

## 1 Transmediation, Illustration and Material Culture

Illustrations of literature often developed lives beyond the vision expressed in the artist's original book or print design, especially when they were adapted for use on other objects. In the process of moving from one object to another, these illustrations were made to function multi-medially. As such, they advanced visual interpretations of the works and characters they visualized, as part of a new medium. This process of illustrations moving from one object to another, a process here termed 'transmediation', is the subject of this Element. Transmediation defines how visual information and material properties of media cross-fertilized and generated new meanings. It is demarcated conceptually from the limiting new media and virtual reality contexts of 'remediation' in that the latter focuses on the replacement of a prior medium by a newer one, 'the representation of one medium in another' (Bolter and Grusin, 1999, p. 45). This new medium, according to Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, is characterized by 'transparent immediacy', the result of 'attempts to achieve immediacy by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and the act of remediation' (1999, p. 46). Transmediation as a practice predating Bolter and Grusin's concept of remediation involves a process by which a media configuration consisting of material object and visual structure is altered; the signifier retained in the reconfiguration of literary 'content' is the illustration. It involves acts of medial transfer in the form of illustrations and of 'plots and characters that [can] appear in a variety of different media' (Straumann, 2015, p. 256). By contrast, remediation in this account of transmediation will be used in only one, more general sense defined by Bolter and Grusin: specifically, the 'repurposing' of a medial property and its 'reuse . . . in another' medium (Bolter and Grusin, 1999, p. 45).

Two examples will demonstrate transmediation at work. Specifically, I will explore the mobility of the same illustrations across media as well as how, depending on the context of the object to which the illustration is transferred, new meanings are generated. The 1793 Perth edition of *The Seasons* contained a specially commissioned illustration by Charles Catton that introduced a scene of shipwreck and included five sailors during a storm (Figure 1). The meaning of the plate was relationally determined as part of the textual passage that was reproduced at the bottom of the engraving. This clear, interpretative relationship to Thomson's work, however, was complicated once the design was repurposed for use in James Ballantyne's 1810 edition of *Robinson Crusoe*. Neither Catton's intention to create a faithful representation of the scene from Thomson's 'Summer' nor the meaning that readers could establish as part of reading visualization and printed verse alongside one another informed the functioning of the illustration in Ballantyne's edition. Removed from the relational meaning-making of the 1793 edition, the same design in Ballantyne's



**Figure 1** Copper-engraved book illustration of ‘[A Shipwreck]’ (15.8 × 21.4 cm), designed by Charles Catton and engraved by Francis Chesham, *The Seasons* (Perth: R. Morison, 1793). Collection Sandro Jung.

volume signified differently (Figure 2). The original sailor standing and holding on to a rope, who in Thomson’s poem was nameless, is now transformed into the title protagonist, Defoe’s text being used to gloss that which is depicted by the image.

Relational meaning-making involving the same reused designs that illustrate different works demonstrates that the meaning of an illustration is contingent on both the context in which it appears and the medium in and on which it is realized. These context-defined meaning factors are especially relevant once different material contexts of objects and their uses are considered. For example, Angelica Kauffman’s 1782 illustration of a moment in Thomson’s tragic-sentimental tale of *Celadon and Amelia* was produced as a stand-alone print. Yet it was applied to other objects, including enamelled Duesbury vases, mourning pendants and love tokens. Since the objects possessed associated uses that hinged on the occasion that defined their being given, the transmediation of the illustration on the miniature pendants and love tokens resulted in diametrically opposed contextual–relational meanings. Kauffman’s image on the mourning pendant modally and iconically invoked Amelia’s death, anticipating the tragic ending of Thomson’s vignette, which is not visually depicted but hinted at



**Figure 2** Redacted wood-engraved version of Catton's illustration (5.5 × 8.3 cm), *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (Edinburgh: Ballantyne, 1810). Collection Sandro Jung.

through the lightning (Figure 3). The love token, by contrast, highlights the deep emotional connection between Celadon and Amelia (Figure 4). This gift for a lover introduces the danger of the thunderstorm, centralizing the lovers as a unit that is stable and will not be destroyed by the lightning. The transmedial uses of Kauffman's (and Catton's) illustrations demonstrate changes in meaning, including the modal and tonal revision and re-inscription of the designs that are effected by both context and medium.

This Element will study eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century instances of transmediation, concentrating on how the same illustrations were 'adapted to . . . new media and their modes of mediation and representation of cognitive import' (Domingos and Cardoso, 2021, p. 92). By focusing on the 'content' of the illustrations and its adaptation within the framework of a new medium, case



**Figure 3** Mourning pendant, with sepia painting of Celadon and Amelia (7 × 4 cm), c. 1790. Collection Sandro Jung.

studies examine the use across different media of illustrations (comprehending the designs for both book illustrations and furniture prints for framing) of three eighteenth-century works: Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730) and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740). These case studies will reveal that material culture incorporating illustrations forms part of 'a *culture* based on the visual, on modalities of visualization, the production and consumption of visual matter' (de Bolla, 2004, p. 4), which conceived of literature as much as a textual as a visualizable, potentially ekphrastic phenomenon.

The case study texts share an important characteristic: the episodic, narrative character of both novels and the interpolated tales from Thomson's blank verse poem. This character recommended the tragic-sentimental stories from *The Seasons* to compilers of miscellanies and, in the case of Defoe and Richardson's



**Figure 4** Love token, with enamel painting of Celadon and Amelia on ivory (2 × 4 cm), c. 1790. Collection Sandro Jung.

novels, induced booksellers to issue chapbook epitomes that highlighted parts of particular interest, including the protagonists' adventures, trials and dangers. These textually embedded vignettes offered micro-stories that showcased characters involved in actions and meaningful settings at the same time that they conveyed particular sentiments and ideologies. They served as metonymic placeholders for entire works, encompassing moments that helped readers to make sense of the characters' role within a larger narrative; they also piqued 'interest', inducing readers to (re)familiarize themselves with the work from which the vignettes had been singled out through illustration. James Beattie held that vignettes 'animate' literary works, for 'human actions are the columns and rafters [of "the poetical

fabric”], that give it stability and elevation’ (Beattie, 1778, II, p. 30). These works’ characters existed in the realm of ‘the textual commons’, essentially providing a shared imaginative property of the ‘social canon’. Reconfiguration through different ‘modes of iterability’ fashioned by the makers of visual material culture reintroduced them to audiences who were supposed to recover and reimagine the stories of these media (Brewer, 2005, p. 78, p. 13). Their ‘repetition through adaptation kept the . . . [stories of which these vignettes were a part] relevant and recognizable’ (Lopez Szwydky, 2020, p. 101). Visual adaptation conjured story-worlds, transmediation repeatedly changing the dynamics and components of the stories; in the process, it invited audiences to reconstruct the authors’ textual worlds and ‘immerse’ themselves in them (Wolf, 2012, p. 19). Even though the illustrations visualized scenes from works of different genres, genre and modal identities proved subservient to the vignettes’ symbolic-narrative meanings highlighted in their visualization.

Offering an original perspective that brings together illustration studies, transmediation studies and material culture research, this Element focuses on what Thomas Bremer regards as essential in literary material culture: ‘the interplay of materiality and text’ (Bremer, 2020, p. 350). It examines the connections between illustrations and the physical objects that adapt them, including the processes of medial integration that obscure the illustrations’ origin as distinct from these objects. The Element argues for the wide reach of literary illustrations as part of a hitherto largely uncharted material culture whose makers deploy the creative-transformational mechanisms of transmediation. Clearly, transmediation not only enriches the meaning of illustrations but also complicates meaning through the material and social practices related to the object incorporating the illustration. My examination concentrates on one of the two principal research areas of literary material culture: the study of how material culture harnesses iconic textual cultures to promote literariness. As such, it does not adopt the more established practice that investigates the presence of objects and material practices in literature.<sup>1</sup>

The Element will particularly focus on a discussion of ceramics, a medium (or substrate) that was especially versatile: depending on their particular ‘primary intended use’, ceramic objects could function variously (Brooks, 2010, p. 158). It will probe how producers of different objects recruiting the same

<sup>1</sup> The latter focus on the representation and use of material culture in literature has resulted in specialist studies such as, among others, Julie Park’s 2010 book on the artificial life of objects, Chloe Wigston Smith’s 2013 monograph on women, work and dress, and two themed issues on ‘Material Fictions’ of *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (31:1 (2018) and 32:2 (2019)). Research in the former area is scant, although Angelika Müller-Scherf’s 2009 account of the Meissen *Werther* porcelain demonstrates the use of book illustrations on porcelain, while not, however, exploring transmediation at work.

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illustrations advanced particularized versions of iconically invoked works. Importantly, it will extend traditional foci in literary illustration studies by going beyond the ways in which text–image relationships are commonly explored within the paratextual framework of a codex or between a text and an extra-textual print. In doing so, I will explore the readability of material culture that mediates literary illustrations not as alien, iconotextual features but as ‘naturalized’, integral elements of the material constitution of objects that represent textual extensions and sites of literary reception (Mole, 2017, p. 2).

Studying the transmedial use of the same illustrations of literary works sets this Element apart from important scholarship on the illustrations of eighteenth-century literature: David Blewett on the illustrations of *Robinson Crusoe*, Robert Halsband on *The Rape of the Lock*, Tom Keymer and Peter Sabor, as well as Lynn Shepherd, on *Pamela*, Peter Wagner on *Gulliver’s Travels* and William Blake Gerard and Mary-Céline Newbould on *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey*. These scholars’ considerations of illustrations largely concentrate on illustrated editions, applying ‘a resolute focus on word and image’ (Ionescu, 2011, p. 29) within a codex-defined framework of meaning. As such, they restrict meaning and do not look to illustrated material culture. They contextualize illustrations as iconic devices, framed by the object of the ‘bi-modal’ (Ionescu, 2011, p. 8) – rather than the multi-modal and multi-medial – book. Paul Goldman reinforces this notion, observing that the ‘central purpose of illustrations’ is ‘interpretation’ (Goldman and Cooke, 2012, p. 15) of that which textually surrounds the illustration in the codex. His notion of the ‘discipline’ of illustration studies does not include transmedial uses but frequently conceives of illustrations as high-end visual culture reduced in size.<sup>2</sup> This understanding of the ‘discipline’, however, no longer holds, with recent interventions by Sandro Jung and David F. Taylor respectively challenging Goldman’s conception of the field.

Jung embeds illustrations of *The Seasons* within a wider (printed) visual culture that includes more than merely paper-based objects (Jung 2015). As an exception in the field of illustration studies, he extends the study of diverse target audiences beyond Britain to transnational considerations of the visual reception of Thomson’s poem and to the transformation of the same images across editions. By contrast, Taylor examines ‘the process of narrativizing

<sup>2</sup> Most of the studies of eighteenth-century authors’ illustrated works privilege upmarket editions and high-cultural paintings over those visualizations that were included in such cheap print media as chapbooks – even though the latter, including what Keymer and Sabor term ‘the least distinguished of the later illustrated editions’ of *Pamela* (Keymer and Sabor, 2005, p. 172), issued by Francis Newbery in 1769, would have reached many more readers than the illustrations they centralize in their account.

politics’ (Taylor, 2018, p. 2) in satirical prints and their parody of literary works. He is concerned with how these prints responded to (performative) renderings of Shakespeare, Milton and Swift and how they catered to a politically aware elite. His focus is on parody rather than the re-creative, adaptive transmediation of existing book illustrations for ends that support the marketing of visually inscribed objects. Even though he does not study inter-iconic relationships between book illustrations and satirical prints, such prints reworking book illustrations did in fact exist: Thomas Rowlandson produced a series of prints, ‘The Four Seasons of Love’, which in a radical way transmediated a set of illustrations for *The Seasons* (Jung, 2020, pp. 301–8).

Because multiple modalities characterize the multi-medial literary culture to be investigated, it calls for a reconsideration of how illustrations are commonly understood by scholars of illustrated books. As indicated by the examples introduced at the beginning of this section, the transformative use of illustrations across media challenges widely held assumptions. Restricting consideration to the medial framework of intra-textual, edition-specific illustrations, on the one hand, and to the intermedial rapport between texts and separately issued prints or paintings, on the other, obscures the multi-medial – rather than bi-medial (or what Ionescu terms ‘bi-modal’) – functioning of illustrations (Peterssen, 2020, p. 273). According to Edward Hodnett, ‘the primary function of the illustration of literature is to realize significant aspects of the text’ (Hodnett, 1982, p. 13). But this understanding of the function of illustrations limits it to iconic paratext commissioned for works published in codex form and ignores illustrations harnessed by makers of literary material culture. For him, the value of illustration lies only in the fidelity and precision of the specific interpretive visualization of the typographical text it represents (Hodnett, 1982, p. 12). But the ‘precise’, exclusive text-specific image, as Hodnett comprehends it, does not reflect the evocative and allusive character of illustrations once transmediated and removed from the original words they previously visualized. Indeed, as I will argue, once embedded into a new medial context, they signify differently – representationally and symbolically – precisely because they form part of the social practices governing the use of the material culture of which they have become an integral part. Moreover, Hodnett’s understanding of the function of illustration is limiting in its use of qualitative criteria that *may* apply to the text–image relationship within the codex. As Julia Thomas has noted, ‘an illustration is not simply a “transposition” or “transformation” of the words, but stands in a nuanced relation of complementarity and conflict, sameness and difference’ (Thomas, 2017, p. 3). It is Thomas’s broadened notion of illustration that will inform my examinations of remediated visualizations of literature.



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In order to make sense of the transmediation of illustrations, including how iconic, literary meaning is incorporated in a new, material medium, different kinds of literacy are required. Next to visual literacy (the ability to ‘read’ images at both representational and symbolic levels) and textual literacy (the ability to recognize motifs, scenes, intertextual connections between works or to recall allusions), those readers seeking to understand the entity of transmediated image and cultural object required material literacy. The latter concept encompasses not only the ‘making practice, skill and knowledge’ to produce goods but also, as Serena Dyer and Chloe Wigston Smith posit, those people not directly involved in the making of objects ‘who mobilized their knowledge of making to comment upon, judge and inform their own activities as consumers and owners of material objects’ (Dyer and Wigston Smith, 2020, p. 1). Different kinds of literacy frequently did not operate independently of one another but merged into what may be conceived of as a more comprehensive material–textual–symbolic literacy. This complex literacy, according to Caroline Winterer, enabled those eighteenth-century women drawing on the history of the classical past to harness this past for their own ends, as we can see when they copied illustrations and introduced them in such domestically produced material culture as embroidered textiles (Winterer, 2007, p. 30).

The examinations of the transmedial appropriation of illustrations in this Element build on recent work on the recycling of illustrations by different publishers (Jung, 2021), particularly since these illustrations are characterized by a mobility across media and geographical borders, which facilitated their meaningful recontextualization and altered meanings. They will conceive of illustrations as ‘portal[s] between the text and its cultural context’ (Haywood, Matthews and Shannon, 2019, p. 5), but also as part of ‘the rambunctious materiality of eighteenth-century texts’ (Barchas, 2003, p. 6), textuality being defined broadly to include material culture as long as it was ‘produced with the intention of communicating a meaningful message that an audience could usually interpret’ (Treharne and Willan, 2020, p. 2). Illustrations are ‘gateways’ to stories and the materiality of, and access to, the gateway, spatially constructed on the planar surface of a substrate, changes modally as the illustration is adapted. Transmedial adaptation involves ‘a galvanizing force that drives storytelling’ (Lopez Szwydky, 2020, p. 3) whereby the literary stories invoked iconically converge with those practices inherent in the making and social use of the material substrate. In the process, the stories conveyed by the image intersect with the cultural narrative, as part of which the objects adorned with the illustration operate; the two media cross-fertilize one another, the material agency of the object affecting the story-generative potential of the illustration. Rather than merely understanding this illustrative literary material culture in

terms of epitexts that, according to Gérard Genette, exist in ‘a virtually limitless physical and social space’ (Genette, 1997, p. 344), the literary material culture discussed in this Element remains context-specific and catered to social practices that required their ‘performance’ to take place in delimited settings to fulfil their cultural function.

The increase of illustrations after the 1770s being reused on substrates other than paper was facilitated by technological innovation pertaining to the cost-effective reproduction of designs on materials ranging from voile fabric and silk to copper and ceramics. The hand-modelling and painterly application of pre-existing designs on literary material culture that had respectively characterized wax works and porcelain cups relating to the *Pamela* media event of the early 1740s were gradually replaced by transfer processes and transformed the industry. Even so, high-end productions such as unique porcelain objects still continued to be produced at the end of the century. By the 1820s, however, when illustrations from *Robinson Crusoe* were printed onto dessert plates, these wares had become mass-produced commodities. While the *Pamela* vogue had been defined by a small number of transmedially applied illustrations, the opposite proved to be the case in relation to *The Seasons*. The reason for the larger number was not purely technological but was grounded in the unprecedented number of illustrated editions of the poem that were published from the late 1770s onwards. Driven by the media interest surrounding the 1774 court decision in *Donaldson v. Becket* regarding the end of perpetual copyright, at the centre of which action had been the copyright of *The Seasons*, a new media event was triggered. It benefitted from the end of the copyright monopoly controlling the printing of editions of Thomson’s poem and focused especially on Thomson’s three most popular vignettes. As a result, an unprecedented transmedial visual culture developed in which illustrations from the large number of competing illustrated editions experienced new lives on non-book objects. The end of perpetual copyright also made possible the reprinting, in illustrated editions, of Defoe’s novel – and to a lesser degree Richardson’s by then less popular *Pamela* – by non-copyright-holding publishers. In one decade alone, the 1790s, illustrators produced a much larger number of visualizations of *Robinson Crusoe* than those that had appeared in the six decades following the work’s original publication. These illustrations were part of a visual archive from which producers of literary material culture could choose freely those designs that suited the media products they manufactured.

The four sections that follow introduce detailed interpretive contextualizations of how artisans adapting existing designs for application to another medium intervened in the meaning-making process of the image: they created new meanings in relation to an inferred text or supported by a text gloss through