



James Thomson's *The Seasons*, Print Culture, and Visual Interpretation, 1730-1842 (Studies in Text & Print Culture)

Sandro Jung

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Drawing on the methods of textual and reception studies, book history, print culture research, and visual culture, this interdisciplinary study of James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730) understands the text as marketable commodity and symbolic capital which throughout its extended affective presence in the marketplace for printed literary editions shaped reading habits. At the same time, through the addition of paratexts such as memoirs of Thomson, notes, and illustrations, it was recast by changing readerships, consumer fashions, and ideologies of culture. The book investigates the poem's cultural afterlife by charting the prominent place it occupied in the visual cultures of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain. While the emphasis of the chapters is on printed visual culture in the form of book illustrations, the book also features discussions of paintings and other visual media such as furniture prints. Reading illustrations of iconographic moments from *The Seasons* as paratextual, interpretive commentaries that reflect multifarious reading practices as well as mentalities, the chapters contextualise the editions in light of their production and interpretive inscription. They introduce these editions' publishers and designers who conceived visual translations of the text, as well as the engravers who rendered these designs in the form of the engraving plate from which the illustration could then be printed. Where relevant, the chapters introduce non-British illustrated editions to demonstrate in which ways foreign booksellers were conscious of British editions of *The Seasons* and negotiated their illustrative models in the sets of engraved plates they commissioned for their volumes.

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