"Seminar in Visual and Textual Technologies: The Illustrated Book"

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This seminar will explore the complex interchange between text and illustration, beginning with the glories of anonymous manuscript illuminators through late Medieval illustrations of Chaucer and early printings of the Bible. We will then follow along an extended line stretching from the advent of illustrated printing through three centuries of line engraving on copper and woodcuts, culminating in the technological advances of the Romantic and Victorian illustrated book in Britain (lithography and mezzotint engraving on steel), before the onset of photography in the later 19th-century. These changes in technology all accelerated the cultural pervasiveness of mechanical reproduction (Benjamin), even as they grew from the integral development and evolution of the art and handcraft of engraving. The seminar is, in simple, a rough survey of the history of the illuminated and illustrated book, a prolonged reflection upon the metagraphic realm, what Ruskin described in Ariadne Florentina (1875) as the tracery between "pure line" and the myriad complications of the engraved mark and "life itself."

Engraving requires a permanent cutting of a furrow in a flat surface, whether of copper, wood, steel, or earth (to etch, mark, scour or score, to make a grave). As in the illustration given above, from the Biblia Pauperum (15th-C.), Medieval Christians imagined the entire world as a book in which God's creation was both written and drawn. This seminar will investigate the formal (skilled/craft) elements and technology of illustration, of the way text informs images and images text, and the transformations that occur as an illustrated text alternates from one medium to the other. One is reminded here of Michael Camille's Image on the Edge (1992), where he notes the often antithetical relationship between image and text: "medieval artists created marginal images from a 'reading', or rather an intentional misreading, of the text."

The sorts of questions we may consider might include but will certainly not be limited to the following. What is the status of illustrator as artist, especially in works that were designed to be widely reproduced? In the Middle Ages, manuscript illuminators are often independent craftspeople (women as well as men) working for either religious or secular patrons; their talent is enormous, but their names are, with a few exceptions like Fouquet, who illuminated the Heures d'Etienne Chevalier, lost to us. Those celebrated painters who chose to illustrate equally famous texts, as Botticelli illustrated Dante's Divina Commedia, however, are rarely classified as mere illustrators. What does the division between "artist" and "illustrator" tell us about aesthetic and cultural values, about our own assumptions and preconceptions? How does the illustration serve to educate and what sort of education does it provide? The early modern Biblia Pauperum (Bible of the

Poor) was widely disseminated and printed in Northern Europe; not a Bible per se, but rather a compendium of Bible stories told through typological illustration and moralizing texts in a variety of vernaculars, it was intended for those who were impoverished educationally rather than financially. It suggests the degree to which the collaboration between the printer and the illustrator became a potent tool for the education of the nascent bourgeoisie. When do illustrations stop being description and become commentary, or become nearly autonomous matter, all but independent of context? The marginalia in medieval manuscripts, and especially in religious manuscripts, often satirize the text, while the Ellesmere illustrations of the Canterbury pilgrims work in the opposite direction, to downplay Chaucer's satirical vision of class relations in 14th-century England.

The 15th and the 19th centuries will serve as the two nodal points of the seminar, not least because William Morris and the Kelmscott Press in the 1890s looked back conscientiously to the 15th century. Morris's work near the end of the century only completes an extraordinary hundred years or so (lithography was invented in 1798), in which most of the genres of the illustrated book reached consummate expression, including the tour guide or nature anthology (Scott and Turner's The Provincial Antiquities and Picturesque Scenery of Scotland of 1826); the illustrated collected works or long poem (Scott's Prose Works of 1834-36, Samuel Roger's Italy of 1838, or the famous Moxon Tennyson of 1860); the illustrated novel (Dickens, of course, by Phiz [Hablot K. Browne] and George Cruikshank, or Sir J. E. Millais's well-known series for Trollope, including the wood-engravings for Orley Farm of 1862 or The Small House at Allington of 1864); the illustrated architectural monograph (Ruskin's lavish Stones of Venice of 1851-1853); urban scenes and views of industrial squalor (Ollier or Dore); and children's literature, as surely as it develops from late 19th to early 20th- century book production (those extraordinarily well-known and now nearly pervasive images from Arthur Rackham, Beatrix Potter, Edmund Dulac, Howard Pyle, or N. C. Wyeth). This list is too immediately anglo-centric as it stands, but it will be extensively supplemented by French and German sources in the seminar.

Later in the second semester the seminar will consider the long-standing antipathy between traditional forms of engraving and photography. Gordon N. Ray himself noted that there must be an "absolute" exclusion of photography from any discriminating discussion of the illustrated book, not only, historically, in deference to the Victorian position that photography was a "foe-to-graphic art," but also because the "criteria for judging photographically illustrated books are radically different from those for judging other kinds of illustrated books" (1976). The seminar will not seek, of course, to reinscribe this exclusion, but we will turn to it as a question in the light of 20th-century developments. The seminar will conclude with consideration of current literary cyberculture and examples of the contemporary graphic novel.

We would hope to invite 3 to 4 visitors to be guests of the seminar, at appropriate times during the year, even as we imagine that the Mellon post-doctoral fellow would be a young scholar of the cultural history of the visual arts, during the 16th, 17th, or 18th centuries, or an art historian with a special interest in illumination and/or illustration. In

the fuller proposal that would be circulated to faculty, we also hope to provide more open invitation to cross-disciplinary and theoretical approaches to the topic.