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Charming

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## Charming

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Created by performing an erasure of Renée Vivien's 'Prince Charming' (1905), and leaving a violet-drenched account of female desire in its wake, this object poem invokes the fantastical qualities of the fairy tale to propel its audience into the decadent space of a transgressive, unruly body and its emancipatory, sensual metamorphosis.

Nestled in an early twentieth-century guide to Florence (the city where Vivien sends her lovers to live in her prose piece), 'Charming' explores the creative potential of the fairy tale as a site of provocation, initiation, and queer enchantment, combining analogue and digital techniques in a collage of found text and images. These include Otto Wegener's portrait of Vivien (c. 1900) flamboyantly attired as a dandy (to which a double exposure technique has been applied) and vintage fragments that nod to both Vivien's glass cabinets of exotic butterflies and other insects and the purple blooms which obsessed this 'Muse of the Violets', as described by Colette in *Le Pur et l'impur* [*The Pure and the Impure*] (1932). Vivien's fascination with these flowers derived in part from the poet Sappho, whose fragments – containing recurring, evocative references to garlands and crowns of dusky purple violets – Vivien translated, but was deepened by their association with her childhood friend and first love, Violet Shillito.

Using the poetic strategy of erasure to excavate a new testimony of desire from Vivien's original fin de siècle text, 'Charming' engages in the fairy tale cycle of borrowing and encountering as it shape-shifts, performing another decadent version of subversive sexual self-fashioning. It asks to be seen as an unapologetic celebration of heady, enticingly excessive, violet delights.

