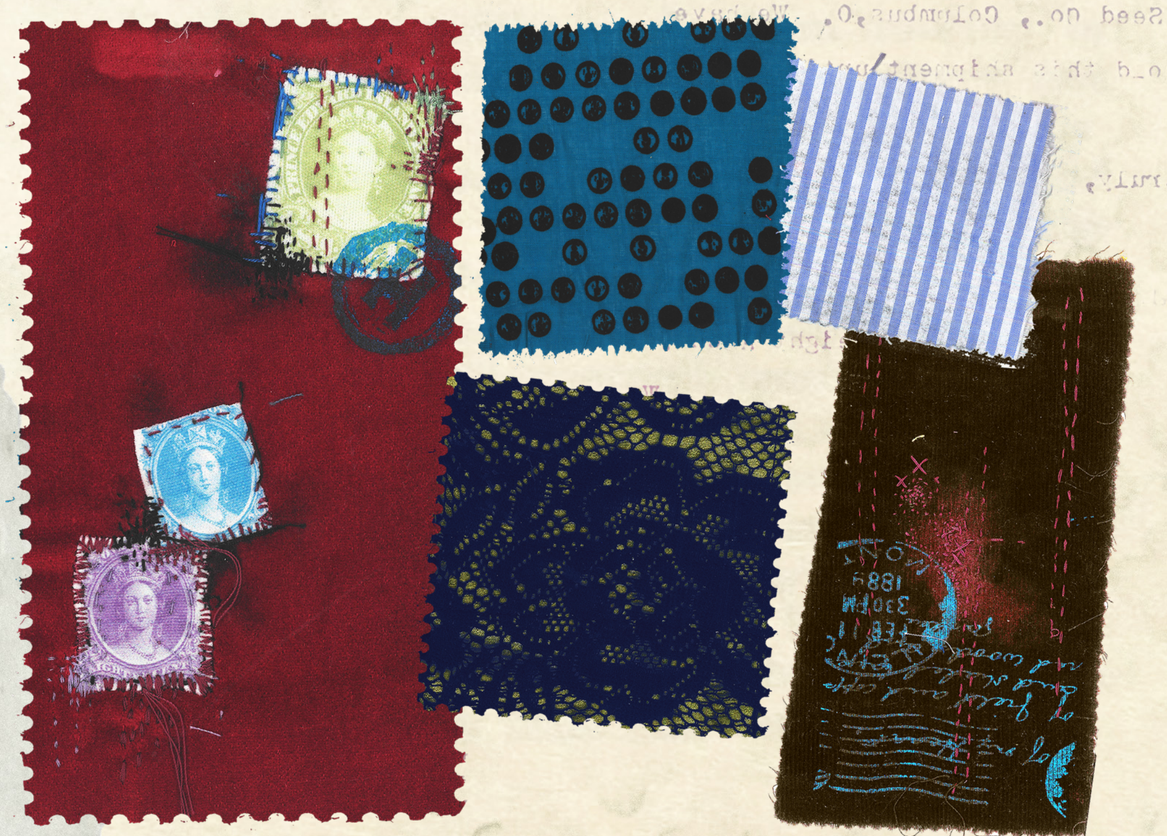












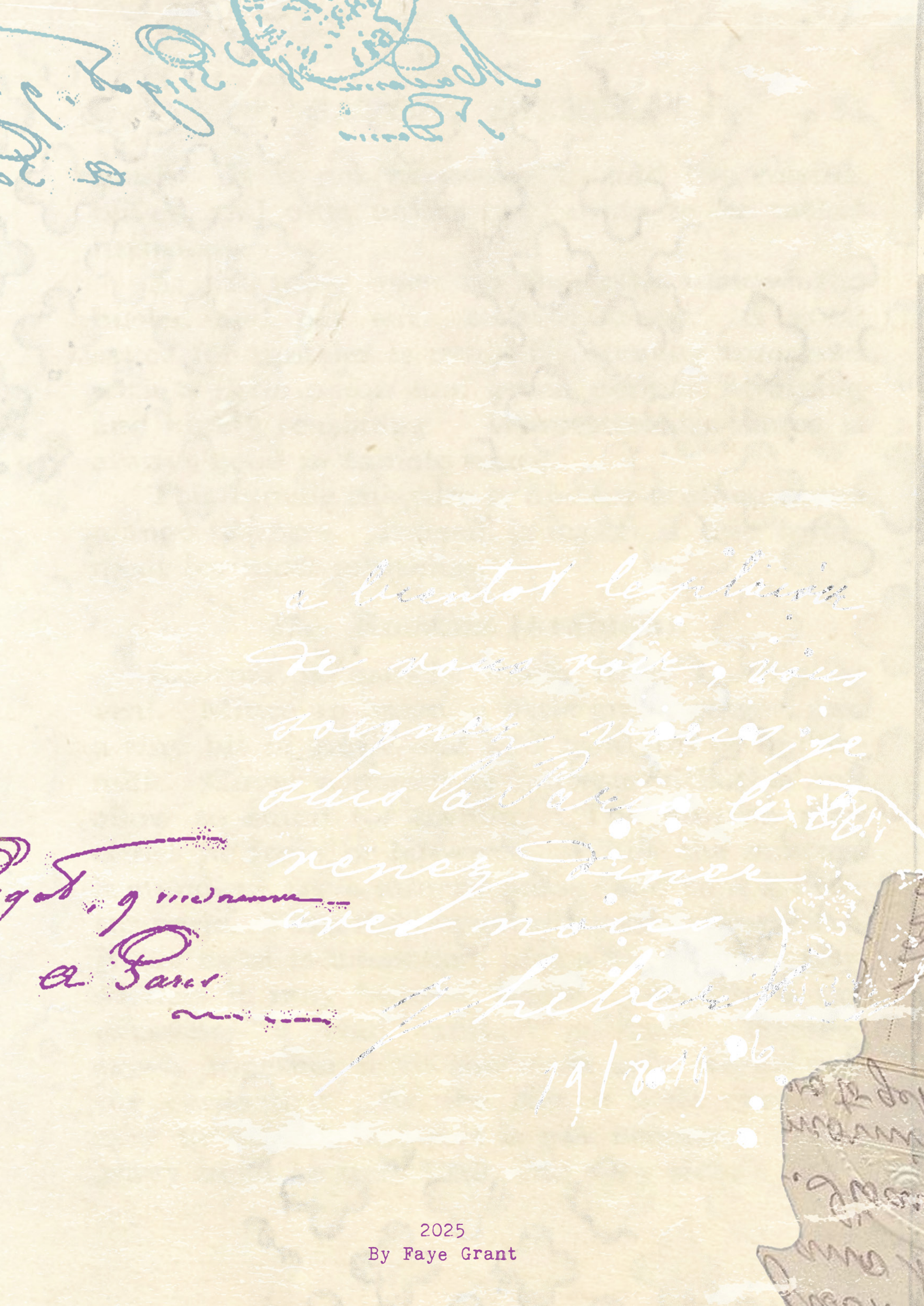
Benedict

Luculia

Princess Charlotte

Costume Make

-Violet



2025
By Faye Grant