The Tale of Charles Perrault
and *Puss in Boots*

Morna Daniels

In 1697 Charles Perrault published a small volume *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*, which became the source for a huge progeny of children’s books, pantomimes, ballets and folklore.¹ The frontispiece of the first French edition shows an old lady telling stories by the fire-side, and a plaque above her reads *Contes de ma mere L’Oye*.² In the first English edition, there is a similar picture, and the plaque is translated as *Mother Goose’s Tales*. This was the first time the French term appeared in an English book. In France it indicated that the story was a traditional one, told by old women who minded geese, or who cackled like geese; but in England it became applied to Perrault’s tales, which were often published without mentioning his name. Mother Goose entered the world of pantomime, often in association with Perrault’s characters. The stories were widely diffused, then re-collected by later folklore researchers, so that the Brothers Grimm collected German versions, believing them to be folk traditions.

Not all of Perrault’s stories became equally popular. The eight stories in his collection were *La belle au bois dormant, Le petit chaperon rouge, La barbe bleue, Le maître chat, ou le chat botté; Les fées, Cendrillon, ou la petite pantoufle de verre; Riquet à la houppe* and *Le petit Poucet*. These are usually translated as ‘Sleeping Beauty’, ‘Little Red Riding Hood’, ‘Bluebeard’, ‘Puss in Boots’, ‘The fairies’ (or ‘The fairy’), ‘Cinderella’, ‘Riquet with the tuft’, and ‘Hop o’ my thumb’.

Perrault’s stories are a high point in a fashion for telling fairy stories that grew up at the court of Versailles and in the literary salons of Paris. This literature of over-ornate expressions and complex Arcadian romances became known as ‘précieux’ (‘precious’), and the ladies who wrote them as ‘Précieuses’. Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy was the first to use the term *Contes de fées*, which was translated as ‘fairy tales’. Her most famous tales were translated into English as *The yellow dwarf* and *The white cat*, but although they were used in Victorian pantomimes, they were rather convoluted, and often violent, and have not stood the test of time.³ The white cat has survived as a character in Petipa’s ballet *The Sleeping Beauty*. Another writer of fairy stories was Marie-Jeanne L’Héritier de Villandon. Her father was a poet, and her mother was the sister or cousin of Perrault’s mother. She had connections with Normandy, and claimed her stories came from her nurse, but as she translated Ovid she was probably influenced by classical myths. Many of the tales of the time contain echoes of Italian romances.⁴

¹ A version of this paper was read at the *Child Reader* conference at De Montfort University in July 2002.
² For a discussion of the iconography of the stories, see Segolene Le Men, ‘Mother Goose illustrated; from Perrault to Doré’, *Poetics Today*, xiii/1 (Spring 1992), pp. 17-39 (available on JSTOR).
³ Her stories began to be published in English from 1699. A large collection was published as *A Collection of Novels and Tales of the Fairies*. The first edition appeared 1721-2. The British Library has the second edition (London, 1728), shelfmark 12411.a.a.3. Later popular versions attribute the stories to ‘Mother Bunch’.
⁴ Her story *L’Adroite princesse* was translated by Robert Samber. It was published on its own in 1755 as *The discreet princess; or, The adventures of Finetta* (shelfmark: 12510.c.40(2) and another copy at C.192.a.97(2)). It was also added to Samber’s translations of Perrault’s tales, first published in 1729.
Perrault's stories were brief and simple, which made them suitable for the market in children's literature which was to take off later in the eighteenth century. Madame de Maintenon, King Louis XIV's second wife, introduced a mood of piety and morality to the French court. She had acted as governess to the King's illegitimate children, and she founded her own school for girls. The King was concerned with the education of both his grandchildren and his great-grandsons. Fénélon, the tutor of the King's grandson the Duc de Bourgogne, wrote the improving story Les aventures de Télémaque for him (published in 1699). Perrault appears to join in this new morality, and yet when he comes to writing the 'morals' at the end of his tales, his tongue is firmly in his cheek. The first 'moral' at the end of Puss in Boots claims that industry and ingenuity lead to success, but in the story this ingenuity is directed towards deceit, and industry is only apparent in those that are tricked. The second 'moral' states that good looks and fine clothes complete the road to success.

Charles Perrault was born on 12 January 1628, the son of a well-to-do Parisian lawyer. He was the younger of twin boys, but his older twin François died at the age of six months. He had four older brothers, and one of them, Claude, fifteen years his senior, became a doctor and physicist, and was to achieve fame as an architect. Claude was asked by Colbert to translate the work of Vitruvius, the ancient Roman architect, and this stimulated him to study architecture. Colbert was planning an extension to the Louvre, and the classical colonnade is generally thought to be by Claude Perrault, though he may only have made the drawings. The Observatory in Paris is also attributed to him. The British Library holds a manuscript poem written in 1637 by Sieur Corneillau, ‘Le voyage de Viry’, describing a boat trip up the River Seine from Paris to Viry-Châtillon, illustrated with humorous and beautiful drawings in brown ink and wash by Claude Perrault. On the last page is a note in a large, clear hand, that the drawings were done ‘par mon frère le medecin [my brother the doctor] M Perrault’. Charles would have been about nine at the time, but he could have added the note later.5

Charles studied at the Collège de Beauvais, where classics and philosophy formed the main part of the curriculum. He left abruptly after a dispute with a teacher, but continued to study the classics by himself. His first works were verse burlesques of classical stories with scatological embellishments, written in conjunction with his brothers. Charles's eldest brother Pierre, about twenty years his senior, had bought a post (the usual method) as financial administrator of the University of Paris. (He was later dismissed for having borrowed money from his accounts.) Charles worked for him, read in his library, and wrote 'précieux' verse suited to the literary salons he aspired to visit.

After some unimaginative verses, in 1660 he published a more readable prose work Dialogue de l’Amour et de l’Amitié (‘The Dialogue of love and friendship’), a typical analysis of the emotions. He also began to write official poetry, verses to sing the praises of the King. In 1657 he designed a house at Viry for his brother and supervised its construction.6 In 1663 he became secretary to Colbert, the most important man at court, minister of finances and superintendent of royal buildings. Colbert, who suffered painful ill-health, liked to have the fashionable fairy tales read to him when he wanted to relax, and also seems to have been fond of cats.

In 1663 Charles also became secretary of a little academy founded by Colbert to provide classical inscriptions for royal buildings. This academy later became the Académie des

5 Add. MS. 20087.
6 Thomas Bodkin in his introduction to The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault (London, [1922]).
Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. In 1668 he appears on the King’s payroll as ‘Premier commis des bâtiments’ (First clerk of buildings), and in 1672 was made ‘Contrôleur des bâtiments de Sa Majesté’ (Controller of the King’s Buildings). When it was suggested that the Tuileries gardens next to the Louvre should be closed and preserved for the use of the King, Charles campaigned successfully for their retention as a public garden. Colbert bought land to the west of these gardens stretching out into the country, and planned, with the royal gardener Le Nôtre, an avenue of trees and landscaped public pleasure grounds known then as the avenue des Tuileries, but later as the Champs Elysées.

In 1671 Charles was elected to the prestigious Académie Française, designed to honour writers, though his work so far scarcely merited such an honour. Here he joined in the famous ‘Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes’ (‘The Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns’). This was a literary debate on the subject of which was superior, classical literature or modern. Boileau spoke for the Ancients and Perrault for the Moderns. Perrault’s *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes*, written in four parts with various editions between 1688 and 1697, provoked the poet Boileau to a spirited defence of the classics. After much public debate, the two writers were reconciled in 1694.

In 1672 Charles Perrault married Marie Guichon, who was eighteen, from the provinces, but well-dowered. She gave birth to three sons: Charles—Samuel in 1675, Charles in 1676 and Pierre in 1678. Mademoiselle L’Héritier de Villandon, Perrault’s cousin, dedicated her book *Marmoisan* to a Mademoiselle Perrault, so it seems likely that a daughter was born to them first, perhaps in 1673. The frontispiece of the manuscript and the first edition of the *Contes* is thought to portray some of Perrault’s children. The oldest child is a girl, wearing a fashionable little ‘Fontanges’ head-dress. With her are two boys, one young enough to be still in a dress. The original manuscript, however, was not written and illustrated until 1695. In October 1678 Madame Perrault died of smallpox, aged only twenty-five. Perrault was devastated, and began to spend more time at home with his children. Colbert died in 1683, and Perrault’s name was removed from the list of those receiving salaries from the government.

He next wrote three tales in verse: *La Marquise de Salusses, ou la Patience de Griselidis* published in Paris in 1691, *Les souhaits ridicules* (‘The Ridiculous Wishes’) in 1693 and *Peau d’Asne* (‘Donkey-skin’) in 1694. In 1694 he also published *L’Apologie des femmes* in verse. Then came the famous prose *Contes*. The first five stories appear in the manuscript dated 1695, now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. The whole collection was

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7 Add. MS. 24210, f. 13 is a small note signed by Charles Perrault ordering the payment of 2,000 livres (a considerable sum) to M. La Planche. This might be the Lyon artist Martin Le Melletier or Le Meilletier, who was known as La Planche. Both Versailles and the classical extension to the Louvre were under construction at the time, and he could have been employed for decorative projects.


11 Although the British Library does not hold the Paris edition, the *Apologie des femmes* is included in an Amsterdam publication by A. Braakman, published in 1694, which also contains Nicolas Boileau’s *Satire … contre les femmes*: BL shelfmark 1065.d.25.

12 MA 1505. A facsimile was edited by Jacques Barchilon: Perrault’s Tales of Mother Goose; the Dedication Manuscript of 1695 Reproduced in Collotype Facsimile with Introduction and Critical Text (New York, 1956).
published in 1697. The preface is signed Perrault d’Armancour, the name taken by Charles’s youngest son Pierre, only nineteen at the time. Although some have argued that the son really was responsible for the work, it seems unlikely. Admittedly the style is simple, and some critics have considered it to be childish; but such clarity of language is often the fruit of much polishing and skill, and the rhythms of the prose are similar to the rhythms of Perrault’s verse tales.

In the same year Pierre became involved in a quarrel with a young neighbour, and killed him. A trial followed, and Charles had to pay reparations to the victim’s mother. Pierre joined the Dauphin’s regiment, and died in 1700, aged only twenty-two. Such a fiery young man does not seem a very likely author for a polished collection of fairy tales in the salon tradition. His obituary in the *Mercure galant*, the main news-sheet of the day, does not mention the *Contes*, whereas the obituary of his father, who died three years later, implies his authorship of *La Belle au bois dormant*. The manuscript of the *Contes*, beautifully written by a copyist in 1695, is corrected in Charles’s hand. It is illustrated with a painted frontispiece and head-pieces above each story, possibly by Charles himself. Perrault was, as has been seen, an amateur architect, and his brother Claude, who was a fine artist, could have taught him.

The abbé Dubos, writing in 1696 to the exiled Pierre Bayle, attributes the tales to the father. The literary source for the tales serves as another argument against Perrault’s son as the author, for although it appears that the boy was retelling stories from his nurse, in fact they are taken from books likely to have been found in the library of Colbert or the Académie. In 1721 a corrected edition was published in Paris by the widow of Perrault’s original printer, which gave the author as M. Perrault senior.

Charles had been ridiculed for his simple verse tales by fellow members of the Académie Française, so he may have wished to forestall further criticism for writing tales that were too ‘childish’. One of the minor writers who supported the *Anciens* did indeed write a verse condemning the *sot livre* (stupid book) produced by *le jeune Perrault d’Armancour*, who, the writer predicts, will go even further along the paths of bad taste than his father. The dedication of the *Contes* is to Mademoiselle, the title given Elisabeth Charlotte D’Orléans, the niece of the King.

EDITIONS

The first edition was published in 1697 by Claude Barbin ‘sur le second peron de la Sainte-chapelle, au palais’. The National Union Catalogue of America includes an entry for a copy at Harvard University with a note ‘Two editions were printed with t.-p. as above; in the first an errata leaf provides corrections for eight errors; in the second the errors are corrected and evidences of resetting occur. This copy is of the second edition.’ It was illustrated with engravings made by Antoine Clouzier or Clousier, after the pictures in the manuscript. In the frontispiece, the image has been reversed, but the title label reads correctly. Fewer than half a dozen copies of these editions survive.

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12 MA 1505. A facsimile was edited by Jacques Barchilon: *Perrault’s Tales of Mother Goose; the Dedication Manuscript of 1695 Reproduced in Collotype Facsimile with Introduction and Critical Text* (New York, 1956).
13 Held in the Pierpont Morgan Library.
15 Ibid., pp. 87-8.
16 The British Library has a 1724 edition *Contes de Monsieur Perrault, avec des moralitez*, shelfmark Ch.720/1.
Even rarer is an edition from 1697 ‘A Trevoux, de l'imprimerie de S. A. Seren. Mons le Prince souverain de Dombe’. Dombe was a principality near Lyon, and Trevoux the capital. The prince was the Duc de Maine, the second son of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan, and the favoured pupil of Madame de Maintenon. There was also a pirate edition probably printed in Holland, ‘Suivant la copie, à Paris’ in 1697. Percy Muir thought it was published by Moetjens, but when I compared it with a Moetjens French title of similar vintage, neither the type-faces nor the devices appeared similar. Gerald Gottlieb, in his Pierpont Morgan catalogue *Early children's books and their illustration*, states that Jacques Desbordes was the publisher in Amsterdam. The British Library copy is a corrected reprint of this pirate edition dated 1698 (fig. 1). Another edition, which is in the Opie collection in the Bodleian, dates from 1700. The Opie collection holds an Amsterdam edition of 1721, from Jacques Desbordes's widow. N. Gosselin published the next Paris edition in 1724.

![Fig. 1. The head-piece for *Le chat botté* in *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (1698). C.57.a.20](image-url)

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18 Moetjens did publish a periodical miscellany between 1694 and 1701 of various pirated material, and it included Perrault’s *Contes* in 1697.
20 Shelfmark C.57.a.20. This edition is cited in A. Tchemerzine, *Bibliographie d'éditions originales et rares d'auteurs français des XVe, XVe, XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Paris 1927-33).
21 *Contes de Monsieur Perrault, avec des moralités. Nouvelle édition* (Paris, 1724); shelfmark Ch.720/1.
The contes were translated into English as Histories, or tales of past times, and published by J. Pote and R. Montague in 1729, following the Amsterdam edition of 1721. The second edition appeared in 1737 and the third in 1741. The British Library holds the sixth edition from 1764 (published by S. van den Berg in London),\(^\text{22}\) which is in French and English, presumably for pedagogical purposes (fig. 2). It is 'Englished by R.S. Gent'. The dedication to the Countess of Granville is signed Robert Sambier, so the 'Gent' stands for gentleman. The British Library also holds another bilingual edition from 1785,\(^\text{23}\) and a 'corrected' seventh edition from 1796.\(^\text{24}\) These three have L’Adroite princesse (translated as ‘The Discreet Princess’) by Mademoiselle L’Héritier de Villandon added. The eleventh edition from 1799, but with the misprinted title-page showing 1719, has caused much confusion. For a long time this was thought to be the first English edition. In 1763 an edition was published claiming to be translated by a G.M., and the British Museum cataloguers equated this with Guy Miège, a prolific compiler of grammars and dictionaries, but Margaret Weedon considered G.M. to be a fictional cover for a piracy of Sambier.\(^\text{25}\)

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\(^{22}\) Shelfmark Ch.760/7.

\(^{23}\) Shelfmark Ch.780/4.

\(^{24}\) Shelfmark Ch.790/7.

\(^{25}\) Margaret Weedon is credited with the information in the article ‘Histories, or tales of past times’, in Humphrey Carpenter and Man Prichard, The Oxford Companion to Children’s Literature (Oxford, 1984).
THE STORY OF LE CHAT BOTTÉ OR PUSS IN BOOTS

The theme of the animal helper is a popular one in folklore, the beneficiary often being the youngest or poorest in a family. Despite the obvious self-centredness of cats, we enjoy two improbable stories of cat-helpers. Dick or Richard Whittington was a real Mayor of London to whom an existing folk tale became attached. Perhaps it was because he was a younger son who made a fortune that the traditional tale of an animal helping the poorest and youngest child was produced as an explanation for his riches. His coat of arms suggests he was a fifth son, but only two of his elder brothers survived their father, so perhaps he was one of three brothers who survived infancy.

For Dick Whittington the cat merely does what comes naturally to bring its owner wealth. Puss in Boots, on the other hand, wins for his master, the youngest and poorest of three brothers, the crops and wealth worked for by others through his own deceit and is far more humanized. A Sicilian version of the story has a fox as the clever trickster, and the ungrateful beneficiary kills the fox. Perrault used the term Mère l’Oye to suggest that he was retelling folk stories, but no versions of Perrault’s particular stories can be found in French popular literature before his time. He used the expression as a literary disguise, when in fact he found elements of the stories in books he had read.

One of the earliest versions of Puss in Boots was written by Giovanni Francesco Straparola (circa 1480-1558), though the cat had no boots. It was in a collection of stories called Le piacevoli notti (‘The Pleasurable Nights’), published in Venice in two parts, in 1550 and 1555. The book was modelled on the Decameron, in which a hundred stories are supposedly told by ten people taking refuge from the plague. It is not known if Perrault spoke Italian, but his brother Pierre knew it well enough to translate Italian poetry into French. In any case, a French translation was published by B. Rigaud at Lyon in 1596. There had long been an Italian presence at the French court, and Italian culture was much admired and imitated.

In Le piacevoli notti, the stories are told by people hiding in a Venetian palace from political enemies. In this version (Constantino Fortunato) a poor Bohemian lady leaves her two elder sons a trough and board for making bread, but to the last son, Constantine, she leaves only a cat. The elder brothers lend the trough and board to the neighbours, who give them cakes in return, but they do not share these with Constantine. The story is then much as we know it from Perrault’s version except that his cat, a female, is described as a fairy in disguise. She also cures Constantine of disfiguring scabs by licking him all over. At the end of the story, Constantine takes the king’s daughter to the castle of a soldier, who is conveniently killed on the way to collect a bride, so that Constantine can remain in possession.

The other published Italian version of the Puss in Boots story is by Giovanni Battista Basile (1575-1632), a court poet to several Italian princes. His collection of tales became known as Il Pentamerone (‘The Five Days’). Although not published in French in Perrault’s time, he could either have read it for himself in Italian, or have heard it at court or in the salons where the telling of fairy stories was so popular. A poor fisherman of Naples has two sons, and leaves to the eldest a sieve, and to the youngest, Gagliuso, a cat named Pippo, who is female. The story then proceeds along the well-known lines, although Gagliuso is shown to be a small-minded peasant by worrying about the loss of his ragged clothes even while being entertained in borrowed fine robes by the King. The cat has to tell him to be quiet so he does not give the game away. Gagliuso buys himself a castle for his new bride from her dowry.

26 Shelfmark 245.e.21.
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The end of the story has a moral twist, for Gagliuso proves himself quite unworthy of his good fortune. Having expressed undying gratitude to the cat, he promises to have it enbalmed and enclosed in a golden urn at its death. The cat feigns death, and when Gagliuso’s wife bewails the animal’s death, Gagliuso tells her to throw it out of the window. The cat springs back to life, and delivers a lecture on ingratitude, and then runs off for good, though Gagliuso does not lose his riches. The story seems to say patronizingly ‘You can’t help these peasants, because they’ll always be stupid and small-minded.’ The cat is like Scaramouche, the Neapolitan *Commedia dell’arte* figure, a mocking scoundrel who gets the better of his social superiors with his sharp wits. This figure developed into the smart and resourceful valet, who runs rings round his aristocratic master, as immortalized by Beaumarchais’s Figaro, in his *Marriage of Figaro*. P. G. Wodehouse updated Figaro in the character of Jeeves.

In a port like Naples, the cat is a natural and practical pet for the poor, keeping dockside rats at bay. But we should not read too much modern democratic feeling into an old tale. In Perrault’s story we feel the patronizing attitude of a self-contained small circle of rich people, who assume that the poor can only better themselves through miraculous means, and not by their own efforts. The boy is made to seem fatalistic, and even cruel in his readiness to kill his cat, and much stupider than his clever cat. The cat, with his effrontery and bold-faced lies, is an attractive, clever scoundrel, like the real-life Nicolas Fouquet, who made his way to a fortune at the court of Louis XIV.

Why does that cat wear boots? These are an original invention by Perrault. The most obvious explanation comes from another story in the collection, *Le petit Poucet*, where the ogre wears magic seven-league boots to convey him vast distances. The tiny Poucet borrows the boots, which also have the magic power to become small enough to fit him, but which enable him to get quickly to the ogre’s house, and trick the ogre’s wife into giving him all the giant’s money. Poucet is very similar to Puss here. Perrault adds that ‘some say’ that with the aid of the boots, Poucet became a useful messenger between the King and his army. Perrault wrote in his *Paralèlle des Anciens et des Modernes* that children easily accept the idea of ogres wearing stilt-like magical boots covering huge distances, just as the horses of gods could cross great distances at one jump. Magic footwear figures in Greek mythology: the winged sandals of Mercury enable him to carry messages for the gods.

The cat never has four boots; the illustration in Perrault’s manuscript and in the first edition shows him standing on his hind legs looking like a man in disguise. Perrault’s title is actually *Le Maître chat, ou le chat botté*, which translates exactly as ‘The Master Cat, or the Booted Cat’. The second part of the tale, in which the cat tricks the giant into turning himself into a mouse was original to Perrault, and Wagner acknowledged the debt when he used this trick in his opera *Rheingold*. However Perrault probably took the idea from his reading of the classics. The Greek poet Hesiod, in the eighth century B.C., recounts in his *Theogonia* how Zeus persuaded his wife to turn into a fly, so that he could eat her.

Perrault’s first tales were written in verse, and he may have begun writing the *contes* in verse. One can see in the prose short phrases, separated by commas, like lines of verse, with even the occasional rhyme. He describes the cat, proud of his prey, going to the king, and asking to speak to him: ‘Tout glorieux de sa proie, il s’en alla chez le roi, et demanda à lui parler.’

In Britain the individual stories were quickly pirated for chapbook versions, and other illustrated little books for children. John Harris, the most successful and prolific of early nineteenth-century publishers for children, published a version of *Puss in Boots* in (execrable) verse, but with delightful illustrations by an anonymous artist. The first edition appeared in about 1827, and the second in about 1830. The illustrations were hand-coloured for those who could afford the more expensive version.29

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29 *The Surprising Adventures of Puss in Boots, or the Master-cat* (London, circa 1827): shelfmark 012808.h.9(3).
George Cruikshank, the Regency cartoonist, who turned teetotal and moralist in his old age, so disapproved of the immorality of the story of *Puss in Boots* that he altered it in his retelling for *George Cruikshank’s Fairy Library* (fig. 3). In his version, the Marquis of Carabas has been wrongly deprived of his lands by the ogre, and the hero is his grandson. The cat is his gamekeeper who has been bewitched for being dissatisfied with his lot (a very Victorian sin), and having exclaimed that his cat was better off. Therefore, justice is done when the young heir regains his property. Dickens scorned such moralizing and called it ‘frauds on the fairies’.

In 1844 an expanded version of the story was published by John Murray, illustrated with twelve fine lithographs drawn by Lewis Haghe, the main producer of lithographs in London at the time, from designs by Otto Speckter (fig. 4). Speckter (1807-71) ran a lithographic workshop in Hamburg, and became skilled at drawing children and animals, based on his numerous progeny and their equally numerous and varied pets. In the anonymous text the miller’s youngest son is given a name: Theophilus. He takes his cat to the shoemaker to be measured for his boots. ‘The man, although a little astonished, is very glad to get a fresh job; he conceals his alarm; and even when Puss leans one paw upon his head, he only requests the young gentleman to draw in his claws a little.’ The cat thanks his young friend for his kindness and for not teasing him as his older brothers did when they carried him into the dark ‘in order to see what they called electrical sparks from my back’.

30 The British Library copy of the original edition lacks *Puss in Boots*, but it is included in an edition of Cruikshank by Routledge, Warne and Routledge from 1865: shelfmark 12808.bbb.10.

31 *Puss in Boots, and the Marquis of Carabas* (London, 1844, with later editions in 1847 and 1856).
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*Fig. 4.* The frontispiece from Speckter's *Puss in Boots* (1847). 12809.f.57
James Planché, an actor, theatrical producer and historical costume researcher, produced many pantomime scripts which still form the basis for productions today. A manuscript for a production of *Puss in Boots* at the Olympic Theatre, to begin on 21 December 1837, is held among the Lord Chamberlain’s Plays. In 1838 this was published as *Puss in Boots. An original, comical, magical, mewsical fairy burletta.* Characters include Princess Rosebud, and Chatterini and Skiparella, her maids of honour. In a final transformation scene, the Fairy Felina is revealed, on a large cat, ‘surrounded by cats, working stars & etc’ and she forces the King to accept his new son-in-law.

Julia Corner wrote a play for children to perform, *Puss in Boots; or, Charity rewarded,* which was published by Dean in 1854 with illustrations by Harrison Weir (fig. 5). Dean was a prolific publisher of illustrated books for children. In about 1855 he issued *Grandpapa Easy’s Marquis of Carabas; or, New Puss in Boots* (fig. 6), in which the story is told in verse and the outline illustrations daubed in colour by hand.

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Fig. 5. One of Harrison Weir’s illustrations in Julia Corner, *Puss in Boots...* (London: Dean & Son, [1854]). 011779.k.163/3

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34 *Little plays for little actors,* no. 4: shelfmark 011779.k.163/3.

35 Shelfmark 1600/1184.
Now Puss was the cleverest cat ever known,
She was witty, polite, and could speak;
She could read and could write, and, likely enough,
She had studied both Latin and Greek;
When, therefore, her master lamented his lot,
That ‘all he possessed was a cat,’
‘Cheer up,’ she exclaimed, ‘you are poor, it is true,
But I will soon remedy that.

‘You have only to get me some boots for my feet,
And a bag for my neck, into which
I may put what I catch, and I’ll venture to say
That I’ll very soon render you rich.’
Her master at this only laughed, for as yet
He had never discovered her worth;
However, the bag and the boots he procured,
And then ‘Puss in Boots’ sallied forth.

Puss walked till a warren of rabbits she reached,
Where she lay ’mid the furze, on the watch;
Some parsley she gathered, and put in her bag,
And she soon a fine rabbit did catch.
Then puss to King What’s-his-name’s palace re-
And knocked at the door with a stone,
When out came the King with the
crown on his head,
And out came his guards
every one.
In 1880 Dean issued another *Puss in Boots* illustrated with coloured wood engravings, but his artists and illustrators remain anonymous (fig. 7). Marcus Ward was a Belfast publisher who progressed from greetings cards to picture books, and his *Puss in Boots Picture Book* (1863) was illustrated by Edmund G. Caldwell, and printed by chromolithography (fig. 8).

Finally, it is worth mentioning a splendid book which was never published. Beatrix Potter wrote a version of the *Puss in Boots* story entitled *Kitty in boots* which she offered to Warne. It was about a docile black cat who donned boots and became a fearsome hunter at night. It was never published, and all that remains is one design for a cover or title-page dated 1894, an unfinished sketch, two manuscript drafts, and two dummies, all in the Leslie Linder bequest in the Victoria & Albert Museum. Today, the English versions of Perrault have moved to Hollywood to become staples of Disney wholesome family entertainment.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


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Fig. 8. The front cover of *Puss in Boots Picture Book*, illustrated by E. Caldwell (London: M. Ward & Co., [1863]). 12803.gg.39