

*Flower Preservation in  
Victorian England*  
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Courtney Duff

Best of Poetry

White oleander fingers drip down her daughter's back,  
lacing up filaments of ribbon on the corset cage that, like  
decoupage, preserve the girl in pressure—  
and cotton the color of calla lilies snares her taut  
between whalebones like porcelain petals.  
Her freckles maculate her sweet smelling skin,  
where petunias bloom beneath the corset,  
staining her belly. Held fast between pages of Wilde  
she stays static, staples bending under the weight.