Public Abstract

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Graduation Term:SS 2010

Department:English

Degree:PhD

Title:Illustrated Editions: Depicting the Eighteenth-Century British Novel

This dissertation on illustrated British fiction from the 1740s to 1830s argues that a vital part of novelistic interpretation is omitted when illustrations are overlooked. Rather than viewing the novels of the eighteenth century as solely works of literature in the narrowest sense, we should instead think of them as projects defined by collaboration, materiality, and variety--not single texts but an interrelation of cultural forces at work on the author, illustrator, publisher, and reader. The material form of the novel in the eighteenth century unites image and text in a new venue, and most importantly with a new perspective. The mingling of these elements can best be realized when visual and verbal elements are considered in concert, recognizing collaborations that not only speak to the culture of the period but also show the possibility of uniting word and image in ways that can lead us to productive, critical encounters just as they did in their own time. Considering creative collaboration in this way demands that we broaden our definition of reading to include not just the words on the page but the overall materiality of the texts -- words in conjunction with images, white space, margins, paper size, etc. -- as well as the parallel illustrations functioning outside the text as part of the wider visual culture.