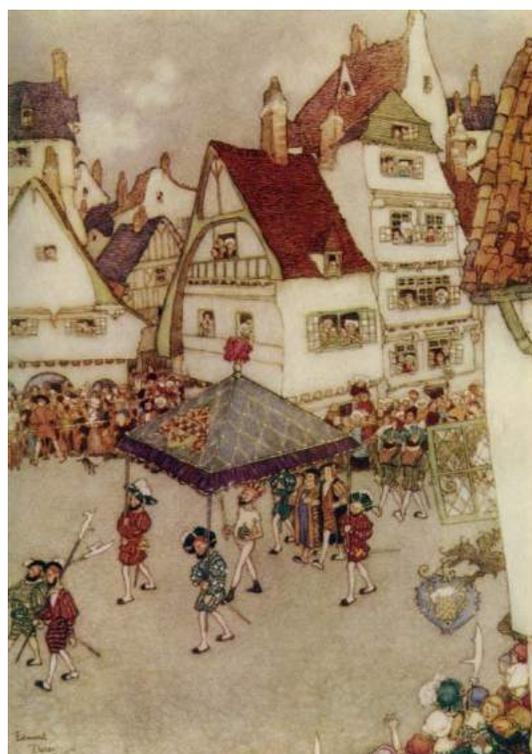
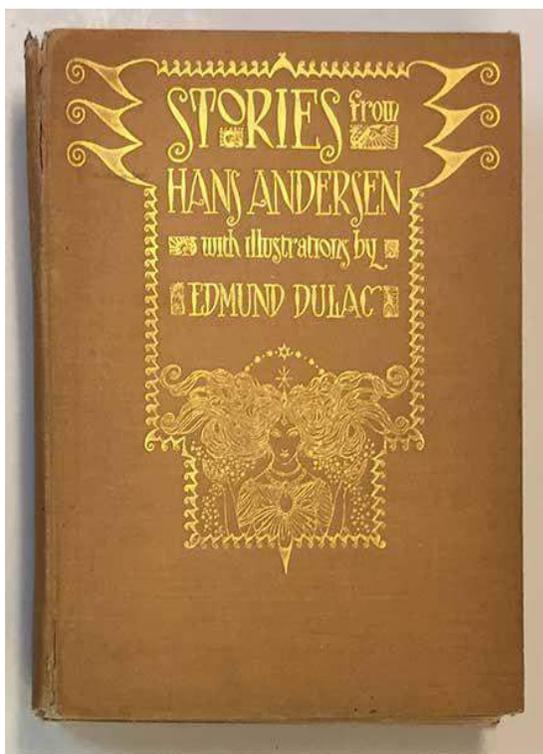


Five Fairy Tales: Rare Books and Special Collections Research Assignment

By Constantine Grigoriadis

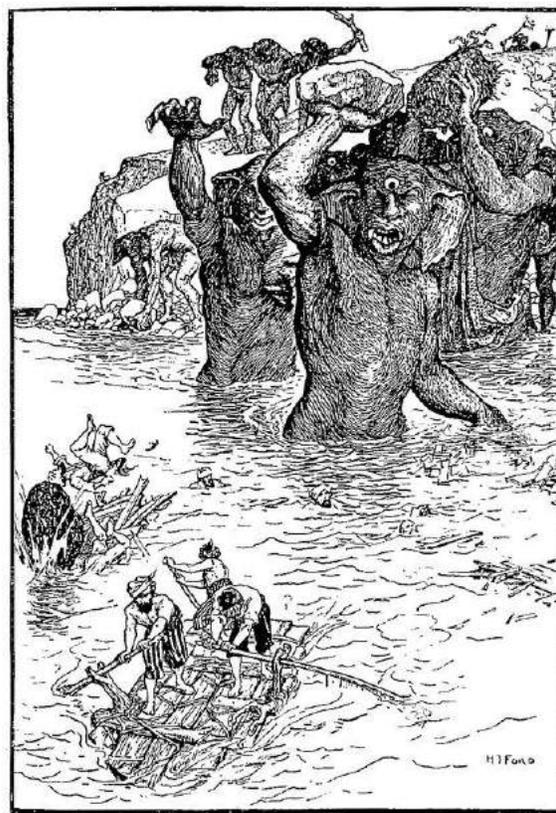
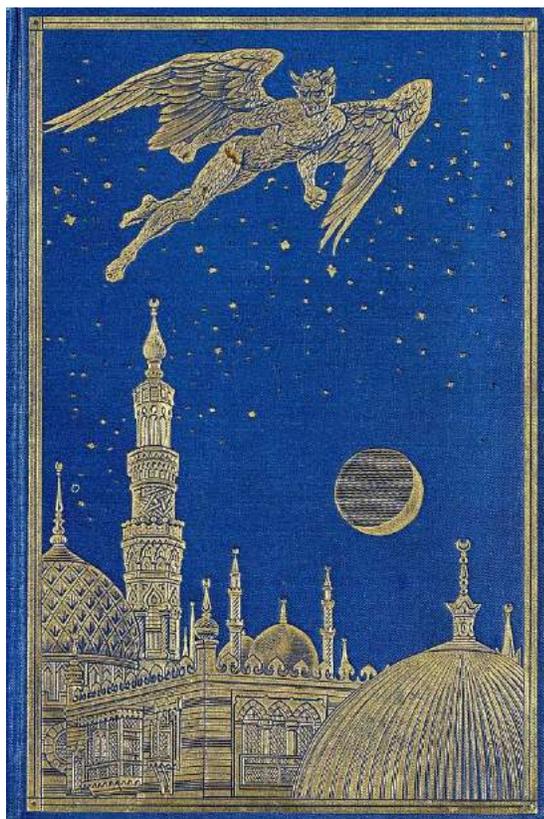
1. “The Emperor’s New Clothes”, *Stories from Hans Andersen*, by Hans Christian Andersen, pub. Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1911. Call # PZ8 .A542 St 1911.
<http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=5732129>

A tale representational of its time’s waning view on the monarchy, “The Emperor’s New Clothes” came to me first by way of its metaphorical saying. I had often heard my grandmother use it mockingly to describe scenes of pretentiousness and hypocrisy, and until I noticed the tale in *Stories*, the reasoning behind it was an afterthought. Upon reading the tale, I admired just how accurately and humorously it portrayed those very contemporary social issues. Andersen touches on the consequences of concerted denial and the overestimation of authority through the Emperor and his minister’s laughably muddling about, and only the most innocent and truly creative mind (the swindlers can only swindle creatively), in the child, can see through the fog of superficiality to its farce. In my chosen book the tale is also complemented by the amazing illustrations of Edmund Dulac, whose ability to portray character attire and the surrounding edifices with such color and textile-like quality brings to light how truly baroque the setting (not to mention the Emperor’s new clothes) must have been, and along with its enlightening conclusion, this tale is one I could not afford to miss.



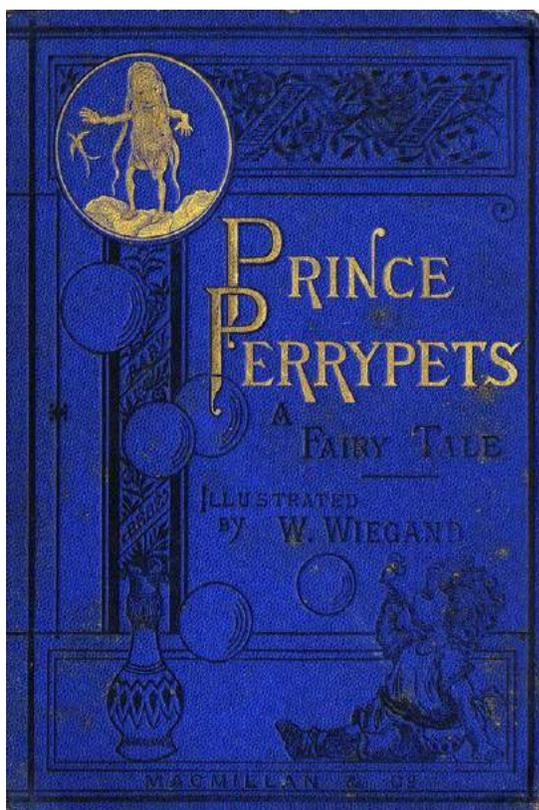
2. “The Third Voyage of Sinbad the Sailor”, *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*, by Andrew Lang, pub. Longmans, Green, London ; New York, 1898. Call # PZ6 1898 A722.
<http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=62683>

As a long-time reader of classical mythology, I found myself enthralled by the *Arabian Night*'s near-eastern take on the types of tales which marked my childhood as a Greek Canadian. Gone were the rolling hills of orchards and their pastoral characters, here was the welcoming of a rage from red sea to blasted lands that only the toughest of sailors could fair, and a particular sailor, Sinbad's, had voyages which vividly painted my imagination. Though I enjoyed all seven of the voyages, the third stood out to me as his most harrowing. It contained everything from the comedically dangerous, in the hairy dwarves, to the just plain dangerous, in the serpents and the unforgettably terrifying giants, all shrouded in the mystery of the most foreign and desolate of settings. When the giants were first revealed, their otherworldly savagery was described with a kind of human touch, residing in palaces, snoring in midday naps, and that surprised me, but the illustration I included was quick to remind me of just how unhuman they were. To me, the illustration depicts a perfect sense of scale for the overbearing creatures, along with a weightiness to their throws (the background giants' effort in picking up the boulder, the crater of a former raft), altogether making the scene feel more urgent and perhaps more real.



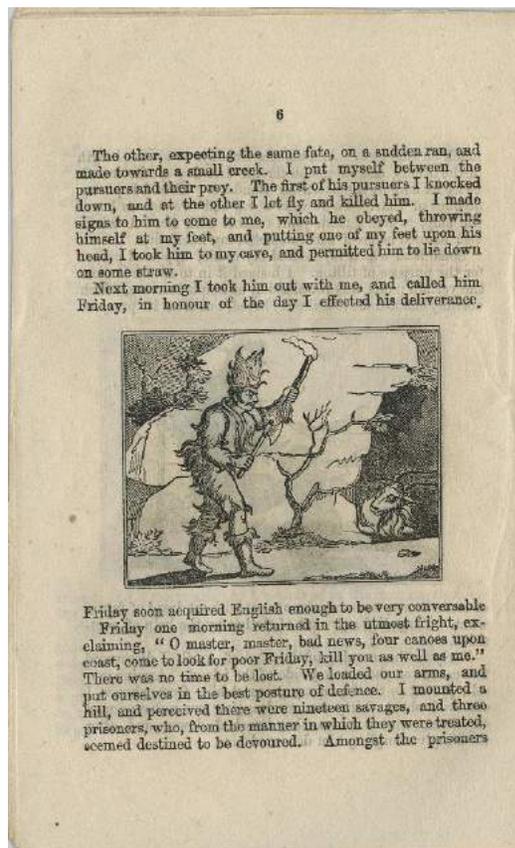
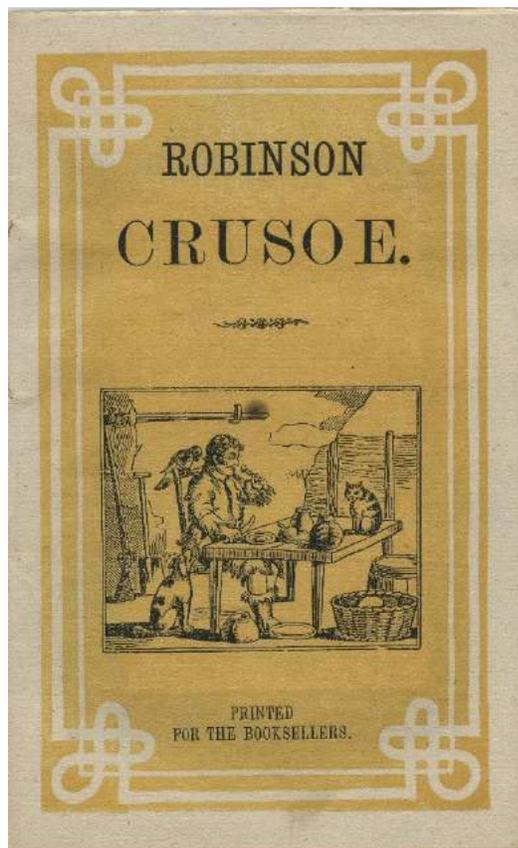
3. *The History of Prince Perrypets: a Fairy Tale*, by Louisa Knatchbull-Hugessen, pub. Macmillan, London, 1872. Call # PZ6 1872 K593.
<http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=1054000>

The choice of this tale was a bit of wild card for me. As I proceeded through a first reading, Perrypet's path became so winding and otherworldly that it brought me to the conclusion that this rabbit-hole was perhaps ten times as perplexing as Alice's, and I was often in a fit of confusion because of it. To state that Perrypet's world was a reflection and perhaps exaggeration of Wonderland would be an understatement, and emerging from my whirlwind tour I pondered at what was seeming to draw me back to it. In the span of no more than a quarter length of Alice's, Perrypet's adventure manages to fling the reader from the backs of winged serpents to the rainbow at world's end and back again, all without but the slightest chance to take a breath. The tale's condensed, and comparatively unstructured nature may not lend itself to such a leisurely read as with Alice, but there is no question that what Knatchbull-Hugessen achieved was a pushing of the fairy tale genre's literary boundaries in both how it was meant to be read and in the extent of the tropes it pursued. This makes *The History of Prince Perrypets* a footnote piece in the genre's timeline, and a must have in my fairy tale collection.



4. *Robinson Crusoe*, by unknown, pub. Otley : Yorkshire J. S. Publishing & Stationery Co., London, 1840. Call # PZ6 1840 O84. <http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=328989>

A tale embedded in the literature of my childhood, and the title of my first ever seen play, a *Robinson Crusoe* piece of any kind would find itself the nostalgic centerpiece of my fairy tale collection. A simple yet warming story, I was likewise drawn back to it because of its place in one of my favorite literary genres in realistic fiction. As you proceed through it, an impression of realism is certainly given, to the point where many considered it to be the bustling adventure of an actual 18th century trader's memoir. For me, it was the feats of backyard and schoolyard play, showing that either way, it is the quintessential adventure tale. To add, in its edition as a chapbook I find it's already quaint and simplistic style to be accentuated. The chapbook genre in itself hearkens to the way I would have read it as a child, and to have this time-worn rarity of a *Robinson Crusoe* which stands alone on the shelf by merit of its form alone, would be a true treasure.



5. *Dame Wiggins of Lee, and Her Seven Wonderful Cats: A Humorous Tale*, by John Ruskin, pub. George Allen, Sunnyside, 1885. Call # PZ6 1897 .D344.
<http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=2186373>

For some reason, to me, and if my collection of Victorian fairy tales was in any way worth its salt, it couldn't be without embracing the inclusion of an homage to our feline friends. There's something about the picture we get of a nineteenth century London, where, through coal-dusted smog and chimney stack, we always manage to find that ominous black cat snaking its way about the lantern-lit maze. In my image, the cat idealizes only a part of *our* perceived Victorian aesthetic. Ruskin's choice to interpret the cat as a *pastoral* creature however, idealizes *actual* themes from many nineteenth century English works, sometimes on account of a new humanism in their author's worldview. Themes, such as the purity in country living, and the perfect harmony between human and animal life only found there, so pervasive to the literature which shaped that of Ruskin's and Wilde's, are revived in characters like Dame Wiggins and her seven cats. Yet, as they fulfill a pastoral homage to times before, they act also with the affordance of Ruskin's *now*. Well-mannered and groomed, artistic, and altogether quite the learned bunch, the cats exist as a representation of centuries' work with literature enmeshed in a new, Victorian time, all condensed into the framework of a children's piece where perhaps that kind of blend could have never happened before.

