

ILLUSTRATION AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: INSIGHTS ON THEORETICAL PERCEPTIONS

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Abstract: Illustration is not just pictorial representation of a particular scene but rather it is much more complex in nature. An illustration is a form of drawing or work of art which elucidates and highlights a text. It ranges from a simple decoration of a page to fully illustrated books. When it is done in children's literature, in particular, the importance of illustration extends its limits. The contemporary illustration has surpassed the traditional methods of pictorial representation. Digital freehand illustration transformed the children's books more attractive and informative. The paper tries to elucidate different methods of illustration techniques along with the development of illustration in children's literature and the importance of images in a children-oriented book as well. It is also trying to incorporate illustration and translation from a theoretical standpoint.

Key Terms: Children's Literature, Illustration, digital illustration, Inter-semiotic Translation.

I. Introduction

Beginning from the early cave paintings, illustrations found in all vicinities of human interests such as literature, visual media, print media, advertising, etc. The age old tradition of illustration with pen and ink, charcoal, engraving, lithography, woodcut, etching etc have gone into memory due to the advent of computer based designing software and designing studios. But, that is an investable progression. Children's literature is pretty much the most useful and informative arena to study about the effects of illustration. During the 1600s, renowned English philosopher John Locke put forth the notion of *tabula rasa* in his essay, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. John Locke says that the human mind is at birth a "blank slate" and there would not be any rules to follow. In that sense, illustrations can have an impact up on the child who sees it. Locke elucidates further that children must be provided with "easy pleasant books" to expand their minds rather than forcing them. It is evident that, illustrations have that kind potential to please the child reader.

II. Illustration and the Child reader

A child is responsive to pictures and shapes even before the development of speech sounds. The message contained in an image is straighter than verbal communication. Children will analyze the illustration and make their own stories. Thus the transmission of a message is possible not only through spoken language. Well developed illustrations can contribute to the mental development of the child by motivating his/her imagination. In addition to that, it will help children to discover their own identity and cultural heritage. Through illustrations, it is very easy to express the events of the past and particularly the environment, trees, plants, flowers, animals, birds, apparels, utensils, etc. A suitable illustration can pass on this vital information without any hassle. Nodelman thinks that the children find the illustration "easier to understand than words and need pictorial information to guide their response to verbal information" (Nodelman, 216).

The main purpose of illustration is to get a message across to the readers or viewers. In another way, its job is to elaborate and clarify the meaning of the text. Illustrations are capable of transforming a simple story into an exciting and fascinating one. It will help to understand the context of a story and could easily memorize the storyline with the help of the good illustrations. According to Bodmer, illustrations serve to 'expand, explain, interpret, or decorate a written text' (Bodmer, 72). In a broad sense, Zhihui Fang demarcates the functions of Illustrations in the following way: (i) To establish the setting

- (ii) Define and develop characters
- (iii) Extend or develop plot

- (iv) Provide a different viewpoint
- (v) Contribute to textual coherence
- (vi) Reinforce text (Fang, 131-136)

An illustration is used to establish a story's geographical setting and time. It is important to note that historical time periods and cultural settings like apparel and artefacts can be easily brought to light in a way that words cannot explicate. It serves to establish the characters more appealingly and the emotional developments can be drawn to supplement the overall development of the character and the plot as well. With ample illustrious narration, the viewpoint can be altered or modified in different ways to catch the attraction of the child reader. Similarly, illustration helps to sequence the ideas in a text and make the text more attractive to the eyes of the reader. Fig. 1 is a perfect example of all those descriptions above. It is from 'A Little Pretty Pocket-Book, intended for the Amusement of Little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss Polly with Two Letters from Jack the Giant Killer', popularly known as 'A Little Pretty Pocket-Book'

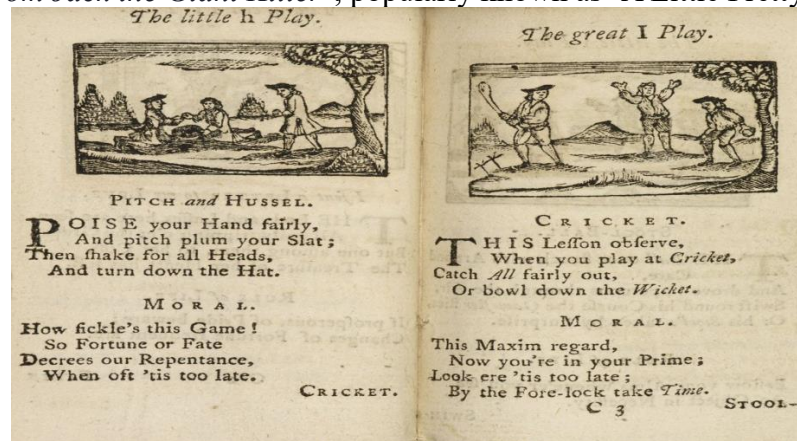


Figure. 1 Woodcut from the 1744 literary work for children by John Newbery

Source: twitter.com/bl_prints/status/980717744508284928

'A Little Pretty Pocket-Book' by John Newbery is considered to be the first complete children's literary work. The illustration here gives clarity about the idea along with a lot to imagine for the child reader. This idea of illustration is shared by Harry Broudy, according to him it "is a primary source of experience on which all cognition, judgment, and action depend. It furnishes the raw material for concepts and ideas, for creating a world of possibility" (Broudy 636). Illustrations are important for children in numerous ways:

- (1) It entices children to read and interact with text and motivate children.
- (2) It can serve as an effective tool to stimulate and promote children's creativity.
- (3) They provide mental scaffolds for the child reader, thus facilitate their understanding of the written text.
- (4) It encourages children's aesthetic appreciation of art and beauty.
- (5) It helps children's language and literacy development. (Fang, 136-140)

III. Types of illustration

Based on time periods and techniques it is broadly divided into two, (1) Traditional illustration and (2) modern illustration

3.1 Traditional Illustration Techniques

3.1.1 Woodcut

It was a prominent way of decorating a page before the advent of printing press. Woodcut illustration made by using the help of a chisel or gouge to carve an image into a block of wood. Printing area is left highlighted and the rest is carved out. Usually these processes involve a designer and a cutter. Refer Fig I.

3.1.2 Lithography Illustration

It is invented in Greece and later spread across the world. It is a method of illustration using a limestone and lithographic pencil or crayons as in Fig: II, and later it is printed into the paper. It was very popular because it will give the illustration a more original feel than other methods. Limitation of pencil drawing is overcome by the lithographic method of printing.

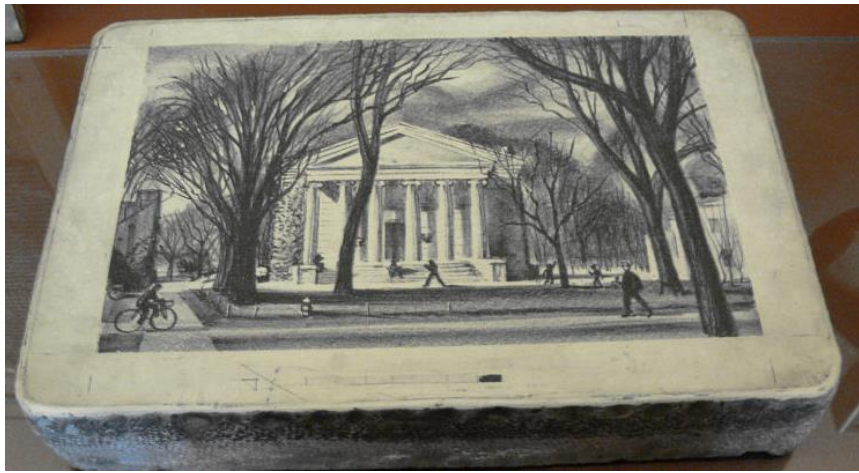


Figure II: Lithography stone showing a morning scene

Source: cdn.differencebetween.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Difference-Between-Lithograph-and-Print-.jpg

Pencil Illustration

As the name suggests, pencil is used to make illustrations.



Figure III: pencil drawing showing a girl and a bird

Source: <http://emmiormalainen.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/0-COVERIMAGE-Puluboi-illustration-kuvitus-01.jpg>

3.1.3 Charcoal Illustration

Charcoal is used to make different shades. In an experts hands charcoal can create a whole lot of shades.



Figure IV: charcoal illustration showing a child

Source: https://mir-s3-cdn-cf.behance.net/project_modules/disp/b0b3c617611172.5603c87dac7b7.jpg

3.1.4 Water Color Illustration



Figure: a fruit in water color

Source: graphicmama.com/blog/wpcontent/uploads/2017/03/24094628/10ce7dbeeb989a06ada25be7a9efcac9-e1512633537670.jpg

It is the most common form of illustration in children's Literature. It can give depth and detailing to an image by mixing pigment and water to evoke different transparencies.

3.1.5 Metal etching

It is almost similar to lithographic printing. Metal is carved out first and then ink is applied to make prints in the paper.



Figure: Lithography stone showing a morning scene

Source: https://a.1stdibscdn.com/a_10101/a_43178521556210745231/P_D_12889_master.jpg?width=768

3.1.6 Pen and Ink Illustration

It is another popular method for illustration. Pen and ink creates more depth and life to the image.



Figure: charcoal illustration showing the witch and her broom

Source: nitramcharcoal.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/broom_thumb.jpg

3.1.7 Acrylic Illustration

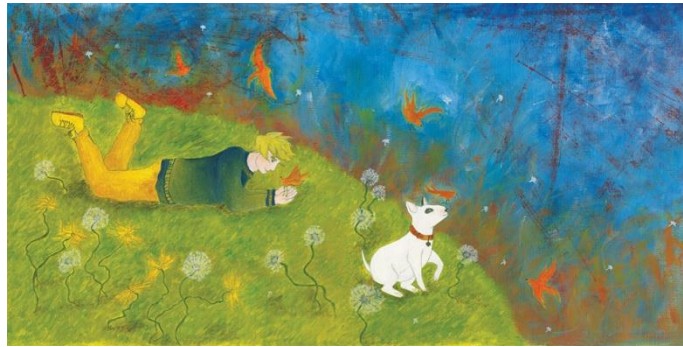


Figure: charcoal illustration showing the witch and her broom

Source: <https://creativepool.com/files/candidate/portfolio/full/1026130.jpg>

3.2 Modern Illustration Techniques

Traditional illustrations along with its making techniques have changed a lot. The early woodcut prints have given way to the contemporary computer-generated graphical images. In look and content, contemporary illustrations are far away from their ancestors. Modern illustration techniques largely depend on a computer so these kinds of illustrations are known as CAD (Computer-Aided Designs).

3.2.1 Free hand Illustration



Figure: Digital illustration showing the animal kingdom

Source: https://usborne.com/media/155634/large-hero-image_babies-and-toddlers.jpg?width=1252&format=png8

3.2.2 Vector Illustration



Figure: vector image of children on vocation

Source: image.freepik.com/free-vector/children-having-fun-beach_1308-29744.jpg

IV. Theoretical perceptions: Illustration as Translation

The translation is the process of transferring a message from one language to another in general. It is the 'communication of the meaning of a source-language text by means of an equivalent target-language text'

(Bhatia 203). The translation is not simply a mechanical transferring of a message from one language to another, but it is an intricate amalgamation of analytical knowledge and creative skills. Thus, the translator is not just a labourer or worker but is a person to mediate cultural exchanges. In another aspect, translation is also a way of making connections. It connects, therefore, not only any two languages or cultures but also across space and time especially in multilingual and multiethnic societies like India. Bijay Kumar Das says:

Translation, in the modern context, is not secondary to original literature in the source language. It is not reproduction but recreation. It has become new literature, maybe literature three, because of the recent discoveries in the field of linguistics and literary criticism. "With the indeterminacy of meaning" of a "text", the need for translation in the modern world is now greater than ever before. (Das, 7)

Roman Jakobson describes three types of translation namely: Inter-Lingual, Intra-Lingual and Inter-Semiotic translation. He modelled his theories on equivalence in translation. Even though he follows Saussure's linguistic model, he is evident that 'there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code-units' (Jakobson, 139). Inter-semiotic translation involves translation between two different media. An illustration is a clear case of inter-semiotic translation. Because it involves transferring a message from one medium to another that is from words to pictures. Pictures can be viewed as translated words in the same way words translate words. Jakobson affirms that "the translator recodes and transmits a message received from another source. Thus translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes" (Jakobson, 139).

The inter-semiotic approach to illustrations in translations is not new in Translation Studies. In her study of picture books and illustrated books, Riitta Oittinen points out 'many similarities between translation into words and illustration translation into pictures as forms of interpretation' (Oittinen, 106); and Eleanor Winsor Leach, commenting on Dryden's "Dedication of the *Aeneis*," sees the translator's remarks on translation as also concerning illustrations:

The statement not only epitomizes those goals of poetic translation which Dryden pursued throughout his career, but it also suggests how closely the art of translation may approach that of illustration, both in its need to convey to the reader a coherent image couched within the understandable contemporary idiom and in its responsibility for preserving fidelity to the text. Both translation and illustration are forms of interpretive imitation. (Leach, 175)

Leach and Oittinen have similar perception about translation and illustration. Both agree upon the needs of advanced research in this area.

Conclusion

Illustrations play a vital role in the aesthetic development of young children. It also uniquely communicates information and emotion in a versatile manner. Whether it is traditional or digital, illustration needs to be informative and inclusive to execute its purpose. The transition from woodcut illustration to the digital illustration is observed by A.F Marcos in his studies, he elucidates that "digital art pieces differ from classical ones by the digital nature of their information content and supporting display material"(Marcos, 98). The author-illustrator relationship needs to be analyzed because an illustrator "*intrudes* his or her interpretation into an intellectual and aesthetic transaction that would otherwise involve only the literary author and the reader" (Behrendt, 24). So, the illustrator is supposed to act as the translator and on the other hand, illustration is an outcome of the process of translation itself. So, both the translator and the illustrator must be careful in dealing with illustration, particularly for children's literature.

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