

## **William Petrie Graduate Student Library Scholarship 2018 Recipient**

**By Kailey Fukushima, Department of English**

### **Award-winning Essay**

In the Victorian era (ca. 1837-1901) people read their literature piecemeal. Like modern television programs, Victorian novels were serialized on a weekly or monthly basis. The serial parts were either published in twenty to thirty-page installments, or they appeared alongside other genres in the era's many circulating periodicals. Not only did Victorians read their literature at a different pace than we do today, they were also accustomed to reading texts with illustrations. Many of the Victorian novels that people consider "classics" originally included intricate and labour-intensive prints which modern print editions often exclude.

Dr. Mary Elizabeth Leighton's graduate seminar "Illustration and Victorian Literature" (English 551/Spring 2018) foregrounded illustration and publication contexts in the study of English Literature. Dr. Leighton designed the seminar around our access to the rich collection of Victorian-era books and periodicals held in the University of Victoria's Archives and Special Collections. Reading titles such as Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849-50) and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891-92) in their original material formats helped me to better understand how Victorians consumed their literature. At each step in my learning process, this seminar prompted me to query how formal and material contexts can reinforce, extend, and distort the dominant meanings conveyed in literary texts.

The "Bring Your Own Text" (BYOT) assignment gave me free reign to explore Special Collections on my own. This assignment asked students to select and research an obscure Victorian illustrated text from the Special Collections catalogue. Because I am interested in

popular fiction, I searched for authors who contributed to the lowbrow “penny dreadful” genre of the nineteenth century. Ultimately, I chose to research an understudied highwayman tale called *Edith the Captive; or the Robbers of Epping Forest* (1872; 2nd ed. 1874) by James Malcolm Rymer—the author of the original Sweeney Todd story (Fig. 1). I was so fascinated by the centrality of illustration to this penny dreadful that I developed my BYOT project into a final research essay that focused on the relationship between verbal repetition, pictorial dilation, and narrative temporality in *Edith the Captive*. I am revising this paper for publication in the coming year.

With the aid of library staff, and with the guidance of Caroline Riedel from the Legacy Art Galleries, our course cohort curated an exhibit in Archives and Special Collections (Fig. 2). Our collaborative exhibit features the original editions of our assigned course texts as well as descriptive labels and materials from eight BYOT projects (Fig. 3). The broad range of materials showcases the varied illustration styles and techniques used in influential Victorian publications such as *The Cornhill*, *The Graphic*, and *The Illustrated London News*. We were fortunate to be able to coordinate our exhibit launch with the final presentations from Dr. Lisa Surridge’s undergraduate course on “Victorian and Edwardian Children’s Literature” (English 479/Spring 2018). Sharing one space in Special Collections, our two cohorts intermingled, acting both as presenters and as informed and attentive audiences for one another.

Many networks of collaboration between students, teachers, and the University of Victorian Library contributed to my excellent learning experiences in “Illustration and Victorian Literature.” Dr. Mary Elizabeth Leighton fostered a collegial seminar environment in which we supported one another in individual and collaborative research. And, throughout the term, we

relied on the support and expertise of university librarians, curators, and staff, just as much as we depended on the Special Collections materials that facilitated our research.

Figures

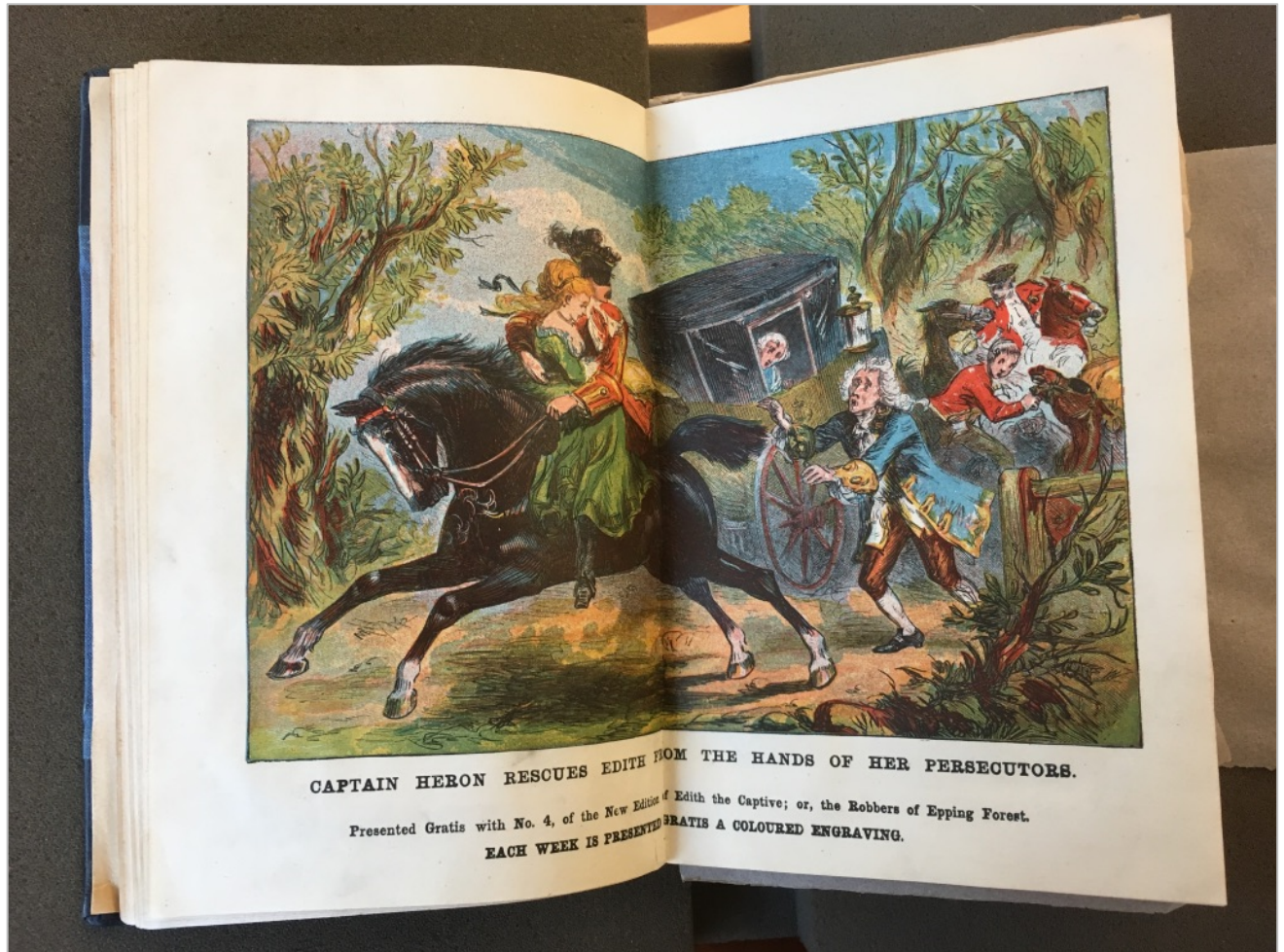


Figure 1: A coloured wood engraving from the fourth serial installment of *Edith the Captive; or, the Robbers of Epping Forest* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1874; PR3991 A1E3)



From the visual caricature and satire of the 1830s through the “golden age” of illustration in the 1860s and the aestheticism of late century, illustration flourished during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837–1901). Victorian authors often published their work in illustrated forms that are infrequently reproduced in modern editions. Charles Dickens owed his literary rise to the illustrated serial novel, starting with his comedic *Pickwick Papers* (1836–37), a serial monthly illustrated with steel etchings by Robert Seymour and Hablôt K. Browne. Poems by such prominent poets as Elizabeth Barrett Browning appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine* in its debut year (1860), accompanied by wood-engraved illustrations. And Thomas Hardy serialized a bowdlerized version of *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* in *The Graphic* (1891), a weekly newspaper that featured full- (and even double-) page illustrations for *Tess* by a stable of illustrators.

From Thomas Bewick’s 1780s experiments in wood engraving to late 19th-century methods of photomechanical reproduction, innovations in illustrative techniques and print technology allowed Victorian publishers to imagine book formats that blended text and image as equal partners on the page. New publication formats—the illustrated comic almanac, the illustrated annual, the illustrated serial, the illustrated book, and the illustrated newspaper or periodical—all blended verbal and visual signifiers.

In wrapper designs that created brands for serials and periodicals, in full-page illustrations that graced books and magazines, and in tiny chapter initials and tailpieces, artists created images that might variously decorate, complement, add to, contradict, or complicate the letterpress—but that in all cases contributed to the rich meanings of verbal-visual forms.

This exhibit displays a small sample of UVic Libraries’ rich holdings in Victorian illustrated literature. Selected by students in the English Department’s “Illustration and Victorian Literature” graduate seminar, these volumes span formats, sizes, literary forms, and aesthetic styles. From illustrated newspaper reportage and travel writing to illustrated poetry, sensation fiction, and penny dreadfuls, these selections suggest the range of Victorians’ reading, both verbal and visual.

Curated by:

- Kate Fralick*
- Kailey Fukushima*
- Eric Henwood-Greer*
- Mary Elizabeth Leighton*
- Iona Lister*
- Graham McMonagle*
- Heidi Rennert*
- Emily Scott*

Figure 2: “Illustration and Victorian Literature” exhibition poster—written by Dr. Mary Elizabeth Leighton; edited by Kate Fralick, Kailey Fukushima, Eric Henwood-Greer, Iona Lister, Graham McMonagle, Heidi Rennert, and Emily Scott; designed by Josie Greenhill

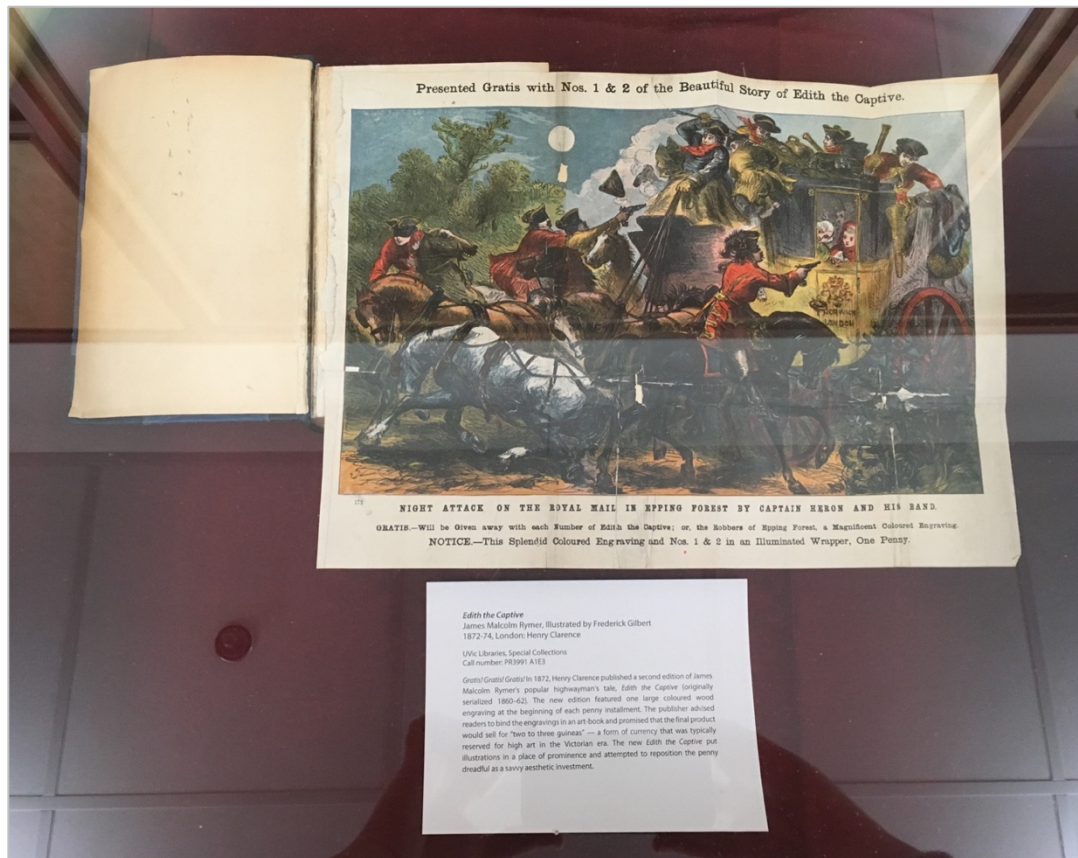


Figure 3: *Edith the Captive; or, the Robbers of Epping Forest* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1874) display case in the “Illustration and Victorian Literature” exhibition—a fold-out coloured wood engraving from the first serial installment

Exhibition label text:

“*Gratis! Gratis! Gratis!* In 1872, Henry Clarence published a second edition of James Malcolm Rymer’s popular highwayman’s tale, *Edith the Captive* (originally serialized 1860–62). The new edition featured one large coloured wood engraving at the beginning of each penny installment. The publisher advised readers to bind the engravings in an art-book and promised that the final product would sell for “two to three guineas”—a form of currency that was typically reserved for high art in the Victorian era. The new *Edith the Captive* put illustrations in a place of prominence and attempted to reposition the penny dreadful as a savvy aesthetic investment.”

## Works Cited

Rymer, James Malcolm. *Edith the Captive; or the Robbers of Epping Forest*. Second edition, Henry Clarence, 1874, University of Victoria Special Collections, PR3991 A1E3.