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Emilie Sitzia – Maastricht University

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Lost in Intersemiotic Translation?

J. J. Grandville's Illustration of *Robinson Crusoe*

Emilie SITZIA

Maastricht University

Robinson Crusoe has been illustrated from its first edition onward. A single frontispiece, an etching by Clark and John Pine after an unknown artist, is the first in a long line of visual interpretations of the story. While there has been some general literature on the illustrations of *Robinson Crusoe* (Blewett 1986, 2018; Behrendt), this article will focus on the illustrations of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in 19th-century France. It looks specifically at J. J. Grandville's (1803–1847) 1840 illustration. This contribution aims to investigate what images say about the reception of a specific text in a specific historical, political and social environment and what is lost (and gained) in visual translation.

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was very well received in France. As Blewett notes:

throughout much of the eighteenth century *Robinson Crusoe* was more highly regarded in France than in England. In the following year, 1762, Rousseau published his *Emile*, in which he promoted *Robinson Crusoe* as the best treatise on natural education, and a splendid example of the value of acquiring self-sufficiency and hence independence of judgment for the young Emile, who is actively encouraged to identify himself with Crusoe. (Blewett, "Noble Savage" 31)

In France, the reading of the text gradually secularized and most illustrations followed in the footsteps of Marillier, who embodied Crusoe as a heroic figure (Blewett, "Iconic Crusoe"; Behrendt). While in England *Robinson Crusoe* was widely understood as the adventures of an ordinary man in exceptional circumstances, in France *Robinson*

Crusoe was increasingly read as the tale of a heroic survivor (Blewett, “Iconic Crusoe” 233).

A sign of this story’s long-lasting popularity is the recurring illustrated editions of the book, in particular that published by Henri Fournier in 1840. A famous illustrator of the time, J. J. Grandville, was commissioned to create images to accompany the text. One particularity of this edition is the unusually high number of illustrations: 206 in total.

I will first discuss the role of illustration as a visual reception of a literary text. With each new illustration, stories are retold, re-appropriated by various cultures and updated to fit their time. But how do illustrations reflect the cultural, social and political fabric of their period? I will then focus on a specific set of illustrations; that is, Grandville’s illustrations in the 1840 Fournier edition. I will analyze these to see how they reflect the cultural, social and political fabric of their own time and what they can tell us about the reception of *Robinson Crusoe* and the particular reading Grandville makes of the text.

Illustration as Translation/Reception/Adaptation

Over time, contrasting views of illustration have ranged from seeing it as subservient to the text to considering it as an autonomous art form; these positions still coexist. Théophile Gautier was one of the first to comment on the role of the illustrator. He claimed that: “The artist must understand the poet [...], it is not about [...] copying reality as one sees it [...]. The illustrator, if one allows us this neologism, who is almost one no longer, must only see with the eyes of someone else” (Gautier 227). This position places the illustration in service to the text and the illustrator as a shadow of

the writer. This position was almost immediately challenged, however, by illustrators such as Grandville.

Scholarship on illustration further questions this dependency. As Forster-Hahn states:

However earnest the attempt to achieve a “faithful” transference of word into image, the artist always brings pictorial conventions into play, not only literary interpretation, and, by dint of its imaginary surfeit, the illustration manifests intricate links to the political and cultural fabric of its own period. (511)

It is in this direction, looking at the interaction between word and image, that illustration studies have developed. Indeed, it is becoming more and more common to look to illustration to better understand reception of a text in a specific historical context. As Colombo argues:

[...] while transposing their sources from the verbal into the visual dimension, illustrations often enact processes of formal and conceptual transformation which require no less creative effort than those involved in original writing. The second fact is that, at times, the creations resulting from these efforts are so inventive and remarkable that they come to challenge the notion of originality and to acquire prominence over their sources. (401)

An approach that has proven to be fruitful when applied to this hybrid material is intersemiotic translation. In his essay on the “Linguistic Aspect of Translation,” Jakobson distinguishes three types:

- intralingual (or reformulation),
- interlingual (or translation in its most common use) and
- intersemiotic translation (or transmutation from one sign system to another). (79)

This last type of translation applies to illustration very well as the ideas from the books are transmuted from words to images. Furthermore, if one considers illustration as a form of translation and if one considers that translation is always to some measure

adaptation (as it adapts the original words, texts and context to a new language and socio-cultural environment), one can consider illustration as a form of reception. The illustrator is then a privileged reader of the text, whose interpretation in turn influences the reading/reception of the text itself.

The Place of Illustration in the Text

The illustrator's reading of the text takes a place of honor within the text itself. In the 19th century, as readership increased, printing costs dropped and technical possibilities allowed for an increasingly intermingled text and image, the tension between the authority of the writer and the illustrator increased (Bland; Mollier & Cachin; Fisher; Lyons; Colombo; Yousif). Illustration became an integral part of a publisher's marketing strategy (Behrendt). Behrendt explains how from the 18th century onwards this situation led to a "tug-of-war between the verbal and visual texts, and between the respective ambitions of author and illustrator each to command the reader's attention" (24).

Sitting side by side with the text, illustration interrupts the activity of word reading and offers an instant interpretation/impression of the text, focusing the reader's attention on the details present (or absent) from the text and on specific scene(s). When looking at a page spread, the domination of the image over the text is clear. This domination of the interpretation of the illustrator is particularly important if, as in the case of the illustrations analyzed here, they are numerous. In the case of the 1840 French edition of *Robinson Crusoe*, Grandville illustrates almost every second page spread. This creates a parallel visual narrative voice that selects key scenes, gives specific features to the characters, creates atmosphere and provides a visual context for the

adventures being described. The images focus the attention of the reader on certain details, complementing or even contradicting the text.

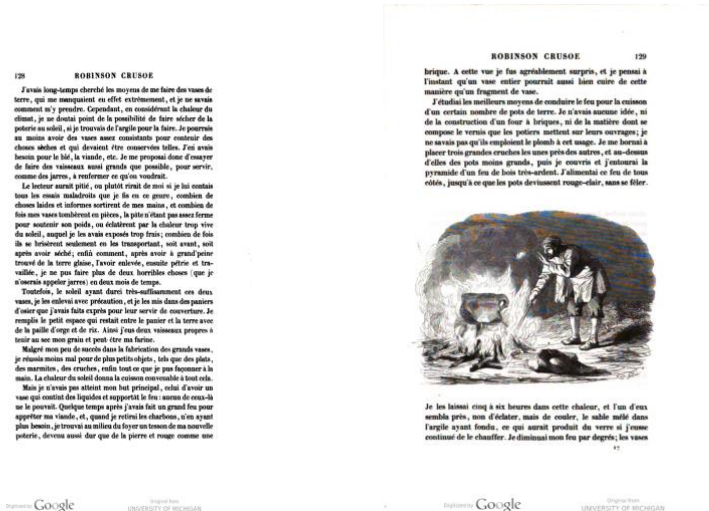


Fig. Ill. 1: Grandville. *Robinson Crusoe*, 1840, pp.128–29.

The sequencing of the text and the image slows down or accelerates the action in relation to the placement of the image in the text. Images have a synchronic nature; that is, they deliver the whole message in one go. In contrast, text needs unfolding over time and a linear reading to pass on its message. As a consequence, reader/viewers tend to have a more immediate response to images than text (Behrendt). The very high number of images in the 1840 Fourier edition therefore impacts on the pace of reading but also on the perception of the narrative itself.

The numerous images in this edition are likely due to the fact that by the 19th century in France *Robinson Crusoe* was largely seen as an educative text. From Rousseau's recommendation to use it for the education of Emile, to the development of specific educative illustrated publications for children such as *Le journal des enfants* (1833), images were seen as part of the educational toolbox. Images can support a deficient (or still-being-acquired) reading. Yet the number of images is also a way to

“not read”; rather, to look at the narrative instead. This is especially true for *Robinson Crusoe* as at this time there was already a pre-existing visual culture around the text (Blewett, “Noble Savage”). This visual culture was simultaneously part of popular and more refined book/print culture. Indeed, at that time, one could find almanacs, chapbooks, large display prints and *images d’épinal* all looking at the adventures of Robinson Crusoe. Interestingly, this visual culture is mostly focused on Crusoe’s time on the island, an episode that Rousseau identified as the most educational part of the text.



Fig. III. 2. Fabrique de Pellerin (Epinal), *Histoire de Robinson Crusoe*, 1840.

Of particular importance was Marillier’s image of Robinson Crusoe that had anchored the character in the French imaginary as a heroic figure. Another key visual reference (especially for Grandville) was Cruikshank’s illustration of the book. The two-volume edition contained two engraved frontispieces and thirty-seven woodcut illustrations dropped into the text (Vogler). Cruikshank’s illustrations were marked by a sense of humor that impacted on French representations. All these images contributed to an existing visual culture and specific understanding of *Robinson Crusoe* at the time.

Generating Knowledge vs Displaying Information

Johanna Drucker, in her book *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production* (2014), distinguishes between images that 1) generate knowledge and 2) display existing information. The former have an active role in knowledge production processes: the translation to a visual language implies the addition and transformation of information. The latter simultaneously show existing knowledge and conceal the decision-making processes that lead to the selection of what is on display. Such an image witnesses the bias of the image-maker and the society that produced and consumed it. Illustrations often do both, as illustrations of literary works are both an adaptation and a reception of the text. As Peter Guenther claims, illustrations not only comment upon and reference the times of their production, but more importantly,

they are interpretations of the text as it was read and understood at this period. It is a common experience when opening an illustrated book that the time-lag between the production of the illustration and the viewer/reader's own becomes immediately apparent. The conclusions are rarely drawn: illustrations can provide the basis for a reception assessment frequently more precise and enlightening than contemporary literary reviews. (104)

The illustrator's interpretation of the text simultaneously displays a certain interpretation of that text and impacts on the reading of the text itself.

Such images are difficult to analyze. Semiotics and translation theories have been the preferred method since the 1990s and 2000s (see for example Pereira 1998, 2007 and Sitzia 2010, 2019), as it allows for an approach that looks simultaneously at what is represented and its cultural context. As a method, this approach has recently been updated to analyze illustration. Jaleen Grove proposes we merge contextual analysis, iconography and semiotics to offer a more extensive understanding of these hybrid images, of how they are created and how they impact audiences. This approach allows a more holistic analysis of illustrations and permits us to see what is gained and

lost in the process of intersemiotic translation, from text to image, and also to consider the social mechanisms at play.

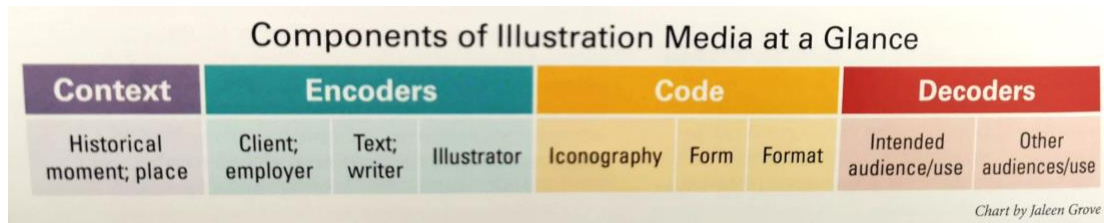


Fig. Ill. 3. Jaleen Grove in *History of Illustration*, 2019, p. xviii.

Grandville's *Robinson Crusoe*

Grandville

Grandville's illustration of *Robinson Crusoe* is particularly interesting. Despite the relatively limited studies on Grandville (Renonciat 1985, 2006; Hannosh 1992, 1994; Colombo; Yousif), he is well known as a grand master of imagination. In particular, he is known for his fantastic representations and metamorphoses in his proto-surrealist albums (Gamboni).



Fig. Ill. 4. Grandville. *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des Animaux*, vol. 2, 1842, p. 248.

It was *Les Metamorphoses du Jour* (1828–1829) that brought Grandville fame. The seventy-one hand-colored lithographs offered high social commentary satirizing church and state while employing anthropomorphism (Doyle et al. 181; Gamboni). Like many illustrators of the time, Grandville produced caricatures, illustrated books and drawings for the illustrated press (Mainardi 8). One of the keys to his success was his awareness of the variety of his audience.



Fig. Ill. 5. Grandville. *Les Metamorphoses du Jour*. 1828, pl. LXIII.

At the time Grandville was asked to illustrate *Robinson Crusoe* he had been dubbed the “king of caricature” (Renonciat, *Vie et l’œuvre* 173; Renonciat, *Grandville* 8). From 1836 he focused on illustrations of books as the censorship rules against political caricature (1835) were re-enforced (Renonciat, *Vie et l’œuvre* 124; Colombo). His literary illustration—La Fontaine’s *Fables* (1838), Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1838) and Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1840)—all share an extremely high image-to-text ratio (423 drawings for *Gulliver’s travel*, for example) (Colombo).

Unsurprisingly, for his illustration of *Robinson Crusoe*, Grandville’s starting point was, in part, the existing visual culture. This is not unusual, as illustrators often

tend to ground themselves in iconographic traditions (Behrendt). For Grandville, Marillier and Cruikshank seem to be of particular importance. By choosing such starting points he anchors the character in a French tradition but also in a British (and humorous) visual world. While Cruikshank definitely impacted on Grandville's selection of scenes and composition, Cruikshank's 39 images is of course a lot fewer than Grandville's 206 for the same text. Grandville expands the visual realm of *Robinson Crusoe*, details characters, situations and contexts and offers new points of view.

The main themes of Defoe's book are generally understood to be the domination by the white colonizer, the exploitation of nature, the praise of technical skills, the power of faith, the value of friendship and the discovery of simple happiness. The thematic emphasis of Grandville's images overlaps and diverges from this standard reception and gives us insights into Grandville's interpretation of the text. As Wettlaufer notes: "Grandville makes clear that the viewer must read his images to understand them, for like words they function symbolically while signification is produced by the dialectic between the terms on both visual and linguistic levels" (458).

From Religion to Moral Lesson

The power of faith is replaced in Grandville's illustrations by an emphasis on the moral lesson. This places the images in the tradition of an enlightenment understanding of art; that is, that the role of art is to morally educate citizens for the betterment of society. For example, for Robinson's departure from the family house—a scene also represented, albeit quite differently, by Cruikshank—Grandville uses the visual vocabulary of 18th-century moral images. Of course, William Hogarth is evoked, but it is mostly to Jean-Baptiste Greuze and his *Fils puni* (1778) that Grandville refers.



Fig. III. 6. Grandville. *Robinson Crusoe*, 1840, p. 3.

The codified hand movement, the traditional frieze-like composition and the drapery and furniture style evoke 18th-century moral representations, especially that of Greuze. As Rosenblum mentions, Greuze is known for his attempt to reform and simplify Rococo style and for his works, which often included a “broad horizontal frieze of clearly sculptured figures arranged frontally and symmetrically within the geometric dictates of an oval” (Rosenblum 53)—a compositional structure used here by Grandville. Even the type used for the representation of the father’s face is inspired by Greuze. While Cruikshank presents a humorous scene transforming the father into a sort of *Commedia dell’arte* type, Grandville presents an *Exemplum Virtutis* (example of virtue). Greuze is known for such depictions and had, on several occasions, represented “the touching moral lesson of filial inconsistency, in which an unworthy, evil son is contrasted with a noble, suffering father”, where the moralizing deathbed formula is transferred to a genre scene (Rosenblum 55).

Grandville’s artistic choice is possibly due to the influence of his friend Edouard Charton, director of the *Magasin Pittoresque* and co-editor of *L’Illustration*. He was pushing Grandville towards Greuze and Hogarth as models for Grandville’s artistic development (Renonciat, *Vie et l’œuvre* 143–44). The moralizing quality of the visual

scene shifts the reading of the text: the viewer judges Robinson's action as an example of his lack of virtue rather than siding with the young man—as is the case in Cruikshank's interpretation.

Similarly, the religious imagery, while still present in Grandville's illustrations, is interpreted in an intriguing manner. Grandville mostly uses the religious visual codes present in popular culture rather than those of high religious art. God is represented twice: once in the form of a battered print and once in the form of a book illustration. This process of including an illustration within an illustration creates a distance with the viewer. Instead of creating an image inspiring religious emotions, Grandville creates a rather distanced and reflective image, framing religion in the realm of storytelling and the imaginary.

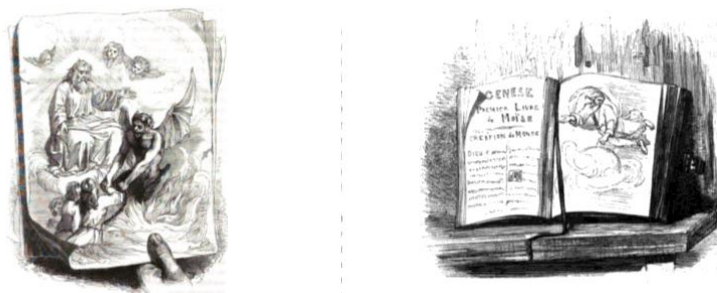
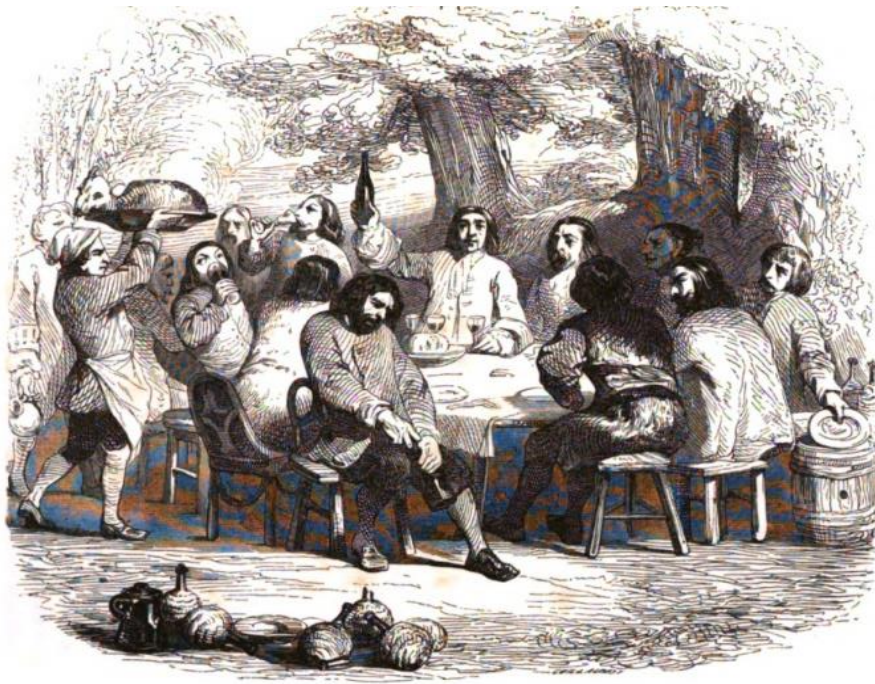


Fig. Ill. 7. Grandville. *Robinson Crusoe*, 1840, pp. 229 and 477.

A further allusion in Grandville's illustrations to religious painting is ambiguous to say the least. The 'Last Supper' scene, where Robinson dines with the new inhabitants of the island, creates an uncertain visual message. Seated among twelve apostle-settlers (we do not count the cook serving the dinner) in a frontal composition, Robinson sits centrally and faces the viewer, raising a bottle of wine in his hand. A cooked goat replaces the lamb, the bread is on the table and a still life in the foreground is mostly composed of empty bottles. Many characters are represented in the act of drinking: ten bottles and two pitchers are present. Because it is unclear from the image if the visual

reference is religious—the Last Supper—or that of a drunken genre painting, the ambiguous image creates a Robinson/Jesus association while seeming to caricature the situation. The tension between the religious painting and genre ‘drinking’ scene is used to create an ambiguous message employing a familiar visual vocabulary.



Plus convinces de nous reunir tous pour diner ensemble le lendemain ; et ce fut reellement une fete brillante

Fig. III. 8. Grandville. *Robinson Crusoe*, 1840, p. 431.

From both the representation of the moral scene and the ambiguity of the religious scenes one can conclude that Grandville adopts a French perspective on *Robinson Crusoe*, toning down and even to some measure satirizing the religious content to put forward a more moral understanding of the story (in line with Rousseau’s reading/recommendation). When looking at another ‘encoder’, the publisher, this ambiguity is maintained. Henri Fournier (1800–1888) specialized in the publication of volumes by Voltaire and Rousseau (as well as Grandville’s work). In this context the

satirizing of the religious content and the emphasis on the moral aspect of the scenes is in line with the publisher's profile.

An Educational Ethnographic Novel

Similarly, the 'exploitation of nature' and the 'praise of technical skills' themes are shifted towards education and ethnographic representation. A large portion of the images created by Grandville seems to refer to ethnographic representations (technical and scientific). Many images represent lists of objects, farming activities, artisan work, and so on.



Fig. III. 9. Grandville. *Robinson Crusoe*, 1840, pp. 116, 86 and 590.

As often with ethnographic representations, the images are quite stiff and without movement. Indeed the focus on and display of the detailed objects, techniques or animals give a fixity to the images. Grandville's adoption of this visual language certainly suggests that the book was as an educational tool.

Furthermore, Grandville adopts from the ethnographic representations a sense of exoticism and escapism inspired by ethnographic travel reports and travel books. He

borrowed from their visual vocabulary: he focuses on the beautiful indigenous women, exotic jewelry and objects, the surprising architecture and the otherworldly landscapes. There are also a number of racial caricatures throughout the book, in line with such visual productions of the time (and often direct references to Cruikshank's work).



Fig. Ill. 10. Grandville, *Robinson Crusoe*, 1840, pp. 393, 565 and 563.

That Grandville's illustrations looked to educate but also provide a form of escapism is relatively typical of the way entertainment and education are thought to merge in 19th-century France. For example, Hetzel, a long-time friend of Grandville (Renonciat, *Vie et l'œuvre* 132), later promoted the genres of the *voyages extraordinaires*—imaginary travels with an educative aim, of which Jules Verne's stories are the most famous example. With their focus on education and escapism, Grandville's illustrations of *Robinson Crusoe* can be seen as a transition towards this genre.

A British Naval Novel

Despite this 19th-century French educative aim, Grandville still made extensive use of British visual references. As mentioned earlier, the similarities in the scenes chosen by Cruikshank and Grandville make it very likely that Grandville used Cruikshank's work as a starting point. Of Cruikshank's thirty-nine illustrations, seven are naval scenes. In particular, the naval battles and seascape, a staple of British painting, are present in

both sets of illustrations. Transcendent seascapes, such as those of Joseph Mallord William Turner or Clarkson Frederick Stanfield, are typical of British Romantic landscape painting (Vaughan 1994). Derived from the topographical tradition, such paintings added action and drama to the genre (Vaughan 1999). The use of these codes functions as a visual acknowledgement of the novel's Britishness.



Fig. Ill. 11. Grandville. *Robinson Crusoe*, 1840, pp. 409, 526 and 18.

Adventure and Fantasy

An aspect of the book put forward in the illustrations of Grandville is absent from many other illustrative interpretations of *Robinson Crusoe*. For a number of illustrations Grandville uses the visual vocabulary of the adventure novel, the fairy-tale and the fantastic (for example, dark organic matter, monstrous representations and highly detailed and contrasted compositions). The opening of the book is interesting in this regard, as a castle seen through what seems to be a fairy-tale forest opens the book. It is unclear where this castle is from as it doesn't appear in the text and Robinson introduces himself as part of the middle class. It is, however, reminiscent of illustrations of *Sleeping Beauty's* castle (Sitzia 2019) and is a usual feature of the visual opening of illustrated fairy-tale books. This frames the story of Crusoe within the fairy-tale realm, reinforcing the imaginary component rather than adopting the 'effect of reality' that

Defoe attempts in the opening pages tracing and contextualizing the family history of his hero.

Similarly, the fantasy with which Grandville represents the idol or the eclipse dragon is interesting. In particular, the eclipse scene—which is only mentioned in passing in a sentence in the text—featuring a dragon and the mustachioed sun, goes far beyond the text, expanding on the beliefs and imagination of the people Crusoe dismisses as ignorant savages. The magnificence of this fantastical representation contradicts the text’s characterization of the population.

Grandville puts the emphasis on such details, making *Robinson Crusoe* a fantastic novel. This of course plays to Grandville’s strength and he certainly addresses his own public with such images. Furthermore, he exploits the “critical function of the fantastic” (Renonciat, *Grandville* 14) by questioning and reframing the text.



Fig. Ill. 12. Grandville. *Robinson Crusoe*, 1840, pp. 1, 577 and 554.

The action scenes and far-fetched adventures, such as the wolf attack or the dancing bear in a tree, are also given a significant place in Grandville’s visual adaptation. But by and large this is still a minority of the images—which is surprising for Grandville who usually has a predilection for such images. The presence of such images gives us

an indication that the illustrations were also intending to satisfy Grandville's usual public.

From the illustrations we can therefore conclude that there is an expectation of a certain readership: readers more interested in the moral lesson than the religious teaching on the power of faith; British culture lovers; a public willing to learn from the experience of Crusoe looking for an ethnographic and educational aspect and those with an interest in adventure and fantasy.

Challenging the Text

However, as we have seen, some of Grandville's illustrations seem to go further than adapting to a specific public: they seem to challenge the text. Wettlaufer attributes this particularity of Grandville's work to the fact that "the content or meaning of the visual signifiers is not fixed and depends on the viewer's interpretation" (469), as we have seen in our analysis of the 'Last Supper' scene.

Later in his career, Grandville challenged the very notion of narrative in *Another World* (1844) (Mainardi 182–183). He even went so far as to acknowledge the limitations imposed to the "crayon" by "la plume" in the prologue of *Un autre monde* (Renonciat, *Vie et l'œuvre* 231). In that work he reverses the dependency of text and image (Renonciat, *Vie et l'œuvre* 145; Colombo). Grandville was aware of the power of illustration and to him illustrators certainly entered into an artistic rivalry with writers (Yousif).

However, Grandville's stance was debated at the time. Writers like Baudelaire were very critical of his "literary" art and use of allegory (Hannoosh 1992, 1994), while Théophile Gautier also criticized Grandville for trying to "make the pencil speak the

language of the pen” (Gautier 231–232). As Wettlaufer notes, Grandville’s works “destabiliz[es] both social and aesthetic hierarchies” of the time (457).

Behrendt writes of the “interpretation and intrusion” of illustration (24), and in the case of Grandville, one could go so far as to claim the colonization of the text by the image. The plethora of images in Grandville’s *Robinson Crusoe* creates a competition between the images and the text. One could argue that the images take over the text for storytelling. Grandville’s work is often identified as being a stepping-stone towards the development of graphic novels and a contributor to the rise of visual storytelling (Doyle et al. 377). And, as we mentioned earlier, Grandville’s starting points are in part the existing visual culture surrounding *Robinson Crusoe* rather than the text itself.

A Romantic Reading?

A dissonant aspect in Grandville’s illustration is the emphasis he gives to the expression of emotions. While Grandville sometimes pushes the images so far that they border caricature, he consistently reinforces and focuses the reader’s attention on the expression of emotions. Of course, this is in line with a characteristic of French Romanticism prevalent at the time. For example, his representation of the maid going insane with hunger with bulging eyes, furrowed brows and violently biting her arm are reminders of early Romantic paintings; in particular, Gericault’s portraits of the insane dating from the 1820s. Interestingly, in the text the maid thinks about biting herself but doesn’t. By the 1840s Romantic art was the official form in France and was used for decorating public buildings. It had become the vernacular French art. Grandville’s adoption of intense emotional representation shifts the content of the book, moving the tale of Robinson towards a French Romantic reading.



Fig. Ill. 13. Grandville. *Robinson Crusoe*, 1840, pp. 404 and 480.

Anticolonialism?

A second dissonant aspect is the way in which the colonial message—domination by the white colonizer—is questioned through the images. Most of the images seem to emphasize the cruelty of the white colonizer. Such an ambiguous image is that of the carpenter pouring boiling liquid over attacking native inhabitants. The image is split into two equal parts. To the right the carpenter and his aid are filling large ladles with hot oil in a small boat. The two men seem to enjoy their work and it looks more like an odd cooking scene than a battle. Only the large boat and the cannons in the background give a sense of the context of the scene. The other half of the composition is focused on pain and horror, the muscular native inhabitants are running away from the scene in a chaotic fashion. The focus of that half of the image is on the emotions—agony and terror—imparted by the colonial figures. One could even go so far as to compare this scene with a baptism, symbolizing the religious domination of the colonizer.



Il n'y eut pas un seul homme qui ne fut échaudé de la plus horrible façon; et ils faisaient des cris, un vacarme tel que je n'entendis jamais rien de semblable.

Fig. Ill. 12. Grandville. *Robinson Crusoe*, 1840, p. 532.

While the text lauds the carpenter's idea as a saving grace and an amusing scene, the image presents two sides of the story: that of the violent colonizer and the victimized colonized. In the late 18th century, there was a clear shift in attitude in terms of the representation and value of the 'other' and a re-consideration of the empire both in France and England. This shift is visible in such an image that questions the morality of the text by presenting on an equal footing the 'voice' of the tortured other.

The Hero or the Anti-Hero?

Finally, Grandville offers an ambiguous presentation of the hero, especially if we compare the first and last images of the book. In the frontispiece viewers are confronted with a monument to the colonial hero. Robinson sits on a throne-like chair framed by exotic palm trees. The sculptural and quasi-royal representation of Robinson is flanked by his faithful dog and parrot. The hero's tools (the gun and the axe) are prominently displayed. He looks to the horizon away to the left, rather than to the tiny ship that can be seen on the horizon. His overcoming of life's difficult events is at the core of the

representation. The massive plinth reinforces the aura of the hero, as do the tiny people admiring the sculpture and learning about the heroic figure. Friday is discreetly represented in a medallion on the plinth along with other decorations including goats and a 'savage'. This is doubtlessly a monument celebrating the genius of Robinson, the hero.

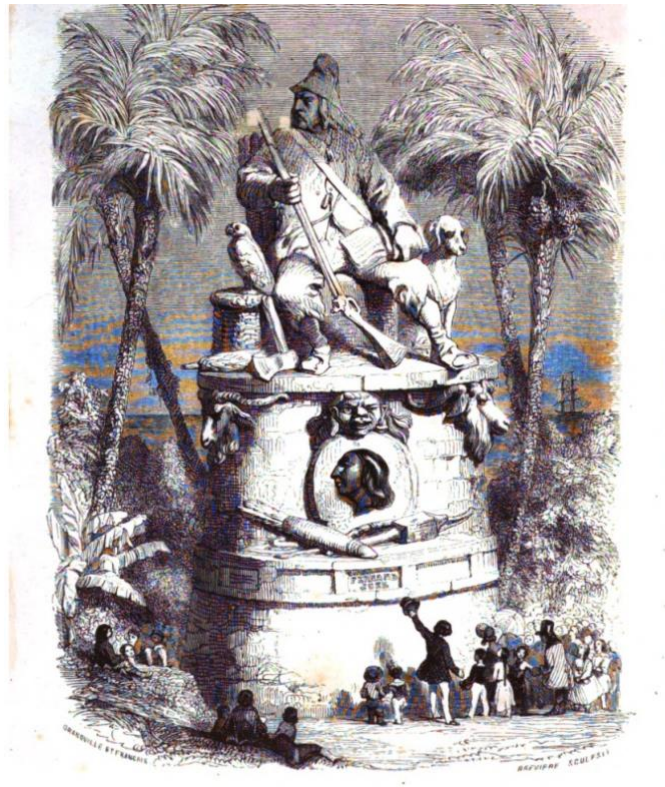


Fig. Ill. 13. Grandville. *Robinson Crusoe*, 1840, frontispiece.

In contrast, the last image of the book questions this image of the hero. Sitting on a gilded chair and leaning on a table, in this image Robinson's pose resembles that of Dürer's *Melencolia* (1514) more than that of the glorious hero. He is reflecting while looking at the remnant of his time on the island: the hat, weapons and tools are now haphazardly gathered on the wall, a mere decoration; the dog is absent and the parrot is caged. A medallion representing Friday is prominently displayed on the wall. On the

table an open Bible, a compass and a looking glass form a still life. The tone of the image is far from celebratory but rather one of melancholy and reflection.



Fig. Ill. 14. Grandville, *Robinson Crusoe*, 1840, p. 610.

The opposition between the frontispiece's hero monument and the dark final image creates a reflective form of storytelling. It invites the reader to question the achievement of Robinson the 'hero'. Grandville particularly excels in such allegories. As Hannoosh notes, Grandville's allegory is both "destructive and revelatory" ("Allegorical Artist" 39). In this particular case, they demystify the colonial hero and deconstruct the confident colonial narrative revealing the hesitation and human cost of such endeavors.

Conclusion

As we have seen, Grandville's illustrations reveal a lot about the reception of the book, about the geographical and historical context (Romantic secularizing France), about the encoders (the publisher and the illustrator himself), about the visual codes of the time

and about the intended audience. Blewett calls Grandville's *Robinson Crusoe* "an escapist fantasy, a celebration of solitary innocence and the pleasures of the simple tasks of life in a wonderfully lush and remote tropical setting" ("Iconic Crusoe" 182). But as we have seen, Grandville puts much more than this in his work and while his utopian and possibly Fourierist tendencies are probably at play here (Sipe 95–96), he certainly criticizes and sometimes contradicts the text. Through visual references and allegories, he invites the viewers/readers to detach themselves from the verbal storytelling and critically look at the text.

The impact of Grandville's illustration of the classics, such as La Fontaine's *Fables*, Swift's *Gulliver's travels* or Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is visible not only as the images are reused and imitated for later editions, but also in the way the texts came to be used, understood and translated (Colombo). As Renonciat explained, Grandville is a "créateur d'archétypes" (*Grandville* 7) and sometimes elements get lost and added in his intersemiotic translations. These archetypes along with their additions and subtractions enter the visual culture and the public imaginary.

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