



Çocuk ve Gençlik Edebiyatında Barış Kültürü

Peace Culture in Child and Youth Literature



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Trakya Üniversitesi Yayınları No: 171



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Image and discourse in illustrated books for children: The case of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

Resimli Çocuk Kitaplarında İmge ve Söylem: Alice Harikalar Diyarında Örneği

1. Introduction

As an aesthetic object a book, apart from its main mission to cover some sort of aesthetic aspects, should also be strictly related to the style of the text that it is aimed to convey (Parsons, 1987, pp. xi-xiii). A book for children, especially, must be challenging and attractive in the sense that it contains material that a child reader would like to go through, for simple pleasure, or even to read it in some sort of depth (Nodelman, 2005, pp. 128-129). In order for an author to achieve this he/she will have to bear in mind that illustration will be the main attraction that does, rather must, "alter the way we read the verbal text" (Hunt, 1993, p. 175), since the personal internal "imaging" is done for us by the artist's work.

Every illustrated book for children, usually, should be the result of an excellent work of both the writer and the illustrator. This goal presupposes the combination of a skilled writer together with a talented illustrator. The latter will have successful results especially in the case that the former will have the skill of challenging with his writing. Through the process of reading, the words, one by one, seem to jump off the text and get a form. The discourse is being transformed in the mind of the reader into images, while the illustration images have their own equivalences of "words". Such a transition from one state to the other happens effortlessly, defining not only the natural relationship that exists and connects discourse and image but also, "the complexity of interplay between picture-meaning and text-meaning" (Pullman, 1989, p. 171).

The visual aids are really helpful to the text in respect of that they depict the exact place and time of whatever is revealed through writing. The pictures may, on the one hand, function as semantics, as comprehension of the written text, or even as the echo of the words, thus making them more concrete and, simultaneously, establishing the deeper substance and semantics of the text. In that case pictures might be impoverished if their only aim is to "say" nearly the same thing as the text. However, the aim of the illustrations might only be to "teach" reading development, in which the fact that pictures echo the words will certainly be the style, because picturing emotions is not the aim. On the other hand, the visual aids can simply serve as a means of explaining situations or events which are revealed through written discourse. They can interpret the words, as the words are a springboard for the artist, while they may limit in a way the possibilities open to readers in an unillustrated text. It is then clear, from what has been mentioned so far, that there is a strong link between image and discourse whose quality is of major importance not only for the aesthetic success of a book written especially for children but chiefly for the reader who is the final receiver (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, pp. 274-277). Our study, in this paper will focus on that particular link.

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That we have chosen *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* for this study has not been merely accidental. This book has been adored world-wide because of its characteristics and the messages it transfers, while every child, of any age, gets excited by it. Imagination, unpredictability and adventure are some of the secrets of the successful writer, while Carroll's rich discourse, full of visual schemata, has been always a provocation as well as an invitation to artists to illustrate it. The crucial question raised here is how should or must images function through a book for children? Should they be merely in harmony with the text and, at the same time, allowed to talk themselves, or should they be totally dependent on it? We will try to answer these questions, by examining two rather representative illustrations of "Alice" made by two different specialists: John Tenniel, the first illustrator of "Alice", and Maria Voudourolou, a Greek prominent painter-illustrator.

Studying the elements that compose these schemata and make some of them special, we will attempt to investigate their link with the discourse as well as the possible aesthetic results that they will impose on the potential reader.

Alice's illustration by John Tenniel

Tenniel's "Alice" is lively in her movements, while one can see an application in the depiction of her appearance that reflects the style of Victorian England. Being a combination of a beautiful "Pre-Raphaelite" model and a short fat schoolgirl (Doonan, 1989, p.12), she seems to be realistic and "touches" the child-like quality. Each drawing is simple and expressive without any unnecessary details. The total sequence is stable and complete without presenting differences of characteristics in the different pictures which would make it difficult for the child to recognize the heroine. In this way, the child can concentrate on different people or objects depicted, learning each time new things. Tenniel does not hesitate to present the changes in Alice's height, whereas she usually appears happy, and inspires optimism. She is full of life because her eye-movements, the grimaces on her face and the position of her hands and feet show us that she is constantly on the move. In fact, she has all the characteristics of a child of her age.

Being always placed in the foreground of the picture, she directs, in a way, the look of the child reader in the direction she chooses. Additionally, in the pictures where she turns her back it is as if the artist is inviting the reader to look in the interior of the picture, to investigate in depth with her. The picture makes the reader more active both with eye and the brain. When, for example, Alice looks at the dog, or the caterpillar the child's look goes to meet them.



(Carroll, 1898, p. 16)

The expressiveness of Carroll's text jumps out through the expressiveness of Tenniel's illustration. Picture and text are related to each other, while the surface serious innocence of Carroll goes hand in hand with Tenniel's total seriousness (Doonan, 1989, p. 15). In Smith's words: "The drawings in themselves are not funny ... they are serious illustrations of funny situations" (Smith, 1948, p. 23). And while Tenniel seems to be frugal as the means of expression in the pictures are concerned, Carroll is not generous as far as the presentation of the world of miracles in the text. Let us consider, for example, the picture in which Alice is in the hall and the white rabbit goes away. It is mentioned in the text:

"Alice felt so desperate that she was ready to ask help of any one; so, when the Rabbit came near her, she began, in a low, timid voice, "If you please sir --" The Rabbit started violently, dropped the white kid gloves and the fan, and scurried away into the darkness as hard as he could go. (Carroll, 1898, pp. 20-21)"



(Carroll, 1898, p. 21)

The illustration of the specific passage depicts the moment when the Rabbit has passed Alice but she has not yet managed to change the shy expression on her face. The picture clarifies the Rabbit as being in a hurry, Alice's desire of speaking to it, and also the contradiction between the limited movement of Alice and the free movement of the Rabbit. The illustrator makes a spectacular delay and simultaneously a propulsion of the picture.

Eventually, Tenniel's drawings as well as the text that escorts them produce the same atmosphere and inspire the very same feelings while they transfer successfully the believable through the unbelievable, the "real" into the "imaginary" (Jackson, 1993, p. 35).



(Carroll, 1898, p. 88)

Tenniel illustrates the animals in a particular way. As he shows even the most trivial details of their outside appearance one has got the impression that they live and move. However, he seems to overcome the level of a simple realism by giving obvious human characteristics, without obstructing their nature, in such a way that they resemble the toy-animals that are so much adored by children, and "just as in dreams, though we may be doing the most absurd things, we keep our everyday appearance" (Smith, 1948, p. 23). At the same time he makes them to respond efficiently to the text which wants from them speaking. In fact, "Tenniel's grave drawings have all the logic as well as the fantasy of Carroll's invention" (Smith, 1948, p. 24).

The depiction of the Queen and the King by Tenniel is of major interest so that one cannot resist to comment on it. As Carroll mentions in the text, these two are cards; so they are presented as such, in order that the text is marched by the picture. The Queen is depicted glumly as this is how it is dictated by the text; nevertheless, not as savage and wild as Carroll presents her.

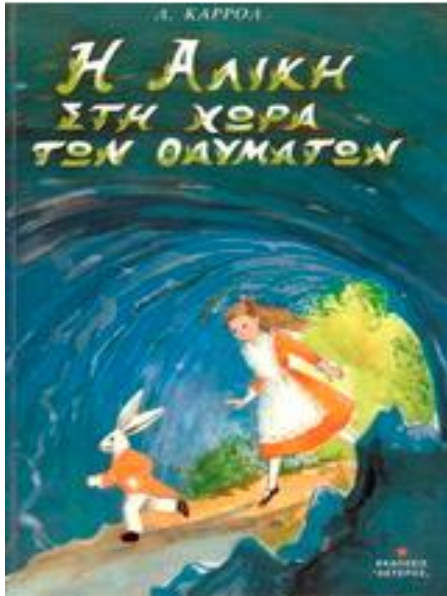
Tenniel depicts faithfully, in detail, the environment of the picture, that is to say the space where the plot takes place. There is nothing more and nothing else of what is needed for the picture to become credible, and reflects those conditions through which the heroes act. Being an illustrator he uses the place as a medium of expression, whereas Carroll as a writer exploits the time; the time of the text becomes the place of the picture.

The size of Tenniel's pictures is relevant to the great number of the objects that must be depicted, the size of heroes must dispose, the importance of the concrete event, in such a way that through the picture's composition to facilitate the context of the text as well as the

relationships he wants to project. This harmonization between picture and discourse is, indeed, unique in Tenniel's illustration making this work almost a "composite text" (Doonan, 1993, p. 83).

Alice's illustration by Maria Voudouoglou

Maria Voudouoglou belongs to the modern illustrators, who brings modernized new elements and provide the children's books with a fresh touch, a colourful joy and a new style. Even her illustrations of "Alice" - a "Wonderland" full of quite menacing incidents that are likely to evoke fear or violence - may prove that as an artist she has found an acceptable (for children) equivalence.



Carroll, L. (1986). (Retrieved from: <http://www.biblionet.gr/main.asp?page=results&Titlesid=145127>).

Voudouoglou's Alice is a pretty delicate girl, very similar to the one of the writer, full of movement and vividness. The whole illustration is distinguished by simplicity with the meaning of understatement in the style which is related to accuracy in such a way as to be able to be analysed through simple comprehensible mechanisms. Voudouoglou's pictures could easily be regarded as children's drawings but they are also aesthetically and artistically excellent. Each picture contains details which are essential for the comprehension of the text, and they are given in such a way that not only they facilitate the functional connection between the picture and the simplified text, but they also provide liveliness and authenticity to the expression. In this case, the art functions through an indissoluble coherence: the accuracy and clearness of Carroll's speech in connection with the clarity of the form presented by the illustration.

Voudouoglou uses a two-colour scheme: red and green on cream paper stock, and one of her aims is to give a better comprehension of the representational elements of the picture. It is of major importance in this case that she uses the colour in a realistic way. So she draws in orange Alice's dress, the coat of the rabbit, the flowers in any such place that there are natural surroundings, butterflies, some of the card's features. The colour is used in such a way as to be functional, it neither impresses nor does it bring any fatigue by repeating itself because it is used selectively and it does not cover other colours; it provides liveliness and realism.

Moreover, the light shades provide warmth and directness, while the colours with their shades are harmoniously connected, thus influencing greatly the aesthetic excellence of illustration, serving its dynamics and producing as a result a pleasing artwork (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p. 281).

As for Conclusions

In this paper we have examined in principle the illustrative views of two different illustrators on a classic text of the English, or should it be said, the world's children literature. Our main attempt was to study the role of the picture and some surface features within these different syntheses. Obviously, "literary" illustration is a unique artistic creation, while the

illustrator is an artist who expresses himself/herself through his/her own ability and talent.

Tenniel's illustration is artistically excellent and it is carried out successfully by the child, as the naturalness and the liveliness of the picture can be humane and is able to touch the child's soul. The realistic features and the naturalism depicted develop his/her artistic criteria and his/her sensitivity "provided that", as Joan Cass argues, "There is unity and harmony between the story and the picture" (Cass, 1984, p. 11). From the psychological point of view the size of the pictures in relation to the text, the accurate placement in which they are exposed, the friendliness of the features together with the detailed description of the different situations facilitate the child to feel comfortably, to feel the controller and the participant in the plot.

Tenniel's illustration brings the child in contact with the magic world of "Alice" threatening it, "as an extension of the natural" (Doonan, 1989, p. 13), while the text is full of descriptions and details. But the illustration makes it so lively in a magnificent way that the child feels as if following the play to be performed on the stage. The combination of picture and discourse is organic and distinct. The picture is based on the discourse and the discourse functions successfully through the picture. Activeness, inventiveness, rich imagination and enthusiasm are common characteristics both of the writer and the illustrator.

Tenniel's pictures, in fact, recreate and extend the climate that Carroll creates. Although they lack of colours that are very much of favour to the children but they are likely to create a feeling of happiness which is extremely rich. Carroll himself seems to express in his text the significance of the picture for the right and complete educational function of the book, as he in fact relegates to Tenniel's pictures for somebody to fully comprehend the significance of what is described in the text. Finally, Carroll and Tenniel have made "one complete work of art", since Carroll's story and Tenniel's illustration is the absolutely perfect combination (Darton, 1982, pp. 258-259).

Voudouroglou's illustration is, on the contrary, characterized by sensitivity and tenderness, for the figures are well-chosen, sketched imaginatively and with inventiveness. The pictures are diffuse and they come naturally connected with the context. They are neither silent, nor static and stylized like those of Venetoulas'. They dispose movement and give emphasis to the discourse. Additionally they are designed in such a way that they give the impression that is some sort of poetic conception and expression. From the artistic point of view, the illustration is so specifically good that the aesthetic result is of high standard. The illustrator has fully realized that she is referring to children, and she is well aware of how they feel and react. This, obviously, does not necessarily mean that the semantic simplicity by what she renders the theme, the use and choice of colours that aim at making the elements recognisable and their interrelated connections comprehensible, create a barrier in the imagination of the illustrator. On the contrary, she is grasping the chance of creating the atmosphere of the space, as she imagines it thus conveying her own interpretation of the story.

In Voudouroglou's version we can spot some renewed elements as she is characterised by some sort of freedom in the expression of the picture without putting any limitations and barriers; the kind of freedom that goes harmoniously with the accuracy a combination which is of absolute necessity in order to succeed in the functioning of the picture and its connection with discourse. Of course, the light use of the brush, the semi-transparent touches of the water paint/ink the freely painted foliage, the leafness and the blossomy quality of the outdoor scenes may achieve such a connection.

Generally speaking, it is a strong interference and co-operation that is needed between the writer and the illustrator; when it comes out successfully, as in the case of Carroll and Tenniel, the results are brilliant. The child must be facilitated in both reading the picture and the text going with it (related to it). For the child the art works through an indissoluble association: the clarity of thinking and the clarity of the feature. Conclusively, a book which is written for children must convey, in form and context, the narrative style in completeness (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p. 277).

Although the most ideal situation would be the identification between the discourse and the image through the identification between the writer and the illustrator, we would at least expect that every illustrated children's book would dispose the features of the harmony between the picture and the discourse (Nodelman, 2005, p. 138). Apparently, such a disposition is of extreme significance not only for the satisfaction of the children-readers but also for the versatile development of their personality and subjectivity.

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