


THE  
COFFIN  
& THE KING 

a folktale written & directed  
by Ryan de Quintal





SETTING: The American West, 1898



GENRE: Gothic Romance / Horror



FORMAT: Short Film



SYNOPSIS: A grieving husband haunted by the ghost of his deceased wife finds mysterious items in their home that might allow him to see her again.



## THE STORY

Charles Williams, a recent widower, has become a ghost haunting his own home. His wife Eleanor was the light of his life, and since her passing the world seems dark. One night, when he's deep into a bottle of gin, and held tight in the clutches of despair, he encounters a stray cat in his residence that leads him to some dark and mysterious discoveries... This film will explore grief, isolation, and redemption, with archetypal characters and a unique visual aesthetic.







## CHARACTERS



**Charles Williams:** A wealthy man in his 40s who went from rags to riches by establishing a dry-goods empire. His business ventures have fallen into peril after the death of his beloved wife Eleanor. A hard worker and a romantic. He's intelligent, curious, audacious, and observant.

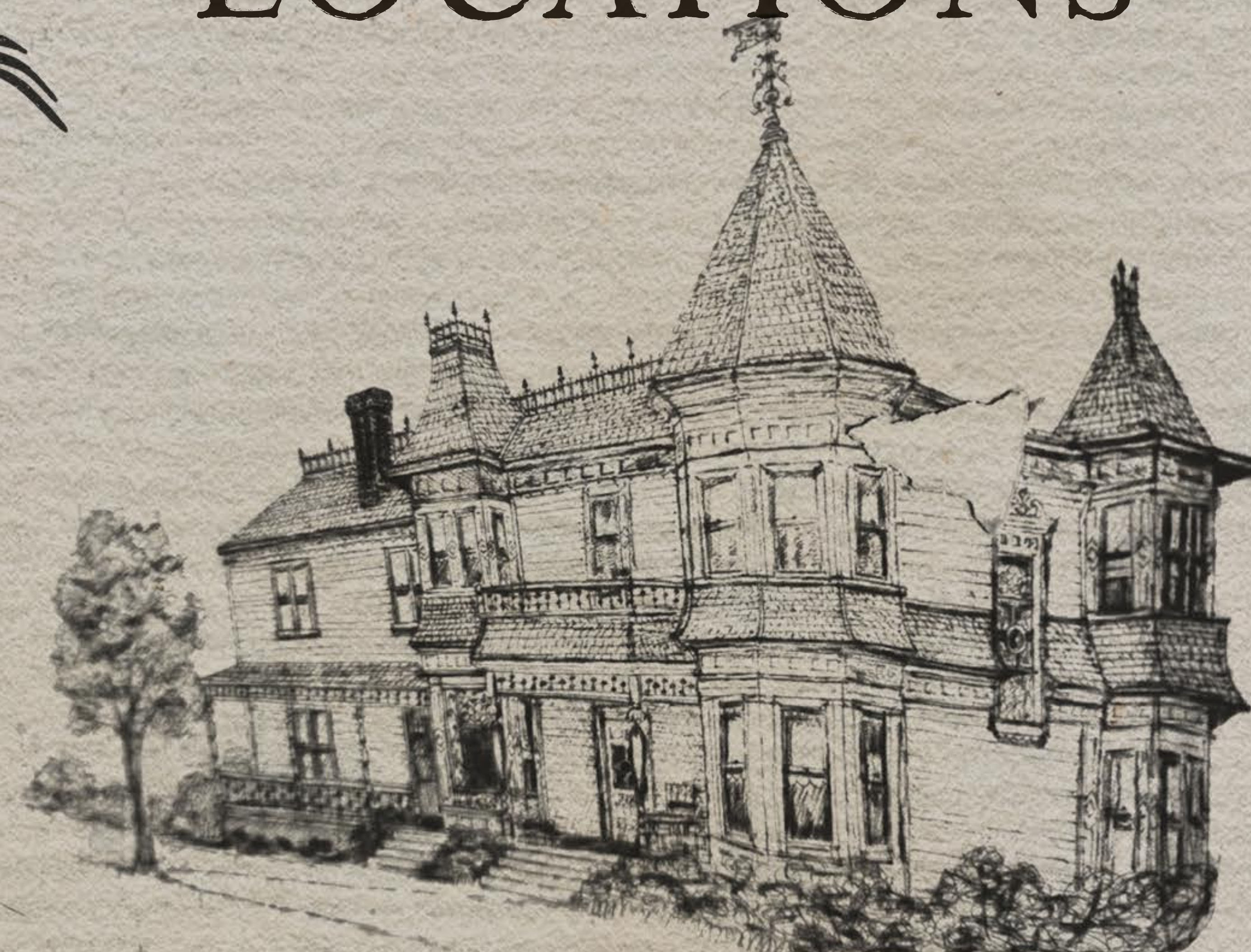
**Eleanor Williams:** A talented pianist and writer. Eleanor recently passed away at the age of 37 from consumption. She had a deep connection with her husband Charles who she married before he came into his wealth. She was patient, self-reliant, good-hearted, and introspective.

**Bill Cutter:** An opportunist and a charlatan. An older man (50s) that has made his living the hard way by lying, cheating, and stealing. A superstitious grave robber that adheres to a personal code and carries out his business in the dead of night. He is impatient, stubborn, and has a strong sense of resolve.

**Jim Harris:** Also known as "Grim Jim" on account of his grim sense of humor. A gambler in his early 30s that has recently taken to grave robbing to pay his debts. An arrogant man who rationalizes his choices moment to moment and won't back down from an altercation.



## LOCATIONS



**The Williams Household:** The Queen Anne Victorian home of Charles and Eleanor built in 1884 will serve as one of our prime locations in the film. A true time capsule to the past, with striking architecture and incredible character.



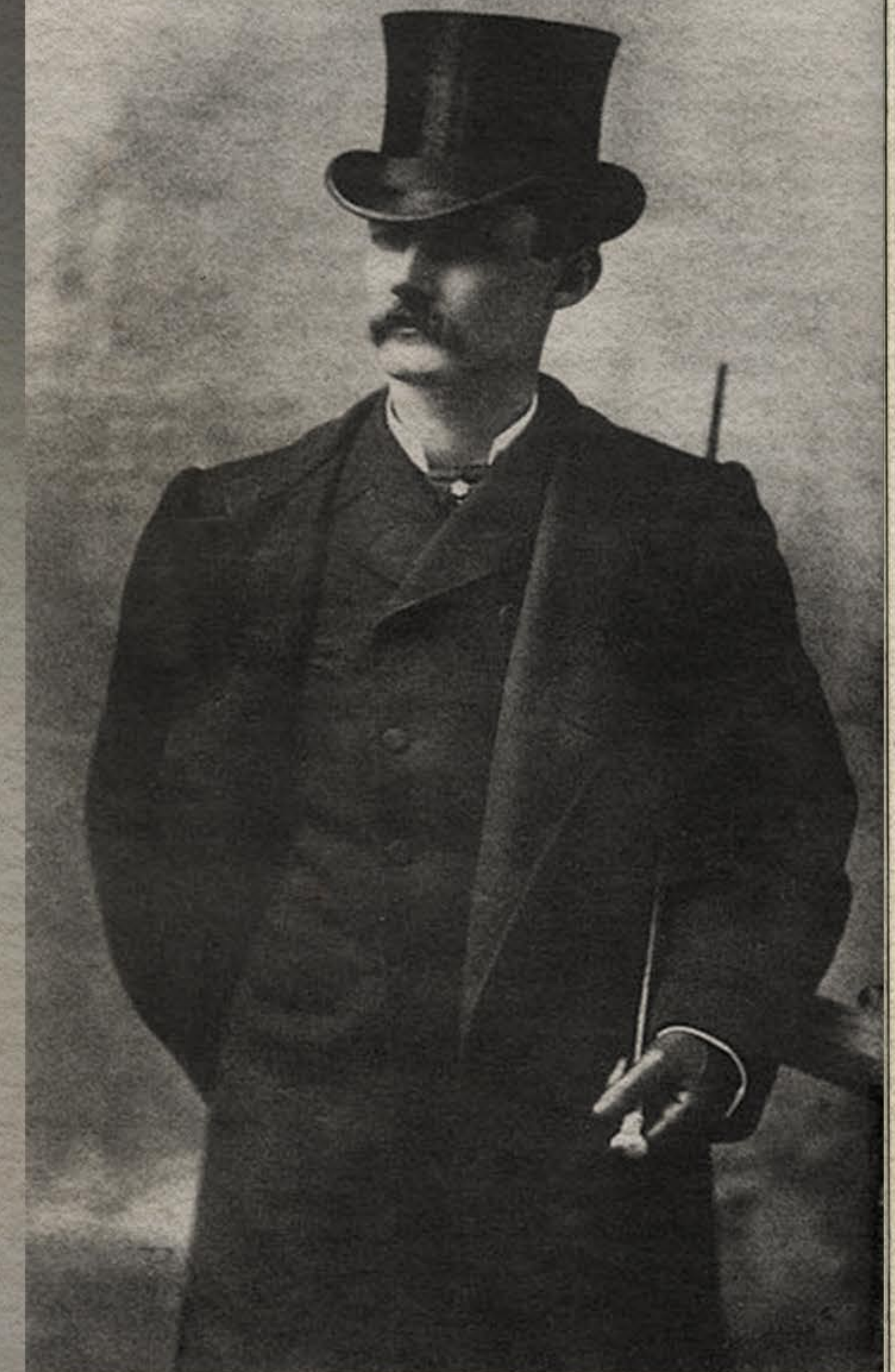
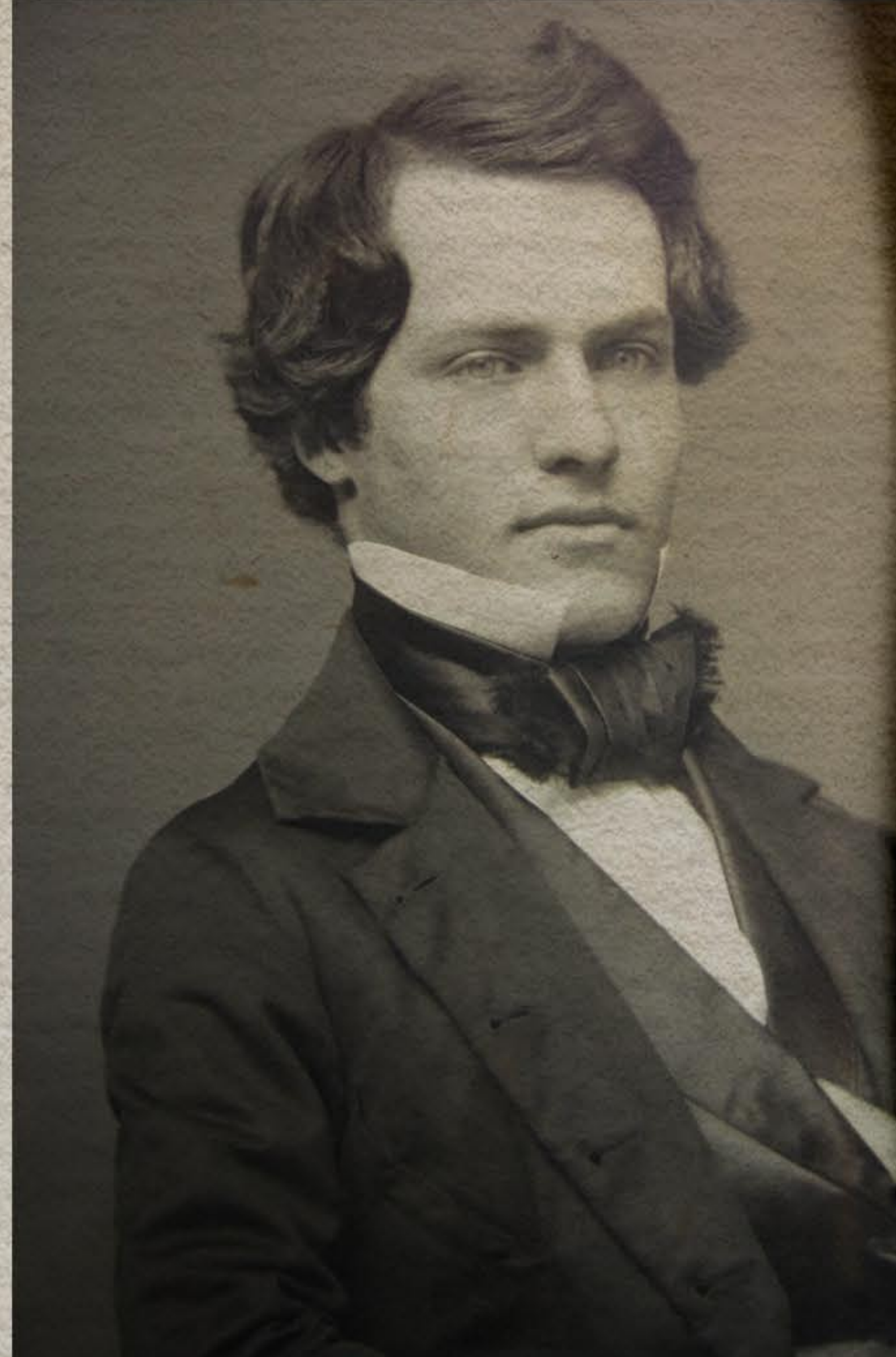
**Hilltop Cemetery:** The second half of the film takes place in a rural cemetery. A dilapidated and chilling place, that pays tribute to the dark stories of resurrectionists (grave robbers) that often preyed upon the dead.



# WARDROBE



Charles Williams:  
A wealthy man that  
dresses to impress.  
He is in mourning  
for his wife and we  
will represent that  
with an appropriate  
absence of color.  
For him, Eleanor's  
wake never ended.

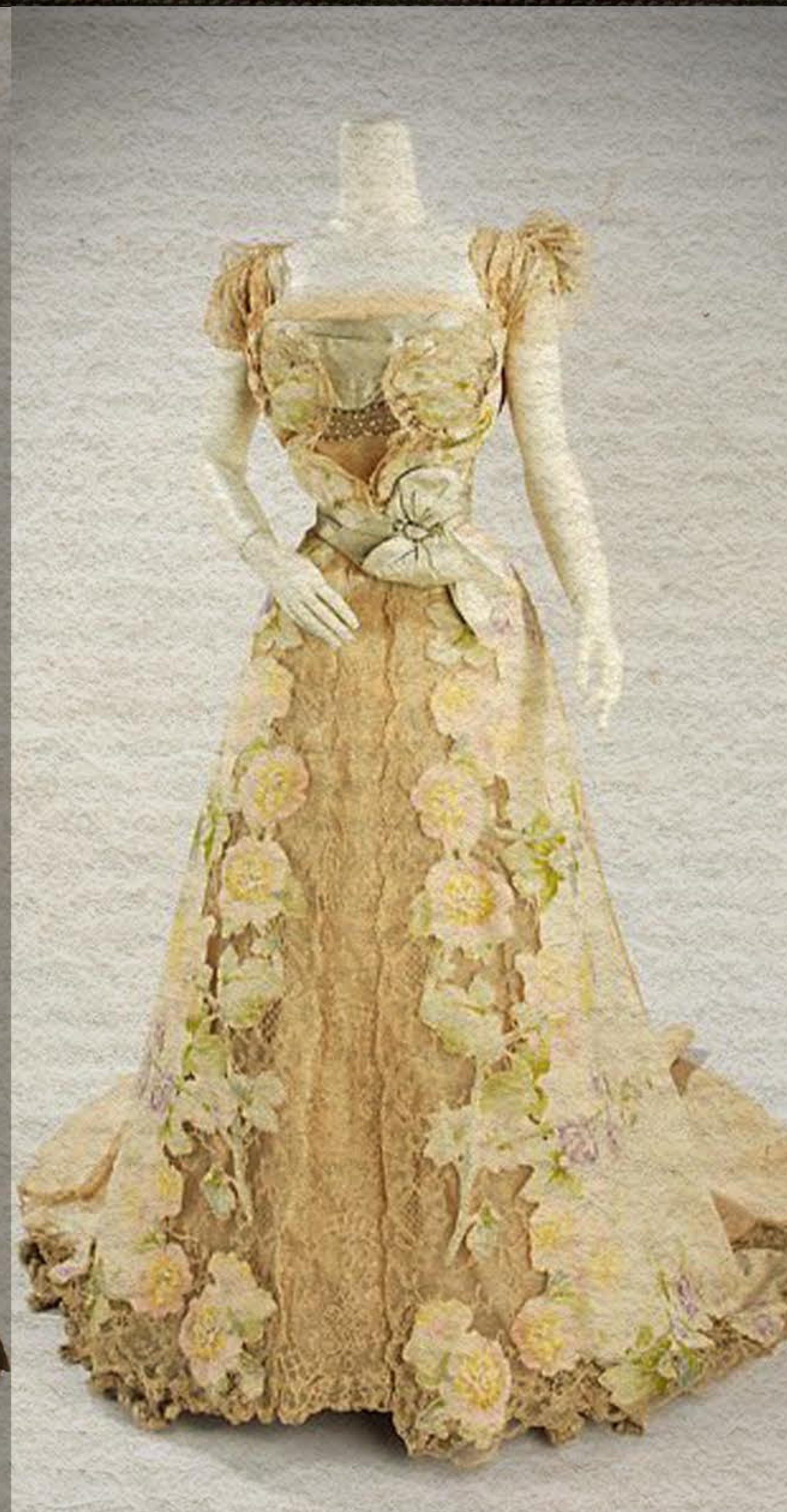




# WARDROBE



Eleanor Williams:  
An artist and a free  
spirit. Eleanor will be  
represented in two  
looks, one living, the  
other, not... There will  
be vibrance and color  
in her living attire, and  
of course all black for  
the other.

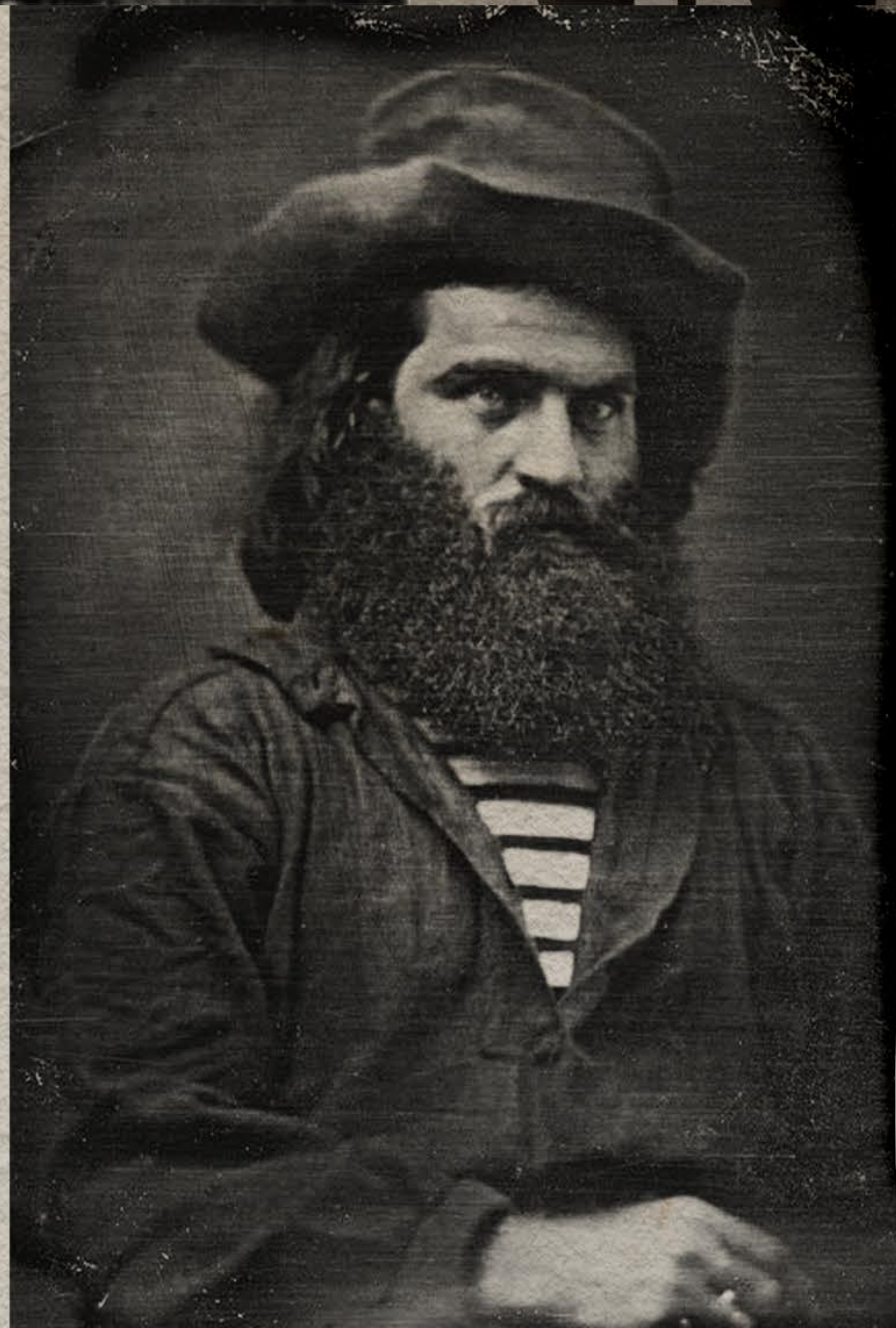




# WARDROBE



Bill Cutter:  
A grubby man, who  
takes what he can get.  
His look will be  
mismatched,  
weathered, and  
disheveled. The idea is  
tattered, torn, and  
layered. He's had the  
same clothes for years.





# WARDROBE



Jim Harris:  
Jim fancies himself a fashionable man, though he doesn't have the coin to back it up. Like Bill, his clothes are old and worn. A collection of stolen and mismatched items.



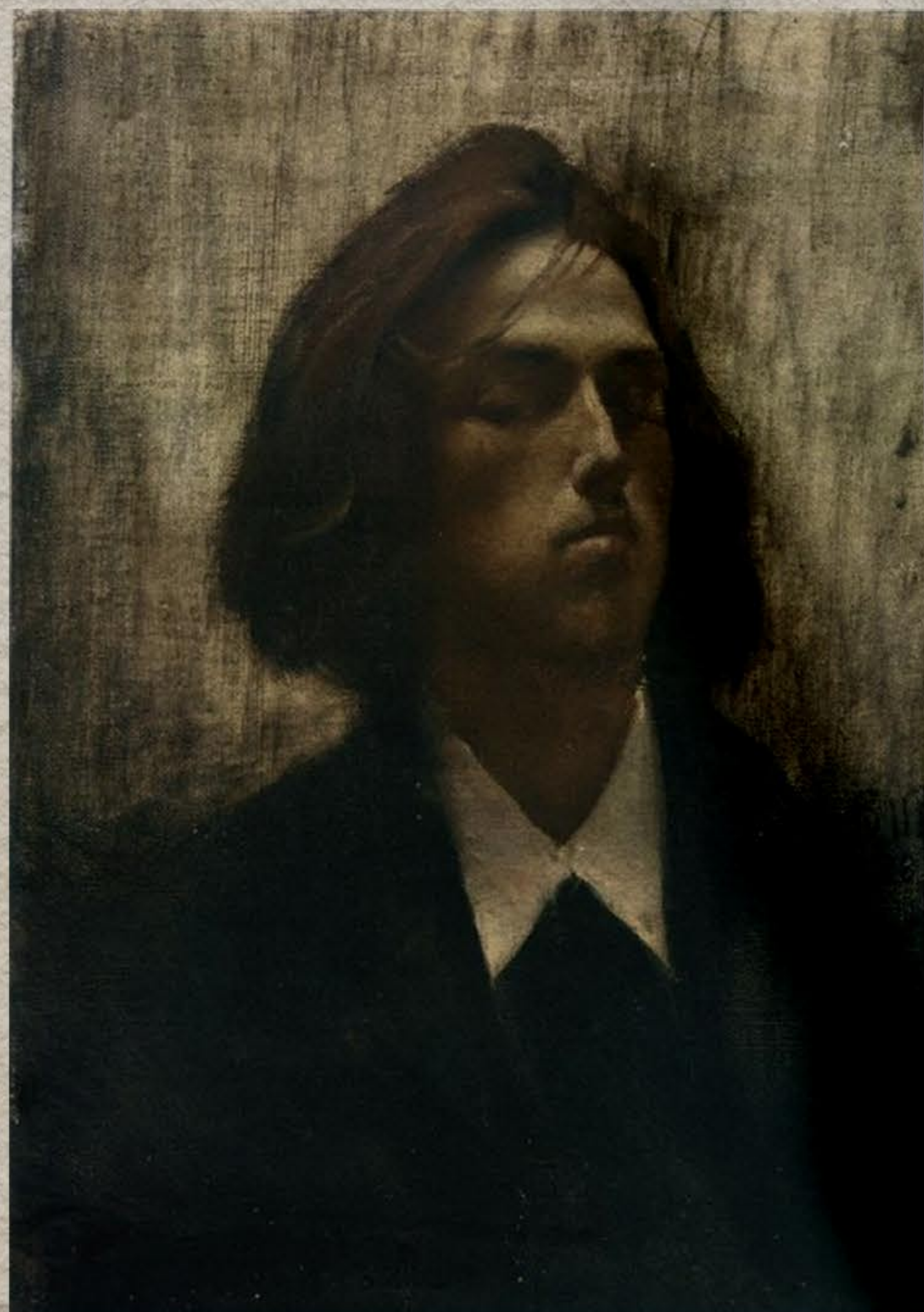




## ARTWORK



The visual language of the film is highly inspired by the oil paintings of some of the most prolific painters of the 19th century. The artwork of Jean Delville, Caspar David Friedrich, George Roux, and Viktor Madarász will inspire the color palette, wardrobe, and cinematography of the film.







# ARTWORK



The illustrations of Gustave Dore and C.J. Staniland will be featured in this film as story points and used as transitional elements in the narrative.





# CLASSIC LITERATURE



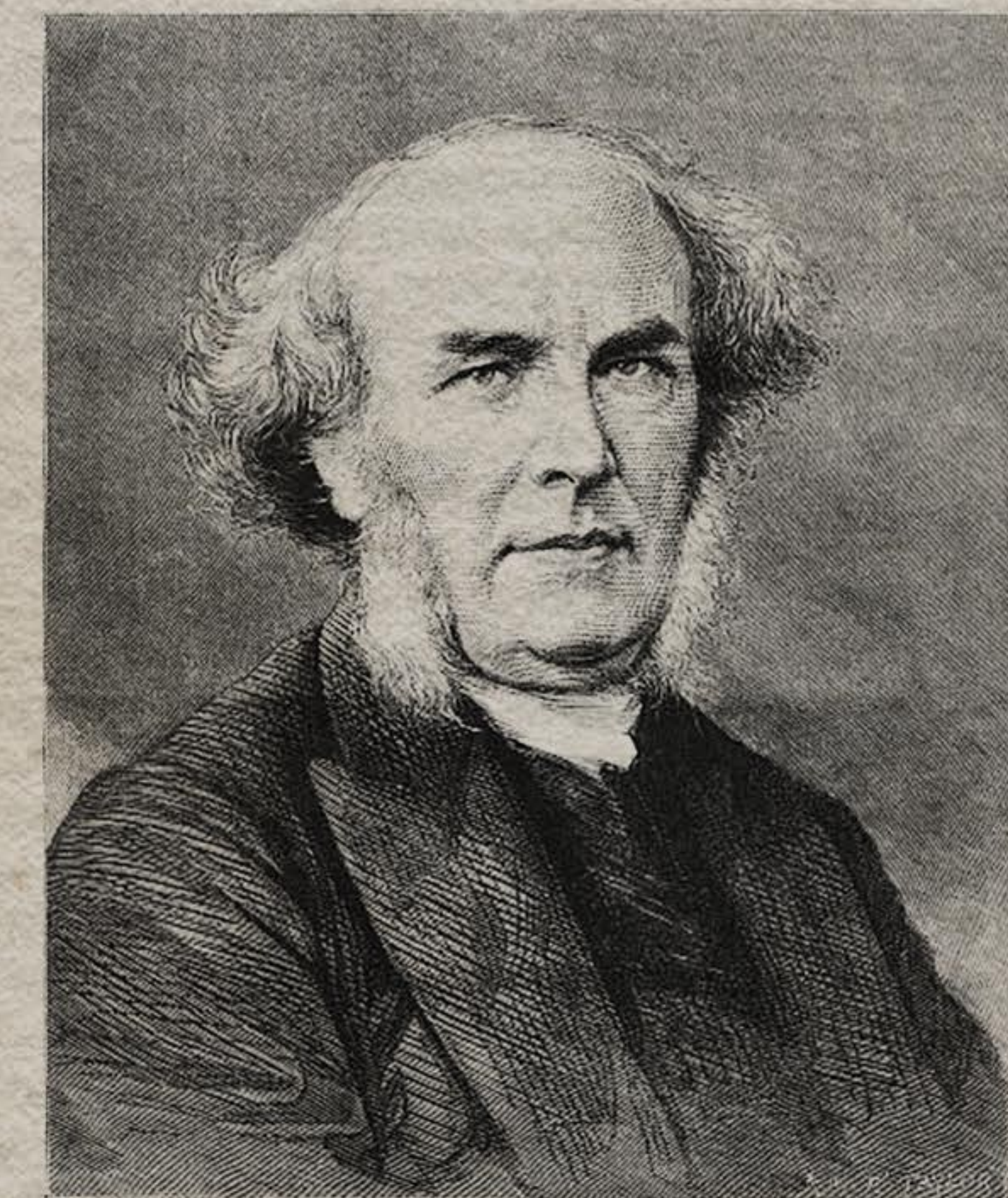
There were a plethora of incredible authors that left their mark on society with the written word in the 19th century. The classic literary works of Adelaide Anne Procter, Charles Dickens, Edgar Allen Poe, P.B. Shelley, and Horatius Bonar were a huge inspiration to the screenplay for "The Coffin & The King." The haunting and spiritual nature of the collective works of these incredible writers provided a wonderful window to the language and the tone of this century.

Screenwriter Ryan de Quintal found them to be helpful in the writing and structuring of the script. There are several texts and poems that are directly referenced through dialogue in the story.

The intent was to shine a light on the amazing work of these authors and pay tribute to them by using their work in the narrative of the film.



*Edgar A. Poe*



*Horatius Bonar*



*Adelaide A. Procter*



*Percy B. Shelley*

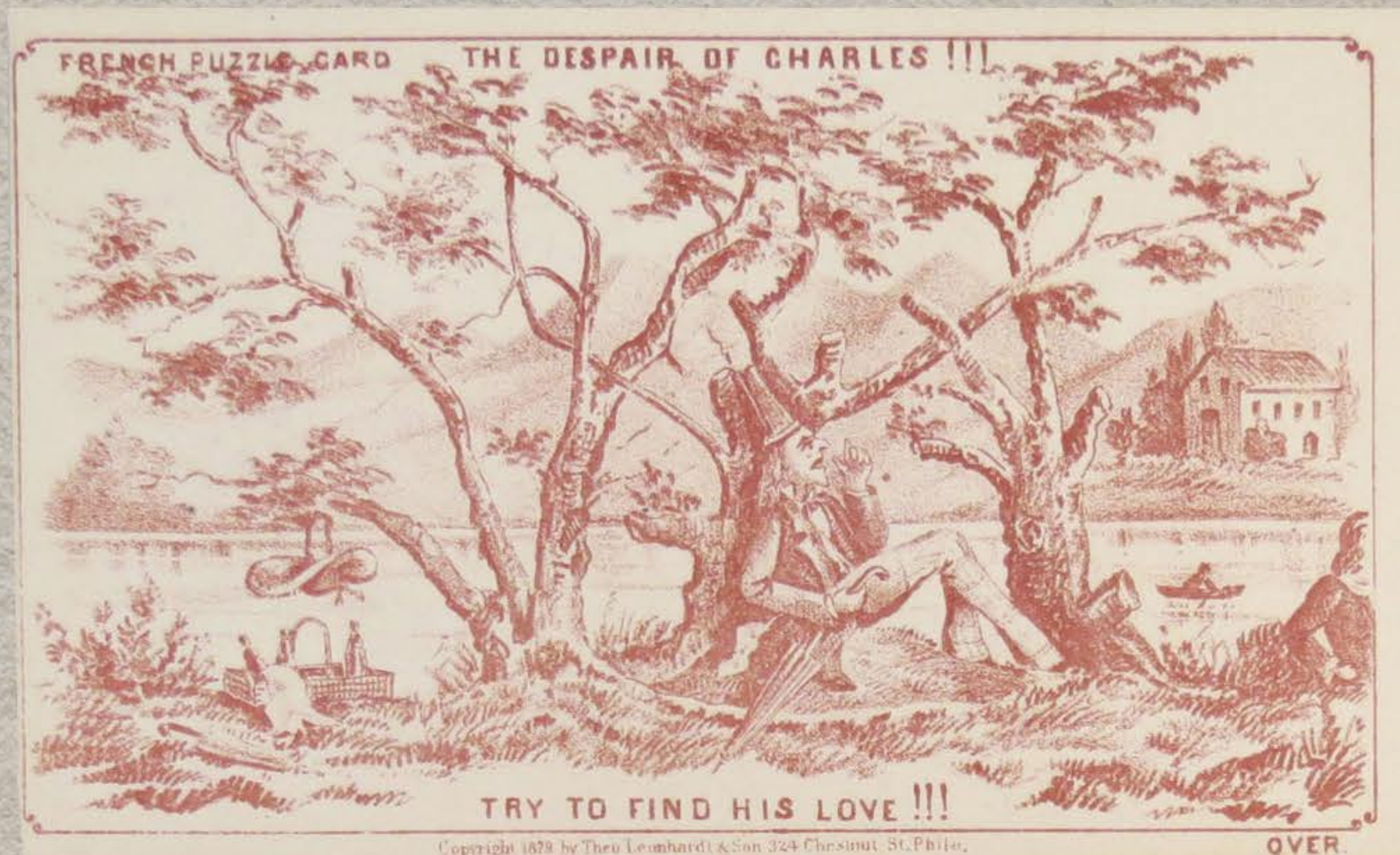


*Charles Dickens*



# PROPS

The props in the film will be period accurate or reproductions of real items of the time. The goal is to transport the audience back to a time and place more than a century ago. The props pictured below will be key items and story points for the film. Classic literature will be highlighted in particular.



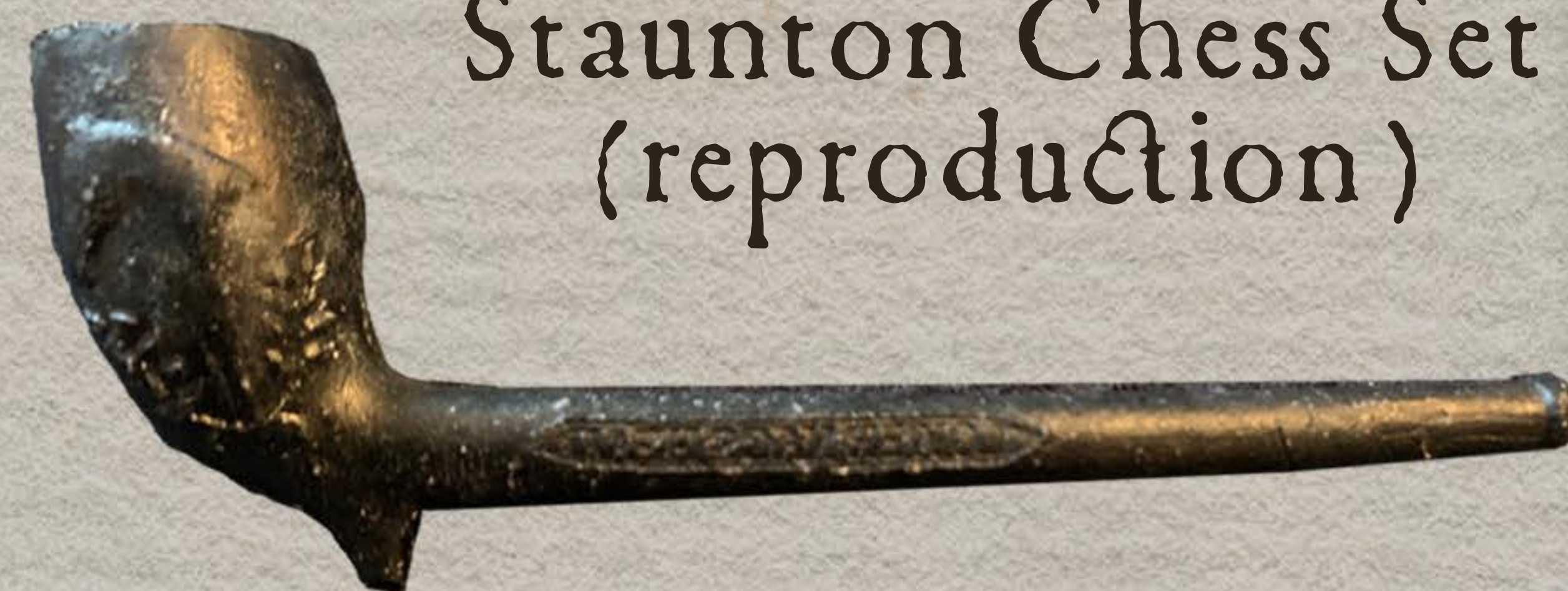
Puzzle Cards  
(1879)



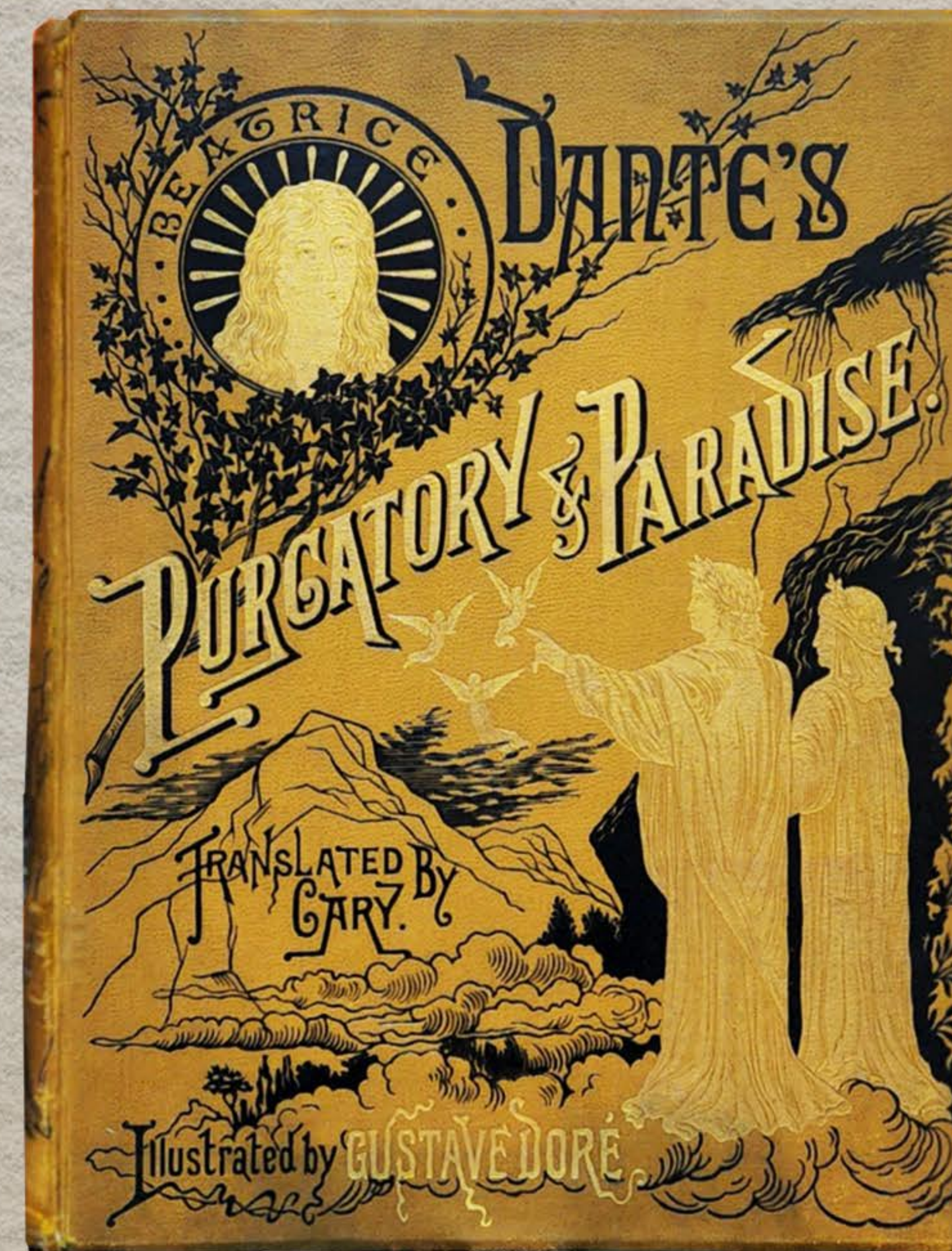
US Silver Dollar (1894)



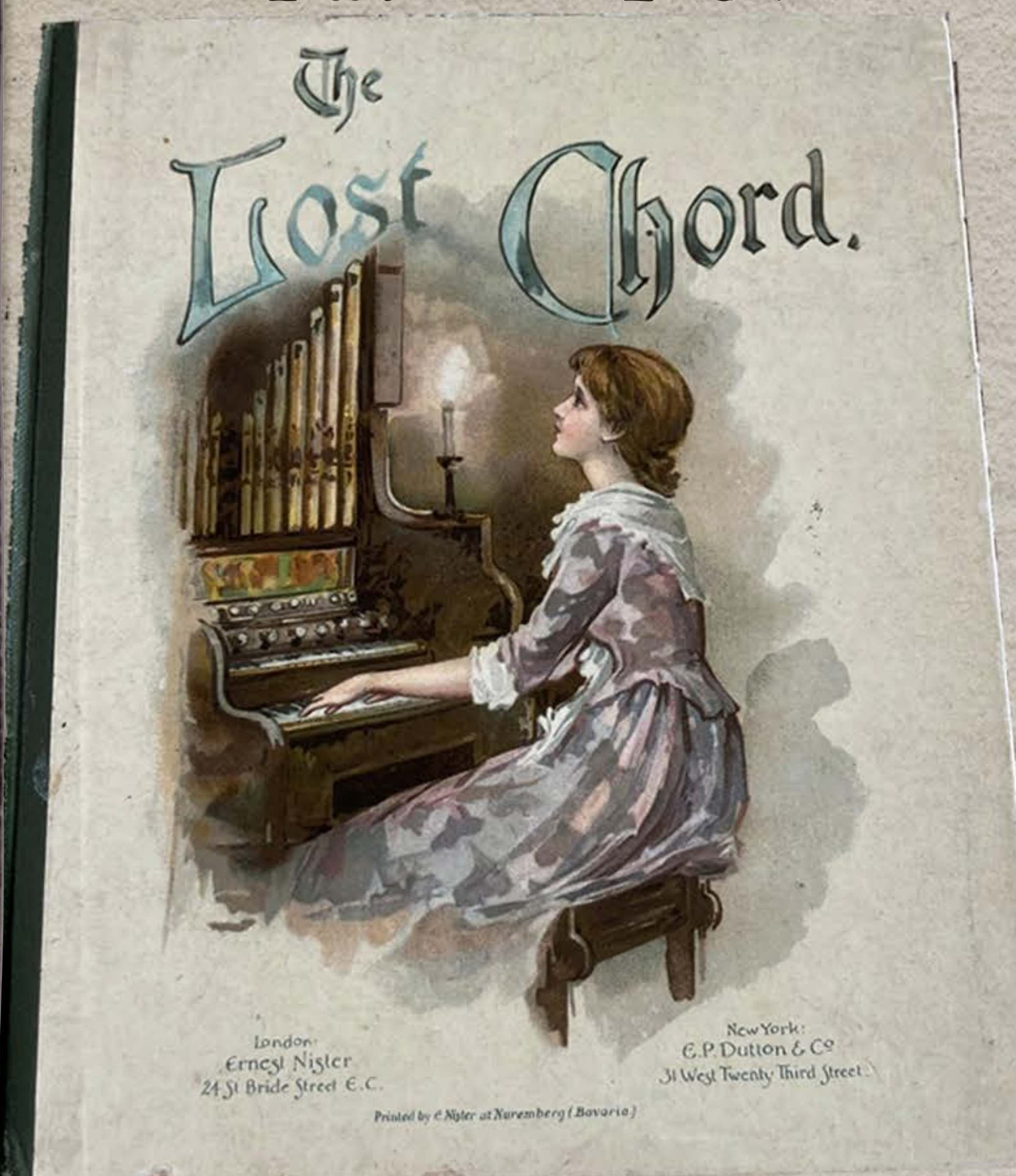
Black Horse and  
Wreath Clay Pipe  
(late 19th century)



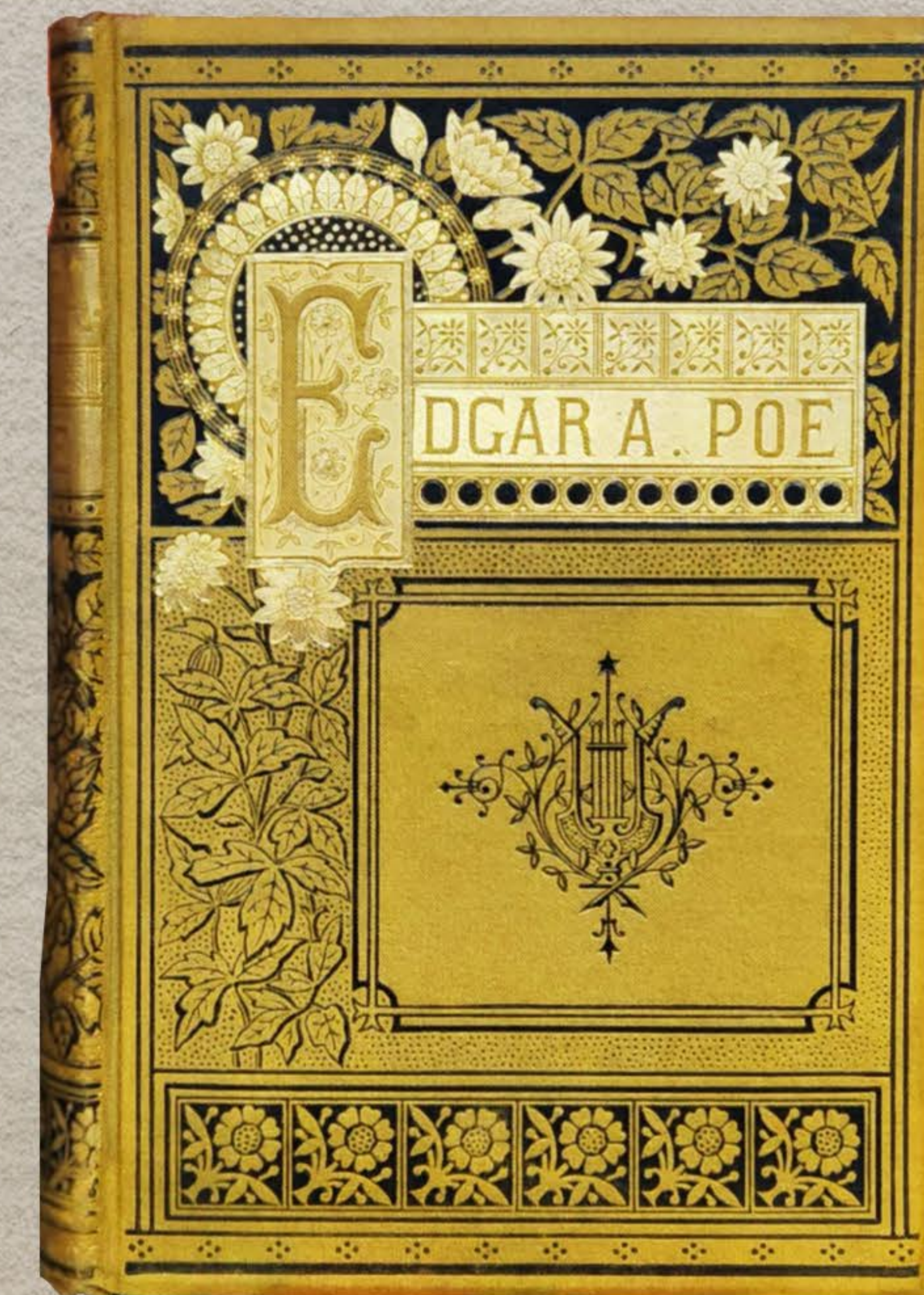
Staunton Chess Set  
(reproduction)



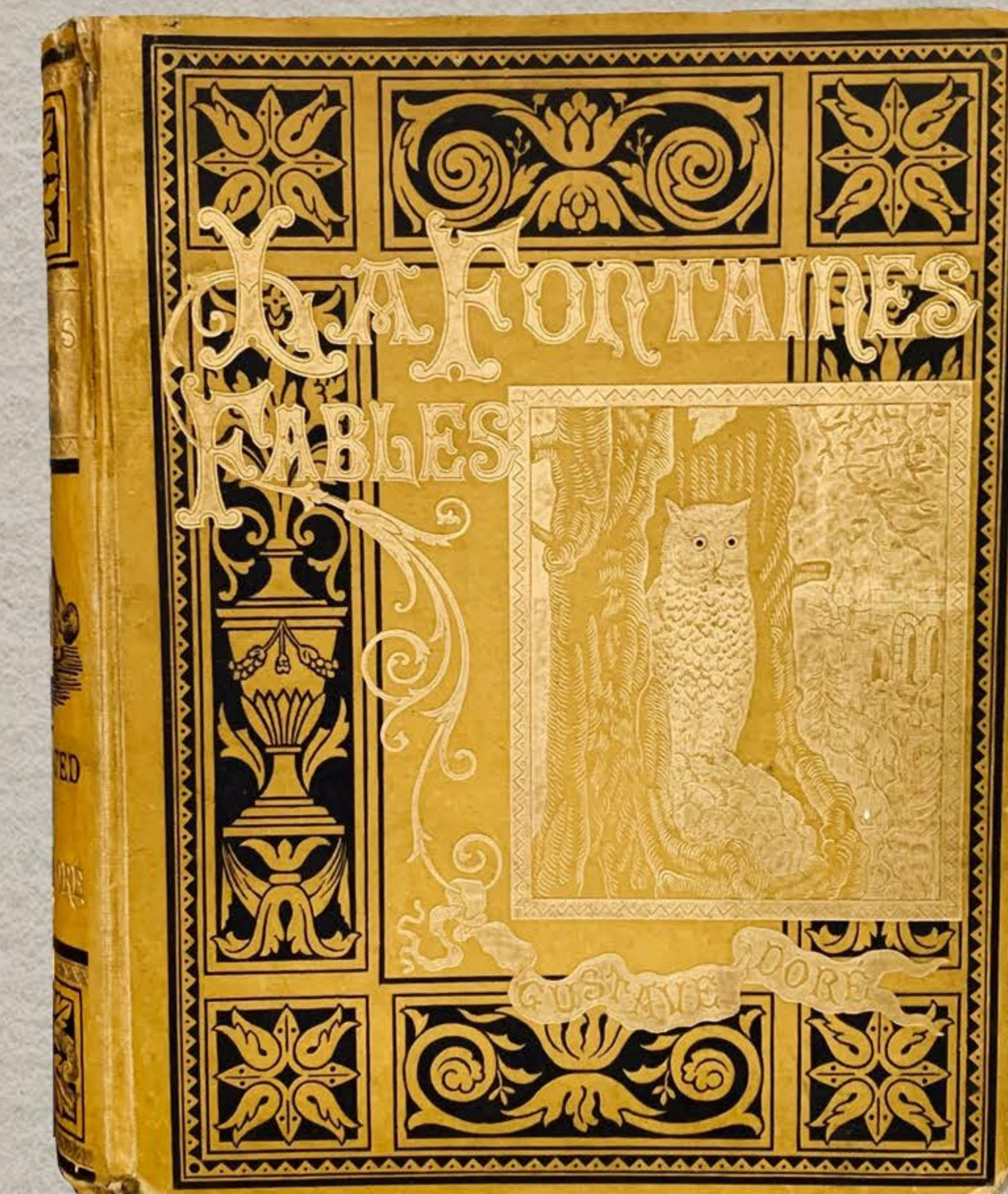
Dante's Purgatory &  
Paradise (1890)  
\*Illustrated by  
Gustave Dore



The Lost Chord  
(1893)



Edgar Allen Poe  
(1881)

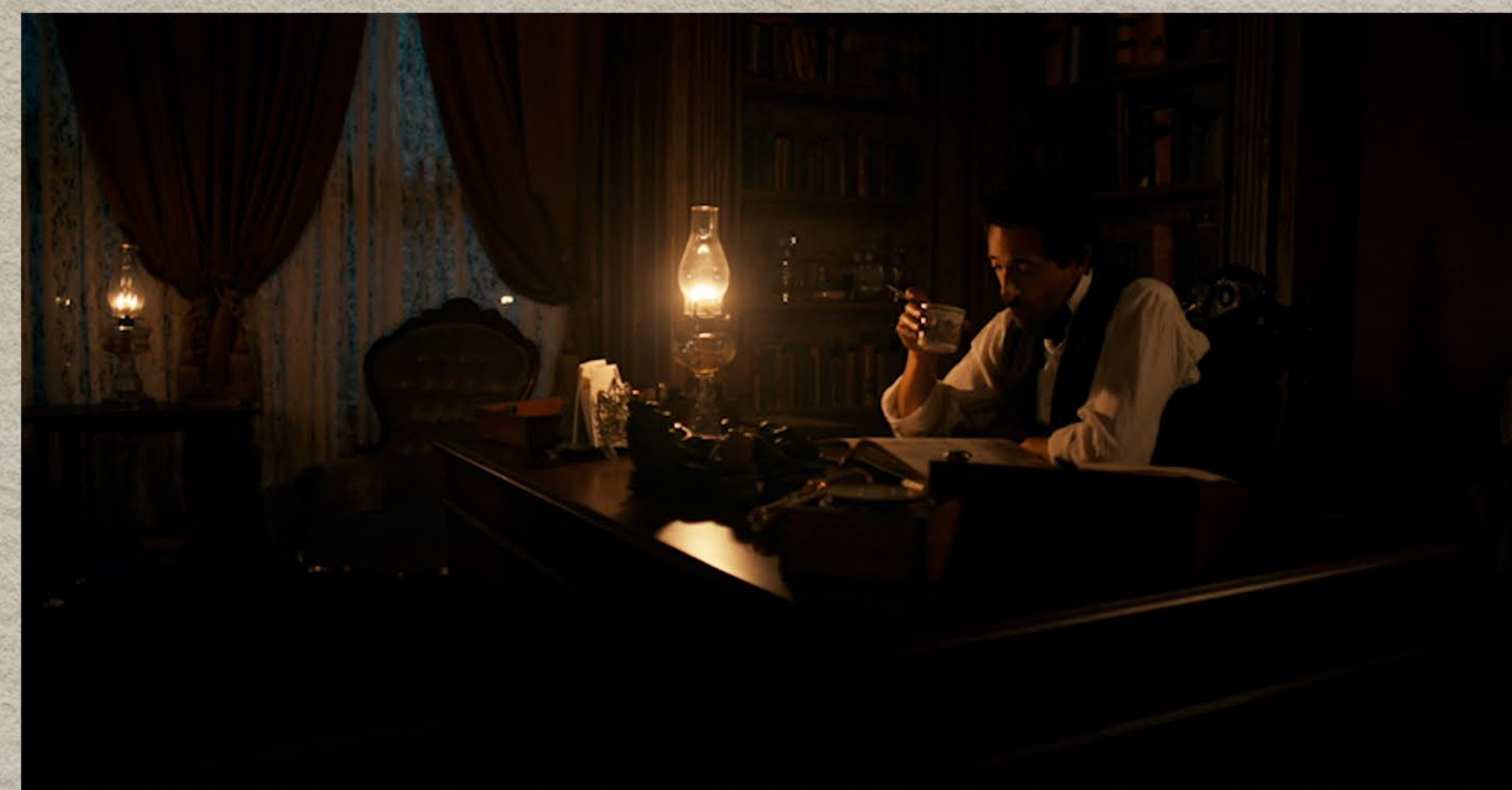
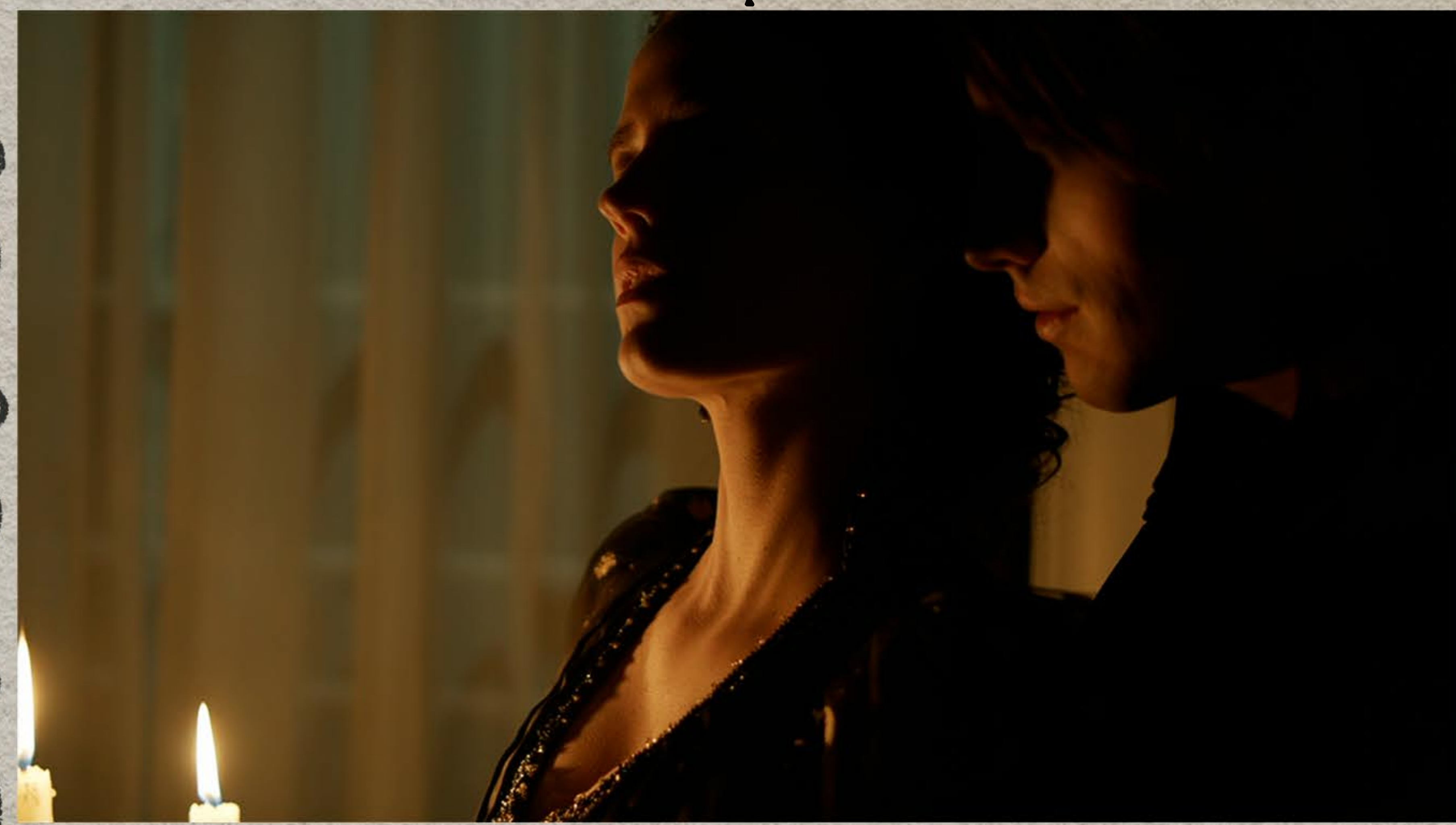


La Fontaine's Fables  
(1885)  
\*Illustrated by  
Gustave Dore



# THE VISUAL AESTHETIC

The film's visual language will be instrumental in transporting the audience back in time to 1898. By embracing shadows and the flickering of candles, the filmmakers will set a gothic tone that enhances the romance of a couple in love while also conveying the terror of being buried alive. The strategic use of color, or its absence, will further heighten the emotions of the audience. Instead of traditional TV coverage, designed shots will be utilized to draw the audience deeper into the narrative. Additionally, the filmmakers will employ a dynamic color palette that will vary based on the location of the scene. For instance, the warmth of the house will be starkly contrasted with the coldness of the cemetery, conveying the emotions of the characters while also creating a powerful atmosphere.





# THE VISUAL AESTHETIC





# HISTORY

Our film aims to take the audience on a journey back in time to experience the sights and sounds of the late 19th century, with an emphasis on capturing the essence of the time through the locations. To achieve this, we have chosen a stunning Queen Anne Victorian home constructed in 1884 as our primary setting. The house has been meticulously preserved, with much of the interior design remaining unchanged since its original construction. To further enhance the authenticity of the film, we will be using period-accurate props and set dressing to bring the audience closer to the historical period. The photographs on the following pages showcase the home's remarkable architecture and interior design, providing a glimpse into the elegance of the Williams residence as it will appear on screen. We hope that this location will transport viewers back to this fascinating era in American history.

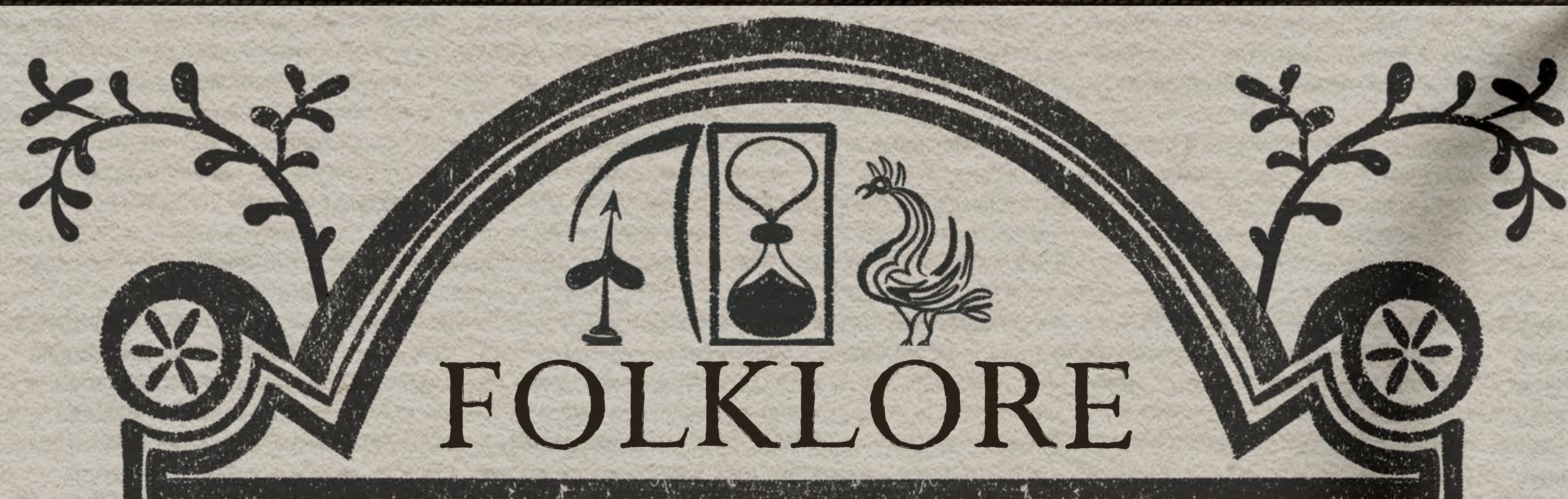




# HISTORY







# FOLKLORE

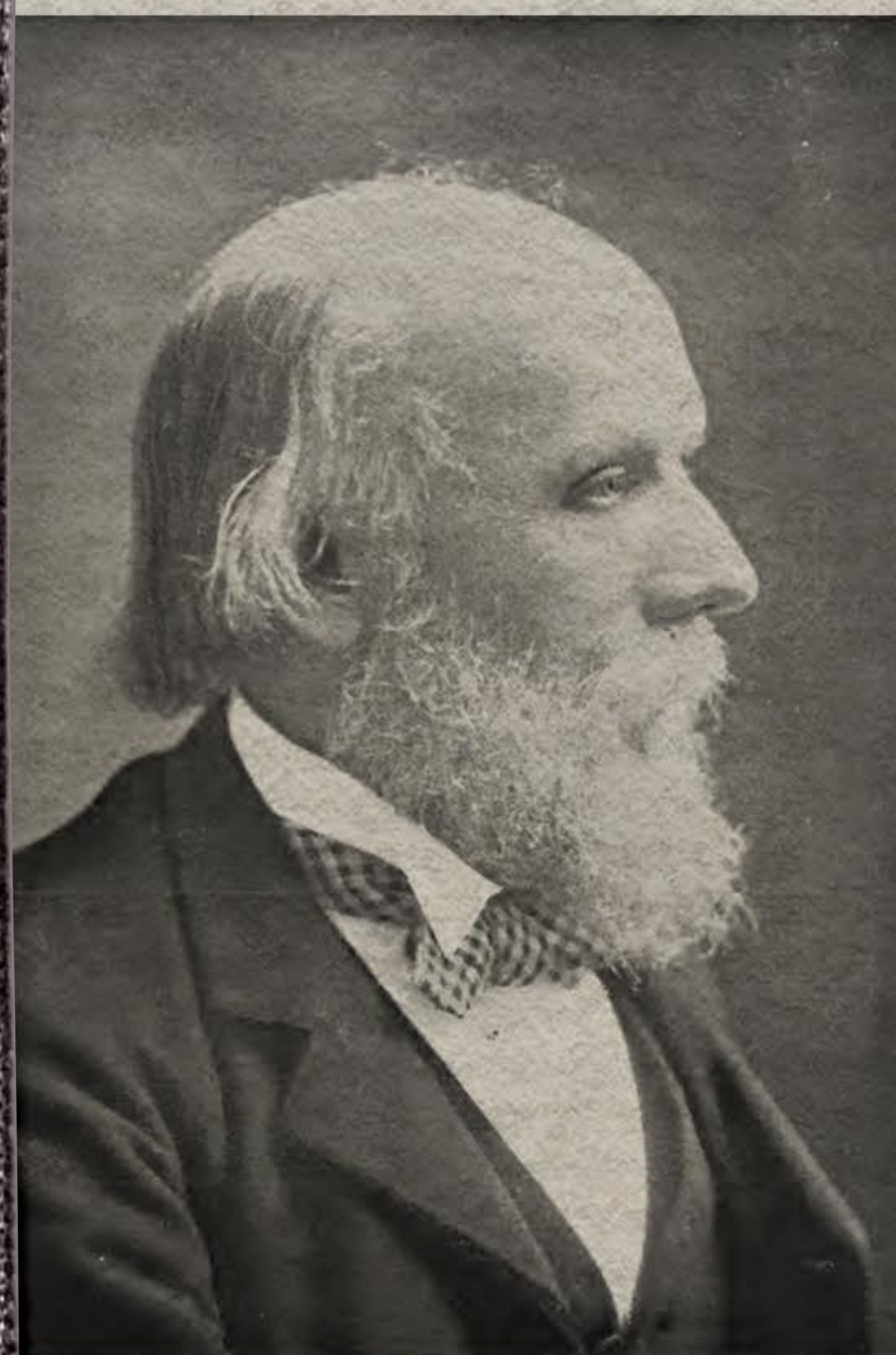
Folklore has existed in our world since the beginning of recorded time. The tales and fables of the 19th century were particularly rich, and writer / director Ryan de Quintal found them to be very inspirational in the narrative of this story. When we look at the past one can often find that the same themes and struggles of the human condition that we explore with art today were also being grappled with by writers, poets, and artists of the past. The written work of Edgar Allen Poe, Dante Alighieri, and Jean de La Fontaine were a particular inspiration to this gothic folktale.



Cats are a prominent figure in folklore throughout the ages and our story will feature this animal. Often perceived to be both omens of good and bad luck, they are known as a guide to the spiritual world.




# RESEARCH



The fear of being buried alive was common in the 19th century. So common in fact that William Tebb, a British businessman and social reformer wrote a book on how to prevent it. This text along with countless newspaper articles and texts of the time provided inspiration for this story. The goal was to use real incidents and accounts to fuel new ideas that felt rooted in reality.

PREMATURE BURIAL  
AND  
HOW IT MAY BE PREVENTED  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TRANCE, CATALEPSY,  
AND OTHER FORMS OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION

BY  
WILLIAM TEBB, F.R.G.S.

*William Tebb*

Resurrectionists or grave robbers were very active during the 19th century. And while the corpse business wasn't as prevalent near the turn of the century it still occurred. Several true stories and accounts inspired the events that take place in this film. Incidents of grave robbing still take place in modern times.





