

UNIVERSITATEA DE ARTE „GEORGE ENESCU” IAȘI  
FACULTATEA DE ARTE PLASTICE, DECORATIVE ȘI DESIGN

## **NARATIVITATE ȘI SIMBOL ÎN ILUSTRĂȚIA DE CARTE**

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**KEY WORDS:**

Illustration, narration, symbol, graphics, narrative, engraving.

***NARRATIVITY AND SYMBOL IN BOOK ILLUSTRATION - SUMMARY*****SUMMARY**

Selection of a complex theme such as book illustration, approached from the perspective of the two image categories outlined following the transposition of a literary text in a visual plane, the narrative image and the symbolic one, is generated by my personal professional interests, as well as to the need of setting the benchmarks of book graphics development from an historical and conceptual perspective and also from the constructive peculiarities. Relating to the two kinds of image arising following the deep relationing between image and text and the poetical idea translation in visual area, the researched an approached theme under the title “Narrativity and Symbol in Book Illustration”, aims at the theoretical and practical survey of the narrative image (it displays and narrates various events in a gradual succession along a series of illustrations) and the symbolic image (it uses signs and symbols in order to suggest an idea or a mood or just to replace various happenings). In the domain of fine arts the book illustration has a clear position, representing an ever developing component that is important due to its artistic qualities – it expresses the most sensitive and profound ideas, decoding poetic universes through elements of plastic language – and also to the overwhelming share in developing the intellect, the sensitivity and the taste for beautiful of the child.

Making a distinction in book graphics between illustrations for children and adults, the thesis considers the evolution and changes created by a conceptual and technical perspective caused by the changes occurred in historical, social and cultural sphere.

## **CHAP. I. ILLUSTRATION, NARRATIVE AND SYMBOL**

The thesis, “Narrativity and Symbol in Book Illustration”, structured in six sections completed with a bibliography and Annexes, proposes the observation of illustration evolution approached through the two concepts making an image that has to complete, describe and/or interpret a literary text: the narrative and the symbolic. In our survey we start from the idea that the image can explain/express the ideas of a literary text appealing to the two concepts, explained in the first chapter, together with the relation types set between the two components of the illustrated book, the image and the text. In the first chapter of the research work we approach the features of book illustration from a general perspective showing the coordinates according to which we built the thesis. The narrative illustration, sequentially well structured, presents events and facts related by causal actions narrating in images. The image gains a symbolic value when assigned to it, hidden, invisible significances and meanings but detectable by means of the intelligible and the sensitivity. Considering that the book illustration study requires an interdisciplinary research, we dedicated a subchapter to presenting the kinds of relations set between image and text from a semiotics perspective.

## **CHAP. II. HISTORY OF BOOK ILLUSTRATION**

Approaching documentary materials (illustrated books, albums, articles and specialty studies in the field, as well as internet selected information) we suggest in chapter II an analysis of book illustration from an historical perspective, permanently enriched with the experience of some artists belonging to various epochs and art styles stressing their conceptual and technical personal contribution to book illustration development.

The concern in visually transposing of an idea or a text dates back in ancient civilization times but we can talk about a peculiar interest on the subject matter in Middle Ages when the enlightened manuscript emerged. As our main concern is the literary text illustration, we notice a new turn the book illustration took beginning with the 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the special interest is focused on ornamentation and decoration quality by the contribution of printing press and Renaissance artists, new pathfinders regarding the illustrated book. remarking the novelties the 18<sup>th</sup> century technically brought ( woodcut perpendicular carved

to wood fiber and lithography), our research stresses the increased interest in children book illustration, as well as in the symbolic one shown during this century. The 19<sup>th</sup> century brought important changes related to printing technology (by chromatography innovation), as well as from the perspective of the image decrypting a literary text, more varied as style and way of approaching, on the ground of a special attention shown to illustration that penetrated in pressing operations. Major changes took place at the conceptual level too: Grandville showed fabulous characters delineating “Une autre monde” in 1844, Walter Crane initiated the fully illustrated children book paying an increased attention to page surface arrangement, Aubrey Beardsley synthesized at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century The Art Nouveau style in illustrations carried out with minimal plastic means. The Russian illustrators transferred the tale characters in a traditional atmosphere with specific backgrounds and clothes and Beatrix Potter created the most humanized delicate characters. The 20<sup>th</sup> century brought remarkable innovations in approaching book illustration and our research pointed out the variety of art styles, plastic visions and technical explorations.. Regarding the exploration simplifying and form metamorphosis, we mentioned the work of illustrators Iela Mari and Leo Lionni, innovators from the point of view of stylizing and economy of plastic expression means within the image for children, although all these had a maximum plasticity effect.

Becoming aware of the close relations of illustration and graphical techniques, we underlined the technical innovations brought by artists along the centuries to the contemporary procedures facilitating the image and text transfer on paper sheets.

### **CHAP. III. GRAPHICS FOR CHILDREN’S BOOKS**

The illustrated book is present in the life of all of us, starting with childhood (gaining a ludic value) due to its beauty, attractiveness, spectacular and easy understanding.

Becoming aware of the educational role of the illustration book destined to the young ones by duplicating in images of the features for children literature in suggesting and creating positive models (always the heroes are given physical and spiritual qualities, being honest, brave, good, striving for justice, not breaking the ethical and moral norms) but also in transmitting information on environmental world, playing a role in developing child consciousness, we

propose deep survey of children book graphics in chapter III, stressing the narrative illustration features, the way it is perceived and built by the illustrator.

Illustration aimed to children presents certain types of specificity, showed and analyzed in chapter III: the image is clear and expressive, the elements are rich in details and information, the characters and protagonistic elements of a scene are recognisable, The frame the action is running in is legible and the character action description is carried out by gestures, mimicry and expressiveness. The story advances from one image to another in their successive order and is irreversible, and there is an inevitable logic of visual discourse.

The working out of an illustration, coming out of a cooperation between two different fields – literature and fine arts – that convey the message by their own means – the word and the image - requires from the illustrator a creative thinking and the gift to handle the artistic techniques. Beside the illustrator's ability it is also necessary an active involvement of the receiver for the message understanding, the illustration playing the role of enriching the text with visual meanings. We also delimited and explained the steps the illustrator passed through, steps necessary for an efficient and expressive elaboration of the illustrations: the setting of the public the book is addressed to, of details related to technical conditions (black/white or colour, size, page arrangement, etc.) full understanding of the text to be decrypted, the documentation and research stage (essential because the illustrator must follow the historical coordinates the action is taking place, paying attention to socio-cultural references, to custom and clothing details), documentation on previous works illustrating the same text, finding out the key elements of the text offering deep meanings, the setting and tracing the composing structure and the proper image realization.

A main concern of our research is to establish the narrative illustration features used preponderantly in the book aimed at the little ones and also setting the elements related to the visual perception and identification of children. We also stressed the educative role of illustration (it enriches the knowledge and the vocabulary of the little receiver, developing his visual thinking, as well as his memory), it re-asserts the importance of the image in children book.

#### **CAP. IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF BOOK ILLUSTRATION**

In chapter IV, the illustrated book is analyzed as a whole starting from the support structure, the particular features of the cover, illustration and text, the latter gaining in certain circumstances a graphical role. The character, leading actor in illustration is studied from its complexity perspective of rendered typologies, but mainly viewed from a miraculous and imaginary perspective, basic aspects in the children's book. The humanized character, of animal or vegetal origin, lives together with the fantastic character in a world that associates the real with the unreal, the infinitesimal with the gigantesque, resulting unusual but coherent images. The truthfulness of these characters and situations is supported by clothing and scenery, these elements having the capacity of introducing the action and implicitly the receiver (onlooker/reader) into the atmosphere of a certain époque, offering, at the same time, documented information. Our research identifies also the issues related to render the dynamics and the event succession, of simultaneous actions and imaginary space, aspects present in book illustration.

#### **CAP. V. THE RELATION BETWEEN BOOK ILLUSTRATION AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE ARTISTIC TECHNIQUES**

The illustration benefits of the unlimited achieving possibilities, appealing to drawing that is defining for all sorts of graphics, consisting of using all the elements of plastic language and rendering some real and unreal images, but also engraving techniques which evolution it is closely related. Hand drawing, with special tracing tools of the line and using materials specific for conventional and unconventional techniques, or, more recently, with the help of computer image processing programs, the book illustration is presented in a variety of forms. In spite of the fact that at beginning it was carried out by hand painting of the parchment or paper page, the illustration is closely related with engraving techniques, subject largely debated in section V. These facts imply the transposition of the drawing, previously made on a support plate, depending on the techniques (wood, linoleum, metal, aluminum etc), the use of some specific tools (engraving needle, burnisher, balancer, crayon, lithographic chalk and ink) and printing on paper of the engraved images with the help of a press and special typographic inks.

The survey is aimed also to the conventional artistic techniques used along the time in book graphics (ink drawing with nib, aquatint, water colors, tempera, gouache etc) of mixed techniques but also of the unconventional ones (monotype, collage), observing the multitude and the variety of plastic expression means. In the contemporary époque, the technical innovations are doubled in illustration in new concept trends and experimental approaches able of discerning and expressing the meaning of the poetic universes.

## **CAP. VI. PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BOOK GRAPHICS**

In chapter VI we propose debating on approach subject and its particularities, putting in discussion certain aspects of personal creation, related to transposition in visual sphere of specific elements of the poetic universes interpreted through the filter specific to the own sensitivity exemplified by images belonging to published illustrated books or object books. By the works presented in chapter VI and Appendix I, we would like to illustrate some ways of approaching book illustrations, both narrative and symbolical, ascertaining the personal concern for symbolic image.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Concluding, we reassert the fact that the book illustration is still a field of maximum interest in continuous change, a sort of cultural mirror of the society, a complex form of inter-human knowledge and communication, both from the perspective of creative activity of the illustrator and from the perspective of the receiving public.

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**ANNEX II:** Personal graphic works realized between 2004-2009

**ANNEX II:** List of reproductions

List of illustrations