A Study of Authorial Illustration

A Study of Authorial Illustration:

The Magic Window

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations vii

Introduction 1

Chapter One 5
A Conversation on Authorial Illustration

Chapter Two 45
Case Studies

1. Samuel Lover, “The Old House in Galway”, *Treasure Trove*, 1844 45
2. William Makepeace Thackeray, “Rebecca’s Farewell”, *Vanity Fair*, 1847 50
3. Cuthbert Bede, *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*, 1851-1852 54
4. Lewis Carroll, *The Adventures of Alice Under Ground*, 1864 57
5. Robert Michael Ballantyne, “Glumm defies the King”, *Erling the Bold*, 1869 61
6. Mark Twain, “William III”, “The Portrait”, 1871 and “The Lorelei”, *A Tramp Abroad*, 1880, and F. C. Burnand, “Soft repose”, *Happy-Thought Hall*, 1872 65
7. Robert Louis Stevenson, *Moral Emblems and Other Poems*, 1882 70
8. George Du Maurier, *Peter Ibbetson*, 1891 73
9. Rudyard Kipling, “The Whale swallowing the Mariner”, *Just So Stories*, 1902 76
10. Edith Œ. Somerville and Martin Ross, “She drifted, rudderless”, *Stray-Aways*, 1920 79
11. Jacque-Emile Blanche, *Aymeris*, 1922 and Jeanne Ramel-Cals, *Vacances à Villefranche*, 1927 83
12. G. R. G. Worcester, *The Junkman Smiles*, 1959 86

Conclusion 91

Bibliography 95

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

[Fig. 1-1] George Du Maurier, *The Mammoth*, 1892, in George Du Maurier, *Peter Ibbetson* (London: Osgood and McIlvaine, 1892), 186.

[Fig. 2-1] Samuel Lover, *The Old House in Galway*, 1844, in Samuel Lover, *Treasure Trove* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1899), frontispiece.

[Fig. 2-2] William Thackeray, *Rebecca's Farewell*, 1847, in William Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1998), 10.

[Fig. 2-3] Cuthbert Bede, *The Adventures of Mr Verdant Green, an Oxford Freshman*, illustration for *The Illustrated London News*, January 17, 1852: 64.

[Fig. 2-4] Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, manuscript, 1864. Scanned by Lenny de Rooy. Last accessed August 26, 2018. the-office.com/bedtime-story/aliceunderground.htm.

[Fig. 2-5] Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, manuscript, 1864. Scanned by Lenny de Rooy. Last accessed August 26, 2018. the-office.com/bedtime-story/aliceunderground.htm.

[Fig. 2-6] Robert Michael Ballantyne, *Glumm defies the King*, 1869, in Robert Michael Ballantyne, *Erling the Bold* (London: Nisbet & Co., 1869), 242.

[Fig. 2-7] Mark Twain, *William III*, illustration for *The Galaxy*, 1871. Last accessed August 26, 2018. americanliterature.com/author/mark-twain/short-story/portrait-of-king-william-iii.

[Fig. 2-8] Mark Twain, *The Lorelei*, 1880, in Mark Twain, *A Tramp Abroad* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1912), 121. The authorship of the drawing is disputed, as the title-page of the volume advertises "Three hundred and fourteen illustrations" including "Three or four pictures made by the author of this book without outside help".

[Fig. 2-9] F. C. Burnand, *Soft repose*, 1872, in F. C. Burnand, *Happy-Thought Hall* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1872), 79.

[Fig. 2-10] Robert Louis Stevenson, *With storms a-weather*, 1882, in Robert Louis Stevenson, *Moral Emblems and Other Poems* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1921), 21.

[Fig. 2-11] George Du Maurier, untitled, 1891, in George Du Maurier, *Peter Ibbetson* (New York: Harper, 1891), 200.

[Fig. 2-12] Rudyard Kipling, *The Whale swallowing the Mariner*, 1902, in Rudyard Kipling, *Just So Stories*. Scanned by George P. Landow for the *Victorian Web*. Last modified February 19, 2005. http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/kipling/4.html.

[Fig. 2-13] Edith Œ. Somerville, *She drifted, rudderless*, 1920, in Edith Œ. Somerville and Martin Ross, *Stray-Aways* (London: Longmans & Co., 1920), 91.

[Fig. 2-14] Jacque-Emile Blanche, untitled, 1922, in Jacque-Emile Blanche, *Aymeris* (Paris: La Sirène, 1922), 181.

[Fig. 2-15] Jeanne Ramel-Cals, untitled, 1927, in Jeanne Ramel-Cals, *Vacances à Villefranche* (Paris: Emile Hazan, 1927), 32.

[Fig. 2-16] G. R. G. Worcester, *Bombs over Chungking*, 1959, in G. R. G. Worcester, *The Junkman Smiles* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), 157.

[Fig. 2-17] G. R. G. Worcester, *The troops were called out and worked well*, 1959, in G. R. G. Worcester, *The Junkman Smiles* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), 158.

INTRODUCTION

This is a book for those who think that academic writing is boring, without pictures or conversations. Its readers will discover that authorial illustration (the practice of illustrating one's own works) is a far more widespread practice than is usually thought, and they will learn a few tips on how to read and analyse books illustrated by their authors, particularly books of fiction.

The origin of this book lies in a long-standing interest in authorial paratext. My research on authors' illustrations is the outcome of twenty years of work on authors' prefaces to their own novels and stories. Many of the analytical tools I have used to read the prefaces of Walter Scott, Elizabeth Gaskell and Henry James, among others, have been useful in studying authorial illustrations, although images also call for specific methods. Obviously, I have not been exploring uncharted territory. Theoretical readings, as well as my own critical practice, have enabled me to develop this work, and the following pages cite text/image critics and theorists of the past forty years, from W. J. T. Mitchell to Hélène Martinelli, to whom I am most indebted.

However, this book aims to fill a gap between illustration and literary studies. The many references given throughout the book will show that authorial illustration has been tackled mostly by critics working on individual authors-artists such as William Thackeray, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Claude Cahun, but that, with very few exceptions, it has not been understood as a generic concept and historical phenomenon. Recent studies include Donald Friedman's *The Writer's Brush: Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture by Writers* (Mid-List Press, 2007) and Serge Linarès's *Des écrivains artistes* (Citadelles et Mazenod, 2010), as well as an article by the same called "Histoires doubles: quand les écrivains s'illustrent" (*Etudes de Lettres*, 2013), which to my knowledge have not as yet been translated into English. However, Friedman's corpus does not bear on illustration only, and Linarès focuses on the iconic value of the letterpress. I have chosen to analyse the works of other authors-artists and to follow other critical paths, in an attempt to initiate original approaches to exploring literary authorial illustration.

My hope is that those who read this book will use it as a starting point for developing their own methods, but the main idea I want to put forward is that authorial illustration, especially in novels, is not a binary relation between one image and one passage in a text, but rather a multiconnected system involving elements generally overlooked by criticism, including captions, intertexts, inter-images, readers' mental representations, other art forms and historical contexts. Systemics allows the critic to analyse the connections between these elements.

The title of the book, taken from George Du Maurier's *Peter Ibbetson* (1891), will be explained in the following pages. At this stage it is enough to say that I, much like Du Maurier himself as I shall argue, see in it a metaphor for authorial illustration. Its implications are numerous, and related concepts such as imagination, framing, interaction and representation will be discussed. Like the magic window in Du Maurier's novel, I hope that reading this book will provide both entertainment and knowledge.

The time period of the works chosen broadly corresponds to my main specialty area (British 19th-century fiction). The first chapter, called "A Conversation on Authorial Illustration", raises a few theoretical, methodological and definition issues. It adopts the style of a conversation or dialogue in order to present a wide range of examples from different genres and periods in the least tedious way possible. To challenge the oversimplified vision of illustration as mere text/image dichotomy, I propose to analyse it from a systemic point of view. The second chapter, called "Case Studies", consists of commentaries on specific illustrations, from Samuel Lover's *Treasure Trove* (1844) to G. R. G. Worcester's *The Junkman Smiles* (1959). I work from the assumption that the study of authorial illustration, and perhaps of literature at large, is "best advanced through such case-studies (...): by illustrations, in other words"[1]. The case studies presented here are organised chronologically and focus on particular types of systemic relations. There are, however, practical case analyses in chapter one, and elements of theory and methodology in chapter two. My apologies to readers looking for the former or the latter only and who will have to endure a bit of both throughout the book.

Finally, it strikes me retrospectively that this book is an endeavour to contribute to a growing critical conversation about literary illustration. The first case study shows the importance to me of engaging in critical dialogue when we try to understand images (or anything, for that matter). The example given here was with students, and numerous references will hopefully help others, particularly arts and literature students, to find useful resources on this thriving field of research. As publications, projects and societies on literary illustration involve more and more academics working from various conceptual backgrounds, I am also eager to receive feedback from fellow researchers and to exchange ideas on the main ideas put forward in the book: the identification of “authorial illustration” as a significant subfield which has been so far understudied, and the use of systemics as an actionable framework for its study.

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[1] Rosemary Mitchell is the author of *Picturing the Past: English History in Text and Image, 1830-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Her forthcoming article "Towards an Anatomy of Nineteenth-Century Historical Illustration? On Dissecting Pictures of the Past", which I am quoting here, will appear in *BPTI7*, "Illustrating History", Presses Universitaires de Nancy, in 2018. I am one of the guest editors of the volume.

CHAPTER ONE

A CONVERSATION ON AUTHORIAL ILLUSTRATION

What is authorial illustration?

By authorial illustration I refer to the practice of illustrating one's own writings, as opposed to illustrating the writings of someone else or having one's works illustrated by someone else. In that sense the phrase does not refer to an illustrator's individual voice or their idiosyncratic style, although this is how it is most frequently used in the world of professional illustrators nowadays. I refer to people who practice authorial illustration as authors-illustrators. Works "with illustrations by the author" or "illustrated by the author", as they are often described on title pages and library catalogues, are examples of "composite arts" (Mitchell 154) like films, cartoons and graphic novels. This simple definition opens the way to various degrees of text/image integration, from rough sketches on draughts and manuscripts to carefully designed plates in deluxe editions. George Sand, H. G. Wells, Marcel Proust and Henry Miller scribbled drawings on manuscripts as visual aids for writing, but these did not appear in the final books. Jules Verne sent his own drawings to better-skilled artists working on illustrated editions of his novels as directions to follow. Christina Rossetti "had a habit of drawing small sketches in pencil or watercolor, both in the formative stages of a poetic project (…) and, after a book was completed, in the marginal illustrations she added to published volumes" (Kooistra 8). However, the authors-illustrators in whom I am more particularly interested are those who published their illustrations with their poems, essays and, most of all, their novels.

Why? Have novels been illustrated more frequently than other works?

Not necessarily. Teri Doerksen has noted that during the eighteenth century, they were even illustrated "much less frequently than works that were perceived to be more literary in tone" (Doerksen 464). But "visual images are likely to operate in tension with the text" (Doerksen 467) and I am interested, among other things, in the narrative tension between fiction and visual images—something we shall come back to more than once, I suppose.

Is authorial illustration a frequent practice?

The reference corpus is extraordinarily varied considering the relatively small number of authors who have been their own illustrators. It consists of poetry, fiction and non-fiction, and includes genres as different as children's books, pornographic novels, comic novels, historical novels, psychological novels, travel writings, heroic fantasies and treatises on insects and architecture. The illustrations range from Punch-like caricatures drawn straight onto wooden blocks to computer-generated designs, to say nothing of the manuscripts from Antiquity or the Middle Ages, which were often anonymous and modified by several scribes. Yet, it has been my experience that the average reader is unable to name more than one or two poets or novelists who were, or still are, their own illustrators. William M. Thackeray generally comes to mind, but even professional critics sometimes equate authorial illustration to Thackeray only, like John Plunkett in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1830-1914*: "he, *uniquely* [my emphasis], produced his own illustrations for *Vanity Fair* (1847-8), *Pendennis* (1849-50) and *The Virginians* (1857-9)" (Plunkett 240). In the same chapter, Plunkett analyses Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* and William Morris's *News from Nowhere*, showing that he is aware of other examples, but his remark shows the prominent role played by Thackeray.

As Gerard Curtis noted, "few writers, with some notable exceptions, directly combined the drawn with the written line in their published works", although "the Victorians appeared casually to have accepted the partnership throughout most of the century" (Curtis 16). The reason is obvious: few people possess such versatility. But even when they do, many prefer to keep art and words separated. Victor Hugo, who was an accomplished etcher, rarely illustrated his own novels, the thirty-six drawings he gave to Henry Turner, his Guernsey bookbinder, for *Toilers of the Sea*, being one notable exception. Charlotte Brontë, H. G. Wells, August Strindberg, D. H. Lawrence and Franz Kafka also chose to keep the two skills separated. Many of us may have read some of Beryl Bainbridge's novels without realising that she was also an artist.

Can you give examples of famous authors-illustrators and some of their works?

William Blake (all his poetry), Thomas Bewick (*British Birds*), William M. Thackeray (the three novels cited above and *The Paris Sketches*), Christina Rossetti (*Verses Dedicated to Her Mother*, *Goblin Market and Other Poems*), Beatrix Potter (*Peter Rabbit* and other tales), George Du Maurier (*Trilby*, *Peter Ibbetson*, *The Martian*), Rudyard Kipling (*Just So Stories*), Aubrey Beardsley (*Under the Hill*), Alfred Kubin (*The Other Side*), Paul Nash (*Places*), G. K. Chesterton (*The Club of Queer Trades*), Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (*The Little Prince*), J. R. R. Tolkien (*The Hobbit*), Jean Cocteau (*The White Book*, *The Terrible Children*), Cynthia Harnett (*The Wool-Pack*), Mervyn Peake (the Gormenghast novels), Kurt Vonnegut (*Breakfast of Champions*), Günter Grass (*The Flounder*, *My Century*), Alasdair Gray (*Lanark*)… I might as well stop there as too many articles on authorial illustration are little more than lists of names and titles, a fact which Hélène Martinelli deplores in her doctoral dissertation on authorial illustration in Central Europe in the first decades of the 20th century. I am hoping our conversation will go beyond such a list to provide the reader with some historical and methodological insights.

These books are not all children's books, then? Many would say that pictures are for children only.

Children's literature is clearly distinguishable from other genres as its authors combine words and images much more frequently. Examples are numerous: *The Tale of the Little, Little Old Woman* by Elsa Beskow, *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan, *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi* by Chris Van Allsburg, *Outside Over There* by Maurice Sendak, *The Ship That Sailed to Mars* by William Timlin, to name but a few. Then there are children's books that are also, if not primarily, for adults. Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is an obvious example. The same can be said of Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*. The ambiguities inherent in any definition of "children's literature" have been recently explored by Perry Nodelman in *The Hidden Adult* (2008) and by Teresa Michals in *Books for Children, Books for Adults* (2014). On the commercial side of the issue, Bob Staake even made this quite unabashed comment: "Never in the history of publishing has a 4-year-old walked into a bookstore and laid down $18 for a new picture book. Never happened. It's adults—parents and grandparents—who purchase these books for their kids, so they're the ones I try to first appeal to" (Staake webpage). Who can say whether Rodolphe Töpffer's graphic literature is for children or for adults? Categorizations are never as rigid as one would think, as travel literature also shows. It is frequently illustrated by the authors themselves—here again examples are numerous, from Bernhard von Breydenbach's *Peregrinatio in terram sanctam* (1486) to Erik Gauger's online *Marrakech Moleskine Journal* (2013)—and here again illustration can mean rough sketches, elaborate colour drawings, photographs, maps or any other form of pictorial accompaniment. The main difference between these examples and fiction is that the pictures are supposed to represent the real world, (whatever that means) although their evocative power may spur the reader's imagination towards a very subjective vision of people and places. It is a truism that the border between fantasy and reality is quite blurred in many travel books.

To come back to your question, during the second half of the 19th century, so-called "serious" novels were often published serially in illustrated magazines like *Once a Week* and *The Cornhill* in Britain, *La Revue illustrée* in France, *Illustreret Tidende* in Denmark and *Niva* in Russia. Subsequent one-volume publications often reproduced the illustrations. We have grown accustomed to reading novels without images, but this is by no means a consistent feature in European literary history. Darragh McManus deplored it in his 2011 article for *The Guardian*, "What became of illustrations in fiction?".

Another vocabulary question: the word self-illustration is sometimes used by critics. Is it the same thing?

I use it about a certain type of authorial illustration, which is relatively frequent: self-portraits. Since the 18th century, authors' portraits, through engraving and then photographs, had been used as frontispieces, and the tradition lasted until the early decades of the 20th century. Nowadays you sometimes find a picture of the author on the back cover of the book or on the dust jacket. Originally, these images conveyed a sense of social respectability and were generally much codified: they were bust-length portraits, the author was usually sitting at a slight angle, sometimes with a book or a pen in hand. Such portraits of Laurence Sterne (*The Works of Laurence Sterne*, Strahan, 1780, frontispiece, volume 1), Walter Scott (*The Lady of the Lake*, Ballantyne, 1810, frontispiece) and Henry James (New York Edition of his *Novels and Tales*, 1907, frontispiece, volume 1) show minimal variations. When they are authorial illustrations, these "apparitions of the author-figure" (Stougaard-Nielsen 140) necessarily take on another dimension, as their ornamental function can hardly be exploited literally. They are usually placed somewhere else in the book, with the authors sometimes appearing in disguise. For example, several of George Du Maurier's characters look strikingly like their creator, especially in *Peter Ibbetson* and *The Martian*, two partly autobiographical novels. Alasdair Gray's face appears in *The Book of Prefaces*. Readers can have great fun trying to spot them. Beyond the playful dimension, the questions raised are manifold. How does a self-portrait relate to autobiographical elements in the narrative? How does it affect the relationships between author-illustrator, implied author-illustrator, narrator and character? Are these self-images always used as a means of protecting and deflecting the question of authorial authenticity, as Maria Pramaggiore suggested of Thackeray's self-portrait in *Vanity Fair*? For example, Breyten Breytenbach's prison narrative *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* first appeared in 1984 with a cover drawing designed by the author. It showed a man strongly resembling Breytenbach and also his mirror-image, suggesting that the self may not be unified, and questioning autobiography as a genre. Judith Lütge Coullie and Johan U. Jacobs have noted that "[these] ambiguities inform the text of *True Confessions*, in which the textual evocation of Breytenbach's police interrogator, "Mr Investigator", blurs into the narratee and into "Mr I"—a shadow self" (Introduction, x). In another book, Judith Lütge Coullie expressed her regrets that later editions did not reproduce the design:

> Unfortunately, later editions of the text have replaced this authorial illustration with an enlarged copy of the original text's back cover photograph. This is a great pity. It underscores only one reading of the author's identity, the most conventional one. The dogmatism of the photographic image of the author on the front cover conforms to conventional generic notions of the author as unified and autonomous, as the unproblematic signified behind the text's sum of signifiers... (22)

Incidentally, the oldest self-portrait appearing in a manuscript, to my best knowledge, was by Matthew Paris, a Benedictine monk, in his *Historia Anglorum* in the early 1250s.

This takes us back to the days before the printing press… What are the main landmarks in the history of authorial illustration? Can it be periodized?

Firstly, I am primarily working on British and European literature, or countries of predominantly European descent like the United States. I am aware of significant traditions in Iran, India, Japan, China and Korea, as well as in Arabic literature, but although mutual influences are traceable these are out of my realm of expertise. For example, I have read the works of David Atherton on the appearance of authors as characters, through woodblock illustration, in Japanese fiction between 1770 and 1820, as in *Sakusha Tainai Totsuki no Zu* (1804) by the poet Santo Kyoden. Some of Atherton's analyses echo observations which will be made here, such as the comparison of book-making to a theatrical performance of *ningyō jōruri* (a form of play involving puppets and music), which echoes the role of drama in illustration which I will discuss. But a deeper understanding of these works would require better knowledge of Japanese culture, language and history.

However, even for non-specialists, the influence of Japanese art, for example, is discernible in some of Tolkien's plates for *The Hobbit*, while Kipling's illustrations for the *Just So Stories* "also engage with a broad range of western and oriental art" (Turci 174) from Edward Burne-Jones to Katsushika Hokusai. In Britain, like everywhere in Europe, modern authorial illustration was made possible by two major evolutions in literary history: the emergence (slightly earlier than in Japan) of the modern author in the late 16th century—the generation of Montaigne, Cervantes and Shakespeare—and the ongoing improvements in printing techniques which enabled making and distributing illustrated books on an ever-growing scale. But it took time, and authorial illustration only sprang up extensively in the early 1800s.

In fiction, the real turning-point took place in the 1830s and 1840s, thanks to breakthroughs in woodcut printing techniques, and the leading role played by Thackeray in making authorial illustration a popular and coalescent form of art, in the sense that the illustrations were integral parts of the novels, not optional additions. The most striking evidence of this emergence of authorial illustration in the world of fiction can be seen in its impact on publishing strategies and reading habits of the time. Until the early 19th century, "[s]ome texts had specially designed engravings, but in most cases they appeared in soft covers with only a frontispiece, and the illustrations were sold separately with directions for where to place them when the owner bound the edition, usually in leather" (Alexander and Sellars 16). Later in the century, the professionalisation of literary illustration and the industrialisation of publishing resulted in a tendency to affix images to narratives more steadily.

Samuel Lover (*Handy Andy*, *Rory O'More*, *Treasure Trove*) and Richard Cobbold (*The Young Man's Home*) are lesser known authors-illustrators from Thackeray's time. Aesthetically, it is relatively easy to see why *Handy Andy* and *Vanity Fair* belong to the same generation. Their style, still mostly inspired by caricature drawing, did not aim at rivalling the depth of expression in painting, for instance. The dominant style lasted until the mid-1850s, when the way in which book illustration was produced and received began to change radically once again. With the exception of William Blake, artists of this generation were the first to consider book illustration to equal the artistic merit of painting. According to Paul Goldman,

> it was during the 1860s that there emerged a definite shift in the relationship between the image and the text. One of the clearest hallmarks visible in the illustrations of this period was a growing equality, verging sometimes on domination, between the illustration and the literature. This situation came about largely because, at least for a time, so many of the artists saw the activity of designing for books as important, worthwhile and as intellectually demanding as painting in oils. (Goldman webpage)

Thus, William Gorman Wills's *Old Times* (1857) shows an evolution in style which is also perceptible in the illustrations of Robert Michael Ballantyne's novels, such as *The Coral Island* (1858). New artistic ambitions were set to correspond with better marketing and new improvements in printing techniques. Many authors-illustrators like Du Maurier were influenced by various aesthetic trends in painting and the visual arts, such as the Pre-Raphaelites, Aestheticism, Art Nouveau, abstract painting, etc. Aubrey Beardsley's influence is still traceable in many drawings by Kipling.

However, as Brian McHale noted in *Postmodernist Fiction*, the 19th-century tradition of publishing illustrated books of fiction aimed at adults virtually disappeared in the early decades of the 20th century, to reappear only in the works of a few postmodernist authors. In 1991, McHale listed eight works illustrated by their authors and published between the 1960s and the 1980s—three of them by Alasdair Gray. But there are other ways of periodizing the history of book illustration, for instance by technique. This was the choice made by R. Margaret Slythe: "The year 1900 was a suitable one to end the survey since by then most illustrations were reproduced by photographic methods" (Slythe 9). The French author-illustrator Albert Robida was well aware of the impact of technique on the situation or status of artworks: in *The Twentieth Century* (1890) he humorously showed how photographic copies gave spectators the impression (maybe the illusion) that art had become more accessible. This was fifty years before Walter Benjamin's theory on the loss of the uniqueness of works of art due to mechanical reproduction. Technically, the latest landmark in the history of authorial illustration is probably the advent of digital literature.

What about poetry? I remember this much-quoted line by Simonides of Ceos: "painting is silent poetry, and poetry painting that speaks." To what extent do you agree with this judgement?

In poetry, William Blake remained a relatively isolated figure for quite some time. George Cumberland was a friend of his who published his own illustrated poem "Lewina, the Maid of Snowdon" in 1793. William Bell

Scott was still under Blake's influence in 1838 with *Hades*, and he kept publishing poems with his own etchings until the 1870s. Louisa Ann Meredith, an Anglo-Australian poet, published her first book, *Poems*, in 1835. The plates, she writes in her preface, were her first attempts at copper etching. Edward Lear's 1846 *Book of Nonsense* is already part of another trend. Later in the century, Christina Rossetti ornamented her poems mostly with symbolic designs. Her watercolours and pencil sketches "demonstrate her personal commitment to, and interest in, complementing poetic language with visual imagery in order to develop wider symbolic meanings" (Kooistra 39). As to Simonides, rather than agreeing or disagreeing, I would simply say that his judgement has set the standard for the Western conception of mimesis in the arts—one hundred years before Plato's *Republic* and four hundred years before Horace's *Ars Poetica*. Poetry is also particularly important because many classic concepts in text/image studies have stemmed from a comparison between the visual arts and poetry, not fiction. This is the case with Horace's *ut picture poesis*, and also with its questioning by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in *Laocoon: or, The limits of Poetry and Painting* (published in German in 1767). These works, however, do not bear on illustration; they compare (and, in the case of Lessing, contrast) language-based and image-based arts.

It is surprising that not only no historical timeline, but no comprehensive study of authorial illustration has been undertaken—apart from the very few works you mentioned. Is the purpose of this book to provide one?

Regarding the importance of a timeline, I would argue that although periodization is necessary, it is only one out of many complementary approaches. It is useful to describe the *Geist* of a particular period, as Martinelli has brilliantly done in her analysis of Alfred Kublin, Josef Váchal and Bruno Schulz, showing how in the context of Central Europe during the interwar period these authors-artists aimed at creating "total junk books" ("un livre total de pacotille", Martinelli 307, my translation). But other methodological tools should not be neglected. Back in 1983 Stephen Roxburgh expressed regret that "critical theory dealing with the narrative function of illustrations, as distinct from narrative elements in the text, is sadly lacking" (Roxburgh 20). In the wake of W. J. T. Mitchell, James Heffernan, Philippe Kaenel, Paul Goldman, Simon Cooke and Liliane Louvel, among others, researchers have started to explore this field. Critics have discussed the works of various authors-illustrators separately, but what is still lacking is a critical theory dealing with the specificities of authorial illustration. One difficulty in devising a general theory is that authorial illustration is not a distinct literary genre. In this conversation, then, as I have already suggested, I am more modestly hoping to lay down ideas and methodological guidelines that might prove useful for the study of specific works, by referring to a broad range of authors-illustrators from various times and countries.

Have authors-illustrators offered any theory of their own practice?

Novelists' writings on fiction and artists' writings on art are numerous, and of course many writers have reflected on whether their works should be illustrated at all—Walter Scott, Gustave Flaubert, Henry James, Thomas Hardy, Virginia Woolf and Joseph Conrad, to name but a few, famously did so in letters, critical essays and prefaces. By contrast, authorial illustration has remained a largely untheorized practice. Even more intriguing than the absence of theory, no author-illustrator seems to have systematically conceptualised his or her practice either. For instance, R. M. Ballantyne surprisingly did not write a single word about his drawings for his own novels in his memoirs, *An Author's Adventures, or Personal Reminiscences in Book-Making*. We can only rely on short pieces and fragments to reconstruct authors-artists' sets of beliefs. For example, in 1947 the BBC invited Mervyn Peake to give two talks about his art, and the subject of the second talk on the 20th of September was book illustration. This does not mean that authors-illustrators' views—however scantily expressed—did not inform their own practice. Simon Cooke has convincingly shown this about George Du Maurier.

Speaking of Du Maurier, I think the title of this book comes from one of his novels…

Absolutely, from *Peter Ibbetson*. Peter and Mary, although physically separated (Peter is serving a prison sentence for murder), connect through their shared dreams, in which they regularly meet in a room with an "enchanted" or "magic" window (Du Maurier 1891, 306 and 316):

> Out of *this* window, from this divan, we can sit and gaze on whatever we like. What shall it be? Just now, you perceive, there is a wild and turbulent sea, with not a ship in sight. Do you hear the waves tumbling and splashing, and see the albatross? I had been reading Keats's 'Ode to the Nightingale,' and was so fascinated by the idea of a lattice opening on the foam '*Of perilous seas by faery lands forlorn*'. (*ibid.*, 300)

The novel was originally published with eighty-four drawings by the author, in six instalments, in Harper's *New Monthly Magazine* from June to November 1891. The window, on top of being a pre-cinematic device, is clearly an embedded self-reflexive symbol for illustrations and/or mental images in the reader's mind—we shall come back to this fundamental dichotomy. The window metaphor was used again by Mitchell in 1986 to talk about the evolution in our conception of illustrations:

> The commonplace of modern studies of images, in fact, is that they must be understood as a kind of language; instead of providing a transparent window on the world, images are now regarded as the sort of sign that presents a deceptive appearance of naturalness and transparence concealing an opaque, distorting, arbitrary mechanism of representation, a process of ideological mystification... (Mitchell 8)

The same image was used by Chesterton! Let me find it—here it is: "The advantage of the small theatre exactly is that you are looking through a small window… This strong, square shape, this shutting off to everything else is not only an assistance to beauty; it is the essential of beauty. The most beautiful part of every picture is the frame" (Chesterton 150-151). But another well-known metaphor for authorial illustrations is the phrase "The Author's Own Candles" used by Thackeray in "Before the curtain", his preface to Vanity Fair. Thackeray writes that his book is "brilliantly illuminated with the Author's own candles" (Thackeray 1847, 2) by which he refers to his own illustrations. It seems to me that the word "illuminated" suggests that the illustrations are ornamental and that they provide the reader with hermeneutic insight—that they are enlightening.

The window, then, has been a running metaphor for illustrations… I shall come back to the analogy between illustrations and the theatre. Concerning Thackeray's phrase, a draft version of this book had it as a working title. It also raises multiple questions: are the illustrations used by the author in order to limit the reader's interpretative and imaginative freedom, or do they widen interpretations? Do they generate complex aesthetic and cognitive responses, or are they designed as tools for assigning meaning?

These are obviously big questions but let us proceed methodically. I would like to come back to the original definition you gave. Is "illustrating one's own books" so different from, say, Dickens's close collaboration with Cruikshank?

You are right in pointing this out. Authorial illustration is not a separate category. It is at one end of a spectrum. At the other end, we find authors who categorically refuse illustration, like Henry James before the New York Edition of (some of) his works. Gustave Flaubert described himself in one letter as “fundamentally a born enemy of texts that explain drawings and drawings that explain texts (…) My conviction about this is radical, and forms part of my aesthetic” (cited in Genette 406). On 11th October 1895, Edmund H. New wrote in his diary about his friend William Morris: “[he] does not think his books want illustrations [for] he describes his scenes so minutely and paints them so vividly that an illustration would rather limit than enlarge the reader’s conception” (cited in Kelvin xxviii). Some authors simply never think of having their works illustrated, others respond favourably to the publisher’s demand and give free rein to the illustrators, or as far as we know do not have a say in the matter. Others try to exert varying degrees of control on the artists’ work. In some cases, a long-lasting fruitful collaboration exists, like the one between Roald Dahl and Quentin Blake. Arthur Hughes worked from Christina Rossetti’s own sketches above her manuscript poems to illustrate *Sing-Song*, which, “from its initial manuscript stage, was conceived as a Pre-Raphaelite pairing of verbal and visual elements” (Kooistra 12).

Sometimes authors develop different relationships with various artists. Such was the case with Dickens. Thomas Hardy sent his own sketches to J. A. Pasquier, the illustrator of *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, and the strong resemblance between the heroine, Elfride, and Hardy’s wife, Emma, is likely to have stemmed from the collaboration between the two men. Hardy’s correspondence shows that he always worked with his illustrators very closely. He was very much aware that the illustrations had an enormous impact on the way readers receive and interpret the novels. Jules Verne also often accompanied his letters to illustrators with rough sketches and detailed instructions, and Ballantyne’s *Hudson Bay* was published with fifty illustrations designed by Bayard and other artists from sketches by the author—thus further segmenting the traditional division of labour between “the artists who drew the designs and the engravers who cut the blocks” (James 35). Moreover, being an author-illustrator is not a fixed identity. Thackeray, Du Maurier and Peake illustrated the works of others as well as their own. Jacques-Emile Blanche illustrated *Aymeris* but not his other novels.

You said that your research bore primarily on illustrations for novels, rather than poetry or nonfiction. Why is that?

As I said before, what interests me in illustrated novels is the interplay between textual and visual narratives—something we shall discuss in detail. But of course, some of the specificities of authorial illustration are shared between fiction, poetry, travel writing and even science books.

What are they?

As Bateman has suggested, paraphrasing Lewis:

> [A]s soon as one has pictures and texts being presented together in the same artefact as intended components, or facets, of the same 'message', their co-presence will insist that they be interpreted in terms of each other. Moreover, the different properties inherent to text and image respectively will *necessarily* create a double-up perspective. Even in the case of the simplest illustration—seen traditionally as 'just' showing episodes from the text—the fact that the visual material and the text necessarily provide different information will bring a double orientation into existence… (Bateman 89)

I would add to Bateman's remarks that authorial illustration has an integrative dimension that does not exist when an illustrator is commissioned to make drawings from an existing text, especially when its author is personally unknown to him or her. Integrative illustration is not about writing a story and then drawing pictures, or making up a story from pictures as students sometimes do in creative writing courses. Here the creative process is based on constant feedback in the sense that pictures made to illustrate a text will prompt the author-illustrator to modify it—and vice-versa. This is the reason why for Kurt Cyrus it is easier to take charge of both:

> The thing is, writers and editors always try to set the text in stone before showing it to the illustrator. But no matter how polished and perfect the words are, problems always arise when you try to set them to pictures. Most writers I've worked with have been agreeable to making changes if the case is strong. But there's that gray area where I have to decide whether I'm asking for a change because it's needed, or because I simply would have written it differently if I were the author. In that sense, it's easier to illustrate my own writing. I'm free to rewrite the text as the pictures progress. (Cyrus webpage)

J. D. Holiday also prefers to be in this position:

> Now, my being the author and the illustrator is actually helpful in putting the story together. Doing both allows me to easily move back and forth between the story and the pictures. I can easily revise the storyline and the paintings to match. Once I let myself go and commit to doing the artwork myself, being both the author and illustrator became an asset. (Holiday webpage)

Du Maurier had expressed similar views: "To illustrate life from one's own point of view, unshackled by the hands of another's suggestion (…) is no doubt easier, on account of the freedom, the irresponsibility, the absence of restraint or limitation", although he pointed out one drawback: "if the result is not a success, neither author nor artist can have the comfort of shifting the blame on to the other's back. It is on the luckless engraver and printer that we have to fall" (Du Maurier 1890, 374). However, although in most cases text and images are one creative process, it is not always so. This is a good example of the difficulties we meet in trying to come up with a universal definition of authorial illustration. Alasdair Gray was asked during an interview where his illustrations fitted into the text, and whether he thought of them with it, or as a prelude or an afterthought. His answer was unequivocal: "As an afterthought. My illustrations are not essential to the text but intended to make it more enjoyable. With my paintings, the image is first, of course" (Gray webpage). By contrast, Tina Kugler says she always starts from the images: "the images come first to me and the writing is like a framework to bring it together (…) the entire thing exists in my head, I just need to get it out on paper (or my tablet, actually, even my rough sketches are digital)." Kugler is both an illustrator and an author-illustrator, and she points out similarities and differences between the two activities:

> Both are fun! When I illustrate a storyboard, I often get visuals (sometimes almost a movie) in my head as I am reading along (be it a manuscript or TV show script). With a project by a different author, I have to reread more carefully, so I catch all of the nuances in the text, versus writing it myself, where I already know every detail as a visual. Fortunately, the author contributed a few illustration notes, but not too many—I have just enough guidance but I feel free to do it the way I want. (Kugler webpage)

What her example shows is that authorial illustration is part of the production process, whereas illustration is a form of interpretation—which of course does not mean that it is not creative. As for simultaneity, it really depends on each author-artist. Sometimes things even happen haphazardly. Originally, Alfred Kubin was supposed to illustrate Gustav Meyrink's *The Golem*, but as Meyrink went through a long unproductive period and stopped sending him new chapters, Kubin decided to use the drawings for his own novel *The Other Side*.

I find Gray's phrase quite perplexing. Shouldn't we always regard authorial illustrations as "essential to the text"?

Probably, although this is a very subjective notion. For publishers, illustrations are rarely essential to the text. For instance, most editions of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* or Peake's *Titus Groan* do not reproduce them. But I would endorse the idea that these works are more than simple juxtapositions of text and images: coalescence, or bitextuality as Kooistra calls it, creates a third dimension between the covers of the book, not only material but also narrative, aesthetic and symbolic, in the way scores and libretto merge in an opera. A publisher would never leave out Jules Verne's chapter titles (for example, in *Around the World in Eighty Days*: "Chapter 1, In which Phileas Fogg and Passepartout accept each other, the one as master, the other as man"), or the texts from Sophie Calle's *True Stories* on the grounds that she is primarily a photographer. Equally, to read *Peter Ibbetson* and *The Hobbit* without their illustrations is to read something other than what the authors-illustrators wanted us to read and see. The same is true with authors' prefaces, which are often left out. But if we say that illustrations are "essential" to a given text, we should also make clear what exactly we mean by this. Are they essential to understanding the content? To the pleasure of reading? To the reader's imagination? To something else? The presence of authorial illustrations has many effects which can vary from one work to another and from one reader to another. Henry James's experience as a reader of *Trilby* shows his confusion: "I observe that I am moved freely to confound picture with text and text with picture", he wrote in his obituary essay about his friend Du Maurier (cited in Pick xix). This did not prevent him from being relieved that the illustrations were excluded from the first book edition. For him, the novel "became somehow more serious without the illustrations, in line with James's 'general jealousy of any pictorial aid rendered to fiction from outside'" (Pick xix).

So, what does Gray mean when he says his illustrations are not essential to his text?

Judging by the rest of the interview, he sees them as part of the package more than the actual work. As always with paratext, the question of boundaries keeps popping up. Here, "not essential" could mean that they are on the outer edge, both physically and hermeneutically, and that the advertising function of the paratext, to use Gérard Genette's taxonomy, is the dominant one. Obviously, we don't have to agree with Gray, or even take his word for granted. Here is the relevant passage from the interview:

> My first book, *Lanark*, was published by Canongate, a small Edinburgh publishing house who gladly allowed me to design it. They would have had to pay someone else to do it had they not. The publishers (not me!) received a Scottish Arts Council design award for the best designed book of 1981. *Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, more copiously illustrated, won another design award, and had my own spoof review printed on the cover, which the Penguin paperback version was careful to copy. British publishers know it is financially sensible to make my books look the way I want them to because many readers and critics like them that way. George MacBeth thought *Something Leather* an unsuccessful novel but said it looked beautiful. Of course, my control of design and cover does not extend to paperback and foreign editions. The American Random House edition of *Something Leather* shed my illustrated initial capitals from the chapter headings, took the golden wasps from the binding, put a dark dark dark jacket in place of my heraldic bright challenging one, and sold badly. But maybe the story is to blame. I never overestimate the value of the package. (Gray webpage)

Despite the insistence on the commercial dimension ("pay", "financially", sold", "package") it seems to me that Gray is mostly concerned with the book as art object. This passage is an invitation to material bibliography (the study of books as objects) through the way it lists a succession of paratexts and parts of the book, and links them, in the final sentences, to meaning rather than price or mere ornament. It also shows a conscious effort to control the book from cover to cover. On top of designing the illustrations Gray sometimes wrote some of his blurbs, as for *Poor Things*. This is something akin to what Laurence Alloway in his 1974 article "Artists as Writers" called a "one-person control situation" (cited in Linker 78).

Can this really be achieved?

There will always be something that eludes the author, as in Gray's case the fact that he did not have the foreign editions in hand. Publishers almost always have the final say and it is not uncommon for authors-illustrators to be annoyed with publishers' decisions. For example, many of Edith Somerville's travel sketches were altered by in-house illustrators. The catalogue from the Somerville and Ross exhibition at Queen's University in 2006 explains that they "tamed and refined her depictions of female travellers" (*The E. Œ. Somerville and Martin Ross Exhibition* 7) so as not to offend contemporary prudish sensibilities. Being her own publisher is one of the reasons Virginia Woolf founded the Hogarth Press with her husband Leonard. When *Monday or Tuesday* came out in 1921, it had four plates by her sister Vanessa, and all the Woolf titles printed by the Press were published with original dust-jackets designed by Vanessa. But even then, reception is beyond the author's control, however tight it may be. Similarly, becoming his own publisher was what prompted William Morris to create the Kelmscott Press in January 1891. Morris searched for illustrators for editions of his own work, as his collaboration with Charles M. Gere and Arthur J. Gaskin increasingly frustrated him. For Norman Kelvin, who edited Morris's letters, "obtaining what he imagined was an historical kind of singular control may have helped him regard himself as the artist-in-charge of production, illusory as the desire for autonomous control was, since he was always dependent on friends, associates, and employees" (Kelvin xxv). Kooistra makes a similar observation about Christina Rossetti: "Even in her lifetime, factors beyond the author's control resulted in certain textual effects that influenced reception and interpretation. Once her works had become part of the public domain with the expiration of copyright in the early twentieth century, illustrated Rossettis proliferated and meanings multiplied with their audiences." (Kooistra 8)

Didn't Morris also have a political agenda? He founded the Kelmscott Press to produce works which looked like the first printed books of the 15th century, a pre-capitalist era. Plunkett, whom you cited in the beginning of this conversation, wrote that Kelmscott books provided "a sensuous rather than utilitarian reading experience: they arrest the eye with their wealth of visual detail (...) The frontispiece and first page form a visual whole because, as Morris realized, 'the unit of the book is not one page, but a pair of pages'". (Plunkett 244)

Absolutely. This is probably the best example of the holistic nature of authorial illustration. Referring to Nelson Goodman's distinction between autographic and allographic works, Mitchell wrote: "Pictures and engravings are autographic: it makes a difference whether we have an original or a copy, an authentic Rembrandt or a fake. With a text, on the other hand, these sorts of considerations do not normally enter in the same way. It would seem odd to speak of a forgery of King Lear" (Mitchell 68-69). However, authorial illustration is beyond the realm of such normality. If one of the illustrations in *Vanity Fair* or *The Hobbit* was revealed as fake, it would indeed "make a difference" (*ibid.*, 69).

You mentioned Somerville and Ross who wrote collaboratively, but the drawings—correct me if I'm wrong—were made by Somerville only. Are there other examples of this, and is it authorial illustration?

The brothers George and Weedon Grossmith wrote *The Diary of a Nobody* together, with illustrations by Weedon. I would call it authorial illustration because in the phenotext—by which I mean the text in its final published form as presented to the public—who wrote what, and who drew what, does not come to the surface. It is important to have the information for scholarly purposes, but then the interpretative grid is different. There is a way of reading which does not necessitate taking this into account. In a way, it is like knowing whether a detail on a painting by Rembrandt or Michelangelo was made by them or by one of their assistants in their workshops. It is of valuable academic interest to possess the information, but the essential meaning of the work can be grasped without it. This question also takes us back to your previous remark about Dickens and Cruikshank. In his pamphlet *The Artist and the Author*, Cruikshank insists on his partnership with Dickens and Ainsworth. He argues that *Oliver Twist*, *The Miser's Daughter*, *The Tower of London* and other novels were not simply illustrated but co-produced by him. This is far from being the only example. Paul Goldman has proposed that "to read [Elizabeth Gaskell's] *Wives and Daughters* without access to the original designs for the first printing of the novel is to lose half the intended purpose of publisher [*The Cornhill Magazine*], author [Gaskell] and illustrator [George Du Maurier]" (Goldman 2016, 26). Yet no modern edition includes all the full-page drawings. The idea is that illustration, taken as a serious art form, to paraphrase Du Maurier, is not simply decorative but adds something to the text which is not already in it.

Like what?

Conflict and divergence! There is conflict when text and illustration contradict each other and divergence when they tell different stories or provide the reader with different elements. The plate showing Becky as Clytemnestra in chapter 67 of *Vanity Fair* is a classic example of divergence. It carries information additional to, though not contradictory with, the textual narrative. Becky is shown eavesdropping behind a curtain with a mysterious object in hand, possibly the phial mentioned in the dialogue—a crucial fact not mentioned by the narrator and which suggests that she is guilty of poisoning Jos. *Peter Ibbetson* provides numerous examples of conflict. Paisley Mann has shown the discrepancies between Peter's memories and dreams as told in the text and as shown in the illustrations. I am also thinking of Carroll's original illustrations for *Alice*.

They are inspired by Bosch and create an eerie atmosphere which is not immediately perceptible in the text. Yet, once you have seen these rather disturbing images, it is impossible to read the story in the same way as before. We need a third category, then: determinism, in the sense that our reading of the text (for example our perception of a scene or a character) is necessarily shaped by the author's visual rendering. I use the word "determinism" to refer to the inescapable influence of the images on the reception of the text (and that of the text on the reception of the images). Du Maurier was aware of this when he wrote that illustrations "stick in the mind like charming tunes that won't allow themselves to be forgotten" (Du Maurier 1890 I, 351). This kind of experience is evidence of the holistic nature of author-illustrated novels. To read them without the illustrations is to read truncated, diminished versions of the works.

There can also be conflict between the author-illustrator's visual rendering and the reader's mental images of scenes, places and characters.

Yes, and this might be where Thackeray's candle metaphor breaks down, something of which he was probably aware. Illustrations don't enlighten the text—they modify it. This is likely to happen if your first reading was of a truncated version, without illustrations, but also if there is conflict between an authorial illustration and your mental representation. You are then forced to interpret the text more deliberately, for example through rereading and reconsideration of your first impressions. You must play a more active interpretative role. Flaubert's radical objection to illustrations, which I quoted earlier, was based on the idea that the relationship linking texts and illustrations is mutual explanation, but many other relationships can be envisaged. Moreover, as Peter Mendelsund observed in *What We See When We Read*, unless there is an illustration on every page, readers break free from these imposed images after a few minutes or a few pages, and their own mental images take over again, until the next illustration. Although this does not necessarily imply conflict, it is an ebb and flow process, and a dialectic one. Illustrations also carry the reader's imagination and help create the story in his or her mind. Once again, and I am sorry for repeating myself, in authorial illustration text and images are integral to the book, or whatever material form the combination takes.

What do you mean?

In Europe, we have been accustomed to reading books for centuries, but a variety of formats exist in other cultures. For example, Jin'ishi Konishi explains that because traditional Japanese scrolls are read by