

Sandro Jung's New Breakthrough in the Transmedial Study of Literary Illustrations

Fang Kairui

Abstract: Sandro Jung's *Eighteenth-Century Illustration and Literary Material Culture* (2023), a book in the Cambridge Elements series, is heralded as a major breakthrough in the transmedial study of literary illustrations. Research to date has generally been done either on illustrated editions or on material objects. Professor Jung selects three prestigious eighteenth-century literary works, *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Seasons* and *Pamela*, in the case studies, and draws a range of primary sources to study the transmedial use of the illustrations. In particular, he examines the interplay among the illustrations, the material objects, the manipulations in adapting and reusing the illustrations, and the production of new meanings. In the light of the subject of the book, the review delineates the case studies, which are central to the book, and the methodology notable for a combination of illustration studies, material culture studies and transmediation studies, and concludes that the methodological juxtaposition yields valuable insights into the study of literature in the digital age.

Keywords: *Eighteenth-Century Illustration and Literary Material Culture*; transmediation; illustration

Author: Fang Kairui is Professor at the Faculty of English Language and Culture, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (Guangzhou 510420, China). His research interests include fiction and fiction translation studies, literary stylistics, narratology, and the history of Sino-foreign cultural exchanges (Email: fangkr2005@163.com).

标题: 桑德罗·荣格的文学插图跨媒介研究的新突破

内容摘要: 桑德罗·荣格的《18世纪插图与文学物质文化》是“剑桥元素”系列丛书中的一本著作,可谓文学插图跨媒介研究方面的重大突破。迄今为止,学术界通常研究插图本或者实物物品。桑德罗·荣格教授选择18世纪的三部文学杰作(《鲁滨逊漂流记》《四季》《帕梅拉》)作为案例,并采用了一系列原始资料,来研究文学插图的跨媒介运用问题,尤其是插图、实物物品、插图调整与重新使用中的操纵、新的意义产生等因素间的相互作用问题。本文参照该书的研究主题,详细评述了其中的案例研究,这是该书的重心,也评述了将插图研究、物质文化研究、跨媒介研究相结合的方法论,并认为通过以上交叉研究法,该书作者在数字时代的文学研究问题上提出了宝贵见解。

关键词：《18世纪插图与文学物质文化》；跨媒介；插图

作者简介：方开瑞，广东外语外贸大学英语语言文化学院教授，研究方向为小说与小说翻译、文学文体学、叙事学、中外文化交流史。本文为国家社科基金项目“中国小说英译的叙事距离调控研究”【项目批号：24BWW009】的阶段性成果。

1. The Author and the Object of the Study

Sandro Jung is Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Director of the Centre for the Study of Textual Cultures at Fudan University, Shanghai, China. His research interests include eighteenth-century and Romantic literature (especially poetry and novels), Victorian novels (especially the Brontë sisters, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins), Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, comparative literature, reception studies, media studies (intermediality and transmediality), book history, print culture studies, publishing history, landscape gardens and literature, and visual culture (especially illustration studies). His publications include *Eighteenth-Century Illustration and Literary Material Culture*¹, *"kleine artige Kupfer": Buchillustration im 18. Jahrhundert* (Harrassowitz, 2018), *The Publishing and Marketing of Illustrated Literature in Scotland, 1760-1825* (Lehigh University Press, 2017), *Thomson's 'The Seasons,' Print Culture, and Visual Interpretation, 1730-1842* (Lehigh University Press, 2015) as well as numerous articles and book chapters.

Eighteenth-Century Illustration and Literary Material Culture is a book in the Cambridge Elements series. The series are aimed, as is stated on the paperback of the book, to explore connections between verbal and visual texts and the people, networks, cultures and places that engendered and enjoyed them during the long Eighteenth Century, examine the uses of oral, written and visual media, and experiment with the digital platform to facilitate communication of original scholarship with both colleagues and students.

The book studies the transmediation of illustrations and the production of new meanings therefrom. Transmediation, namely transmedial migration, is a process of an illustration adapted for use on other objects or on new media. The process often involves the alteration of media configuration and visual structure as well as medial transfer and changes to the plot and character of the story. As a result, it tends to develop both a new life and a new meaning, functioning multi-medially and

¹ See Sandro Jung, *Eighteenth-Century Illustration and Literary Material Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023, 19.

advancing visual interpretations of the story and the character concerned.

Professor Jung selects three eighteenth-century literary works to study the transmedial use of the same illustrations. The three literary works are 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 three works, together with their illustrated editions and the illustrations that were transmedially used, are examined in the case studies.

2. The Structure and Case Studies of the Book

The book comprises six chapters. The headings of the first five chapters are "Transmediation, Illustration and Material Culture," "Re-signifying *Pamela*: From Snuff Box to Chapbook," "Damon, Musidora and the Containment of Desire: From Vase to Miniature," "Palemon, Lavinia and Virtuous Love Exemplified: From Creamware Jugs to Derby Figurines," and "Re-narrating *Robinson Crusoe*: Transmediation on French Speaking Plates" respectively. These chapters study the instances of transmediation, namely the ways artisans adapted existing designs to be used on other media, and analyze the ways new meanings arose from transmediation. Chapter 6 is the Conclusion.

Central to the book are the case studies. Chapter 1, which is rather comprehensive, introduces the object, the key terms and the case studies of the study, and gives a brief literature review. What is particularly noteworthy in the case study in this chapter is a discussion of an illustration of a shipwreck scene in James Ballantyne's 1810 edition of *Robinson Crusoe*. This was a redacted wood-engraved version of the copper-engraved illustration, designed by Charles Cattoon and engraved by Francis Chesham, in the 1793 Perth edition of *The Seasons*. The sailor who stood holding to a rope in James Thomson's poem was no longer the nameless protagonist but became the title protagonist, Robinson Crusoe. By the 1820s, wares such as dessert plates with the illustrations from the early editions of *Robinson Crusoe* became mass-produced commodities. Obviously, the transmedial use of the same illustrations was facilitated by technological innovation which made reproduction more effective and less costly, and was stimulated by the reprinting of illustrated editions of the novel due to the end of perpetual copy right monopoly controlling the print of the book late in the 1770s. No doubt, the transmedially used illustrations are of visualizable as well as textual value.

Chapter 2 studies the transmediation of the illustrations of *Pamela*. The novel's number of transmedially applied illustrations was rather small at first. This inaugurated, however, a shift in media practices and a visual spectacle, including an illustrated fan, waxworks, illustrated editions and series of paintings. What was re-

markable about the varied material and visual culture was an array of transmediated objects created by foreign artisans. In an American chapbook, the facial expressions, dresses and scenes were reshaped, unlike those in the illustrations in the British full-text edition of the novel. Adaptations of figures and scenes were also used on French hand-painted enameled snuff boxes, in copper-engraved book illustrations as well as readapted versions. Due to the artists' choice of reformulated episodes and provision of various perspectives to the review of the protagonist, the transmediations were laden with new configurations, meanings and images. The images of Pamela, for example, ranged from a paragon of virtue to an erotic figure. It is thought that the use of existing illustrations of the novel is intended to increase profit margins, and that the creation of differences in iconic realization is intended to fulfill the need for *Pamela*-demanded media products. In history, these two types of practices became possible when relevant technology was available.

The discussion in Chapter 3 centres around the Damon and Musidora tale from the poem "Summer" in James Thomson's *The Seasons*, a collection of four long poems whose titles are "Spring," "Summer," "Autumn" and "Winter" respectively. In the poem "Summer," the poet presents the scenes of the season with loving details. One of the details is a rude scene where Musidora is to take a bath by the stream with his lover Damon close by. Incorporated into the transmediated objects, among others, were a sepia print of "Damon and Musidora," designed by Angelica Kauffman and engraved by Francesco Bartolozzi; an enamel painting on a Derby Porcelain Vase, the painting being an adapted version of Kauffman's design of "Damon and Musidora"; and a copper-engraved book illustration depicting Damon and Musidora, designed by William Hamilton and engraved by John Heath. The methods used to transmediate the objects included a change of distance between the characters, and the omissions of the details and Damon. These methods resulted in changes in scale and focus, which, coupled with the methods adopted by the artisans to visualize the scene and the interaction between the two lovers, would generate various associations, interpretations and effects. As can be seen, the meaning of an illustration is contingent on both the context and the medium in which the illustration is created. In the case of differing material contexts, then, the meaning of an illustration may be especially divergent. The example given to support the argument is Angelica Kauffman's 1782 illustration of a moment in Thomson's tragic sentimental tale of Celadon and Amelia. This illustration was redesigned and used on enameled Duesbury vases, mourning pendants and love tokens, all of which involved changes in meaning in respective contexts. As Professor Jung thinks, "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 through the lightning," and the "love token, by contrast, highlights the deep emotional connection between Celadon and Amelia" (Jung 2-3).

Chapter 4 examines the multiple ways a design was recontextualized and repurposed in transmediation over the course of forty years. The design was based on a vignette in the poem "Autumn" in *The Seasons*. It was a painting by William Lawrenson, a depiction of the two lovers Palemon and Lavinia. John Raphael Smith later brought out an engraved version of the painting. In 1780, James Birchall published an engraved version as a print, issued as a mezzotint in two states, namely in monochrome and as a hand-coloured version. In 1800, the design was used in America to be the frontispiece to the Reverend M. L. Weems' humorous work *Hymen's Recruiting-Serjeant*, a work written to incentivize American male and female singles coming of age to get married. A ceramic version of the design appeared in Britain in 1820. Some of the figurines were coloured and gilt, and in a biscuit version the tree behind the lovers was missing. In the transmediations, different technologies, including copper engraving, transfer-printing, the moulding of lay and ceramic substances, facilitated the repeated adoptions of Lawrenson's design, and engendered varied interpretations of the tale of the poem and the character. Some virtues of the character, in particular, were emphasized. Lavinia, in consequence, was no longer an indigent gleaner. She enjoyed a high social status and was fashionable—her fashionable sophistication was obviously emphasized to go with her nobility and morality.

Rather than discuss the transmediation of a single illustration as the preceding chapters each do, Chapter 5 explores the ways *Robinson Crusoe's* two sets of illustrations by Thomas Stothard and J. J. Grandville were transmediated on French *assiettes parlantes* (speaking plates) produced by the Montereau and Creil-Montereau manufacturers respectively between the 1820s and the 1850s. The exploration is aimed to "chart how the materiality and mediality of the plates shaped meaning and directed reading/viewing experience" (Jung 60). The images, originally designed on the paper-based medium, were transplanted onto the well (the interior surfaces) of the French speaking plates. The process involved the adaptation of the rectangular designs in portrait orientation to the circular format of the well of the plates, the omission of background detail, the alteration of the scenes, the change of perspective to view the character or scene, the shortening of captions, and the devising or redevising of captions with the first-person pronoun, say, changed to the third-person pronoun. The scenes, in particular, were not only altered but also resequenced, hence different orders in which the scenes of Crusoe's adventures were selected and transmediated in the process of transmediation. All these recontextualizations and

transformations brought the viewer different perspectives or ways to perceive and understand the storyworld.

In Chapter 6, Professor Jung draws conclusions from the case studies. With the existing illustrations being reused and repurposed in the transmediation of the eighteenth-century literary illustrations, new storyworlds and narratives could be inferred, and the experience of reading and visualization was extended. There arises the necessity to harness the power “to decode and synthesize literary, iconic and material meaning” (Jung 79), and study literature from a transmedial perspective.

3. Comments on the Study

In the study of the transmedially applied literary illustrations on material objects, this book is marked by a combination of illustration studies, transmediation studies and material culture studies. It not merely studies illustrated editions in the given period, nor merely studies illustrated material culture by attending to the use of physical objects that adapt the illustrations. It studies the interplay among the illustrations, the material objects, and the manipulations in adapting and reusing the illustrations. In particular, it studies the way the same illustrations were transmedially used so as to discover how “material culture harnesses iconic textual cultures to promote literariness” (Jung 6).

The combination of studies mentioned above enriches and promotes existing studies in two ways. First, this study is concentrated on the transmediation of book illustrations, whereas other scholars’ studies are focused on illustrated editions or on issues in a narrower or broader sense, such as illustrations, novel paintings, materiality and literature, graphic design, ceramic design, print culture, material culture, printed pottery, text technologies as well as reviews of research on adaptation and remediation. Second, the book draws on a range of primary sources, such as the British Exhibitions of the royal academy late in the eighteenth century and early in the nineteenth century, and examines them in the historical, transmedial and transnational circumstances. The study is well grounded in existing studies, but moves forward with multimodality research. In this aspect, the author of the book makes metatextual and interpretive comments on transmediation, and elaborates on the ways handling, tactility and purpose were connected with one another, such as the ways the new storyworlds were formed, hybrid and potential meanings were generated, and transmediated illustrations were used to cater to particular occasions and audiences in Britain and abroad, including those with more or less buying power.¹

¹ See Sandro Jung, *Eighteenth-Century Illustration and Literary Material Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023, 19.

Great value also lies in the choice of literary works in the case studies. The works selected in the case studies are among the most reputable ones in the history of British literature, and enjoy marked popularity across the world. *Robinson Crusoe* is claimed to be second only to the *Bible* in its number of translations, and *Pamela* is hailed as one of the most influential classics in British literature. In particular, the two novels introduce two of the most enduring characters in British literature. The former presents a hero who manages to survive on a desolate island, and the latter tells the story of a heroine who insists on her personal worth. Although it aroused controversial responses after its publication, *Pamela* turned out to be the transition from the novel of adventure to the novel of character. The author's moral interest in men and manners can be read from the information offered on the title page: the novel is "Now first Published / In order to cultivate the Principles of VIRTUE and RELIGION in the Minds of the YOUTH of BOTH SEXES" (Richardson 1741). The third work, James Thomson's *The Seasons*, has also been popular with readers worldwide, although Oscar Wilde listed it among the "Books not to read at all" (Hart-Davis 185). The poems thereof are the descriptions of the four seasons replete with various scenes of nature, and the "descriptions of extended scenes and general effects bring before us the whole magnificence of Nature, whether pleasing or dreadful" (Johnson 376). The three books each captured, so to speak, the spirit of the periods, that is, the spirit to manage oneself in an alien situation, be virtuous, enjoy "Full nature" that "swarms with life," maintain a "pure ingenuous elegance of soul," and be committed to home since "home is the resort / Of love, of joy, of peace and plenty, where, / Supporting and supported, polished friends, / And Dear relations, mingle into bliss" (Thomson 64, 106, 131). The characterization of the two novels and the quoted words from Thomson's "Summer" and "Autumn" in *The Seasons* reflect the values and virtues appreciated in English life. This explains, to a high degree, why the book illustrations continued to be transmedially used on material objects, including commodified household objects such as the *assiettes parlantes* (speaking plates) mentioned above.

Professor Jung's consistent efforts to keep track of the transmediations distinguish the study from others. Academic research in many fields nowadays is crammed with concepts such as postcolonialism, postmodernism, postindustrialism, posthumanism, and poststructuralism. These concepts seem to imply the demise of historical approaches to important processes and phenomena. The panoramic pictures of the transmedially used book illustrations on material objects, which are delineated in the case studies, justify, on the one hand, the author's engagement with history to analyze transmediations and, on the other hand, the author's sustained

interrogation of the critical assumptions that underpin transmediation studies more generally. This poses a strong challenge to the prevailing critical approaches and proves the vitality of research from historical perspectives. The study, therefore, is helpful for us to shape the way we look at literature as well as relevant works of art, including transmedially applied objects. Literature does not come to a close in the aftermath of its publication and reading. As can be seen from the case studies, the illustrations and the transmediations over time opened the present up to a multitude of historical moments, hence the necessity to keep track of the moments. Through the case studies Professor Jung presents many of the key moments in the transmediations.

Meanwhile, more contribution can be made to the examination of the transmedially applied literary illustrations on material objects. As is said above, this is a book in the Cambridge Elements series, hence the limitation of the scope of the research. The examination can be further circumstanced. Indeed, the book studies some important variables as well as key moments in the transmediation processes. It takes into account, for example, the experience of reading, the evolution of literary visuality, and the process of medial migration. Nonetheless, relevant links between the occurrences of the variables are consigned to oblivion. Transmediation is not a static concept. It is a dynamic one, shaped by a social, cultural and personal context. The “personal” context includes the interactive impacts that artisans receive from customers and intersubjective impacts that artisans leave upon others. Evidence can be provided to build up as many links as possible for the dynamic process of transmediation, links to validate the causes, impacts and effects so as to identify more diachronic and synchronic affinities, which will help to find out in-depth forces and logics of the dynamics. Therefore, first-hand accounts, particularly those of the determinate causes, impacts and the peculiarity of taste, cannot in the least be shunned in the examination.

4. Conclusion

The practice of juxtaposing literature with illustration, transmediation and material culture yields valuable insights into our study of literature. Macroscopically speaking, as literature is increasingly recognized as a multilingual, transnational, intercontinental and multimedia domain, the horizon of rethinking the status and identity of literature will be extended. Literature stands not in isolation but in relations. Literary works not only stand in relation to the authors, readers and other works, but also stand in relation to themselves, including their transmedially applied selves. Microscopically speaking, changes are happening to the relationship

between peritext and epitext. With paratext becoming a hot topic in the study of literature, both peritext and epitext have attracted increasing scholastic attention. Peritext refers to the titles, prefaces, introductions, epigraphs, footnotes and covers that are situated around a primary text, whereas epitext refers to the external elements such as reviews and interviews. Illustrations are pictures in books, articles etc., and used to be studied as peritexts. In light of transmediation, illustrations can be both peritexts and epitexts, whereas the transmediated objects can be various epitexts. The above views make it evident, therefore, that in the digital age transmediation will bring new modes of apprehension, and further enlighten the reader's understanding both of the ways the sensible objects work on his/her mind and of the ways ideas and powers work within.

Works Cited

- Hart-Davis, Rupert, ed. *The Letters of Oscar Wilde*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962.
- Johnson, Samuel. *Lives of the English Poets* Vol. II. London: Oxford UP, 1906.
- Jung, Sandro. *Eighteenth-Century Illustration and Literary Material Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2023.
- Richardson, Samuel. *Pamela: Or, Virtue Rewarded* Vol. I. London: Printed for C. Rivington and J. Osborn, 1741.
- Thomson, James. *The Seasons*. London: Wilkie and Robinson, 1811.