

Book review

Llegir la Imatge. Il·lustrar la Paraula. Reflexions al voltant del llibre il·lustrat i el còmic.

Eds. Julia Haba-Osca and Robert Martínez-Carrasco

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Llegir la imatge. Il·lustrar la paraula. Reflexions al voltant del llibre il·lustrat i el còmic (Reading the image. Drawing the word. Reflections on comic books and illustrated literature, in English), edited by Julia Haba-Osca and Robert Martínez-Carrasco (2020), is a compendium of short articles written in Catalan. The book is the resulting outcome of a series of conferences within the International Symposium of Innovation about Illustrated Literature celebrated at the Universitat de València. Each of these articles acts as an individual chapter within the book, which compiles a total of fourteen of these. Speakers from different professional backgrounds and fields of knowledge related to the role of the printed image as a means of communication were invited to participate in the symposia and the subsequent compendium. This variety is reflected in the different thoughts, ideas, and views on the role of image in literature that encourage the reader to analyse and consider other perspectives. The book champions the view of illustrated literature as a graphic and visual literary genre in its own right. The book aims to open the reader's critical eye towards the use of illustrated literature to convey meaning and stimulate the reader's interpretive skills.

The book is made of a compendium of fourteen chapters or articles, which touch on three main aspects of illustrated literature: the linguistic aspects, the visual elements

and pedagogical applications and proposals, which are organised chronologically in relation to the conferences in which they were presented.

The compendium opens with a brief introduction (i.e. Chapter 1) of the context and initiative in which the idea for the book was originally conceived: a workshop on creative writing and illustration. In this workshop, students were asked to rescue and compile local literary tradition on the brink of extinction in Brazil. This workshop was the brainchild of some faculty members at the Universitat de València, for which they worked hand in hand with researchers at the at Faculdade Martha Falcao-DeVry (Brazil) to bring it to fruition. From this idea, a bigger one germinated: the organisation of a symposium with the underlying topic of graphic literary genres. Five editions have taken place to date, which are indicative of its success, and so is the book reviewed here, which is the outcome of those symposia.

The first article (i.e. Chapter 2) addresses the connection between the typography used by computers and other devices with the one taught to develop handwriting skills at the first stages of education. In that sense, the author Dr Almir de Souza Pacheco aims to analyse digital influences in learning and the use of handwriting in students' day-to-day routine in a technological era, but he also poses the question as to which should be the future tendency. Dr de Souza Pacheco intends to spark a long-term discussion among education professionals.

The focal point of Chapter 3 is on Cordel literature. The article offers a brief description and history of this form of folk literature and later moves on to a more detailed analysis and definition of the most common verse metres. Cordel literature booklets include a printed image that illustrates the verses' narrative. The author, Larissa Albuquerque de Alencar, aims to disseminate these popular printed booklets brought to Brazil by Portuguese settlers as well as their social role as both entertainer for the masses and fierce critic of social and political aspects. This traditional form of literature has certainly served its purpose entertaining all strata of Portuguese and Brazilian society, and it deserves recognition to continue doing so.

In Chapter 4, Dr María Rosa Álvarez Sellers provides an insight into the importance of children's literature and young adult fiction in Portugal, which, despite competing against technological devices, must make their way to young avid readers. The presence

of literature at early stages helps develop emotional intelligence, thus its vital role as a pedagogical tool. Chapter 5 is also related to literature and the world of books. The authors Javier Rico Sesé and Òscar Rosaleñ Olmos present a historical summary about the origins and use of the bookplate (i.e. ex-libris in Latin), which dates back to the Egyptians and it has now become a valuable sought-after collectible.

Chapter 6 is not an article but a comic strip. The authors, Dr Tayra Lanuza and Jordi Bayarri, defend the use of comic books as disseminators of scientific knowledge, and they attain their objective by means of *illustration*, in the polysemous sense of the word, both through the use of pictures in a comic format and using the comic strip as a case in point of the main idea. Connected to the use of the image is also the following article, Chapter 7, in which the author, Dr Alberto Prieto Aguaza reflects on the intertwined connection between photographs and text as far as interpretations are concerned. The philosophical thought he proposes is how both elements can complement, supplement or contaminate each other in their meaning.

Dr Robert March Tortajada, in his article in Chapter 8, poses a series of questions in regard to how Catalan and Valencian identities are portrayed in illustrated fiction. In his article, he denounces the dearth of it by raising questions meant as food for thought for the reader. In the chapter that follows (Chapter 9), the authors Sheyla Ros Fenollosa and Andrés Giner Latorre propose using illustrated literature to raise interest in cultural aspects and boost positive and respectful behaviour among secondary education pupils. This cross-curricular proposal aims to meet the objectives established by UN's Sustainable Development Goals, especially to promote that of "peace, justice and strong institutions" (United Nations, n.d.).

Ulises P. López pays homage to the renowned comedian Francesc Vila i Rufas (also known as Cesc) in the following article. The author guides the reader through a condensed journey of Cesc's accomplishments as a satirical artist who used his wit and humour coupled with the power of the image to criticise the harshness of Franco's fascist dictatorship and depict seemingly mundane situations. Chapter 10 is also about sociological aspects, and more specifically, about gender roles and constructs in society. Graciela Rock Mora discusses the importance of heroes and heroines in children's literature and young adult fiction since those protagonists are the ones to establish and

teach genre roles and society standards to the youngest generations. The author points out that behaviour is learnt, and identity is built by external constructs, which results in inequality and genre roles and parameters. The author suggests from a feminist perspective that in the same way that inequality is learnt, so can equality if the cultural models are built anew. The writer recommends portraying equality and diversity in literary works aimed at children and young adults. Along the same lines following the principles of feminism, Chapter 11 calls for women's recognition and empowerment through illustrated literature. The data Dr Rocío Domene-Benito references from a study by Ana López Navajas reveals that female role models were scarce. The author proposes to include female role models in literature and printed literature who have dreams, aspirations, and ambitions; women who take up the reins of their own lives and serve as role models for the younger generations.

Concerning translation studies, Núria Molines Galarza focuses on the intersemiotic relationship between image and text in a comic book, in the sense that one cannot exist without the other. Not only is reading the text necessary, but the image also needs decoding to understand the message. The author underscores the importance of being familiar with the conventions of this genre to translate it. Related to the same field of knowledge, i.e. translation studies, Dr Robert Martínez-Carrasco closes the compendium with an article in which he addresses translation as a tool to negotiate the established literary canon to give a voice to those genres that have been neglected but for which there is a genuine interest, illustrated literature being a case in point.

All things considered, the book advocates for giving a voice to a marginalised literary genre such as illustrated literature, which has not been considered canonical despite being part of folk culture, playing an essential role in shaping social behaviours or developing critical-thinking skills. The articles in the book explore a series of controversial and thought-provoking topics such as historical memory, gender roles, feminism, or satire from a multidisciplinary perspective that allow the reader to enjoy and appreciate the printed image or illustrated literature from different points of view. In that regard, this compendium of articles might be of relevance to a wide audience. From teachers and professors to artists, or those with an interest in the mixture of the graphic arts and the letters. Alternatively, simply to those whose interest and curiosity

are piqued by the different forms of communication and their impact in society and human behaviour.

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