

BJPsych

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Cover picture

The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke
(c.1855–1864), detail.

Richard Dadd (1817–1886)

When Richard Dadd was transferred from Bethlem Hospital to the newly opened Broadmoor in 1864, he had to leave behind his not-quite-finished masterpiece, *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke*. At Broadmoor he was soon at work at a watercolour version of the picture and by January 1865 had completed a rhymed description of its complex contents which he titled *Elimination of a Picture*. Here he identifies, among many other characters, the minuscule figures placed along the bizarrely elongated brim of the hat worn by the bearded 'Patriarch' at the centre of the painting. On the left Mab, Queen of the Fairies and originator of wish-fulfilling dreams (according to Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*), is parked in her chariot along with its team of female centaurs – creatures perhaps inspired by King Lear's description of his treacherous daughters. To the right, a troupe of Spanish dancers process jauntily. Among them, Dadd tells us, is one dressed like Pauline Duvernay, whose *cachucha* he must have remembered from the London stage.

The picture is a detail of Richard Dadd's *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke* c.1855–1864. Taken from *Richard Dadd: The Artist and the Asylum*, Tate Publishing 2011.

Text by Nicholas Tromans, who teaches at Kingston University London and is the author of *Richard Dadd: The Artist and the Asylum*, a review of which will be published in a subsequent issue of the *Journal*.

We are always looking for interesting and visually appealing images for the cover of the *Journal* and would welcome suggestions or pictures, which should be sent to Dr Allan Beveridge, British Journal of Psychiatry, 17 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PG, UK or bjp@rcpsych.ac.uk.

