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**'Illustration is everyone's mother tongue'**

*The Role of Illustration in Individual Identity Formation*

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‘Illustration is everyone’s mother  
tongue.’

‘Illustration is everyone’s mother  
tongue.’<sup>1</sup>

*The Role of Illustration in Individual Identity  
Formation*

*Rede*

uitgesproken bij de aanvaarding van het ambt van  
bijzonder hoogleraar Illustratie  
(wegens de Stichting Fiep Westendorp Foundation)  
aan de Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen  
van de Universiteit van Amsterdam  
op 4 juli 2018

door

Emilie Sitzia

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*Mevrouw de Rector Magnificus,  
Mijnheer de decaan,  
Lieve familie,  
Vriendinnen en vrienden, beste collega's,*

Illustrator Enzo Pérès-Labourdette and I were chatting. We both come from and live in multi-lingual families and intercultural environments. We were talking about our childhood and our favourite illustrated books and about how these books shaped us. But it quickly became apparent that within the books themselves, the images, the illustrations, had a special role in anchoring us. We were talking about how images transcend any language, any written descriptions or nuances, and offer an immediate entry into a fictional world for readers and non-readers alike. To open an illustrated book is to enter its world before one even starts reading. 'Illustration is everyone's mother tongue', Enzo said. At the time I asked for permission to quote him later – you will be happy to know that he said yes.<sup>2</sup>

This sentence stayed with me for several reasons. First, because it implies a secret affinity between the reader-viewer and the image, a comforting bond with the book. Like Proust's madeleine, like a hot chocolate on a rainy day, it is there as an instant memory trigger, a time machine of sorts. We all have these images we go back to when we need soothing or grounding: Pippi, Lilla My, Matilda, Floddertje, or in my case, Emilie. Second, this quote stayed with me because this idea of illustration as a mother tongue implies that illustration shapes how we think, how we see and understand the world, as any language does – I know a student who never sees an elephant without thinking about Babar. Finally, I like this quote because it states very clearly what I have been trying to say in various complicated ways: illustrations are broadly accessible and have a wide impact, which lends them a sort of universality, while staying very personal in their consumption and reception. They manage to be individual, intimate even, and collective simultaneously. I think this quote is a good entry point into what I want to talk about today: that is, the role of illustration in individual identity formation.

It is now well-researched that illustrations are anchored in specific regional and national visual cultures as well as specific times and as such are often seen

as markers and contributors to collective identity (-ies) – such identities being regional, national, linguistic, etc.<sup>3</sup> My predecessor in this chair, Prof. Saskia de Bodt, in her closing lecture, presented some fascinating cases of such analysis. This lecture aims to go a little step further and sideways to analyse how illustration impacts on individual reader-viewer's identity formation. Building on my research on word-image relationships, storytelling and the effects of visual arts on the public, I will today – briefly – investigate the role of illustration as an active shaper of various layers of an individual's identity.

Identity is linked to life stories and, as Rosemary Rich puts it, 'life story is integral to the process of identity formation' (Rich, 2014, p. 1). Furthermore, many social psychologists claim that it is only through stories – individual or autobiographical narratives – that we find meaning in our lives.<sup>4</sup> And the books we read are an essential part of these personal narratives, as Margaret Mackey's auto-bibliography *One Child Reading* (2016) has shown. The concept of identity is a constantly evolving principle through time (Giddens, 1991). Many models of identity formation have been offered from various fields of study. But a recurring feature in the understanding of individual identity by social psychologists, educationalists and museum studies specialists alike, is a distinction between personal and social (or group) identity.<sup>5</sup> For the purpose of this lecture, I will employ Vygotsky's distinction between social identity and personal identity (Vygotsky, 1978). Briefly, social identity came to be understood as the ways in which individuals identify with various social groups, large or small (such as belonging to a nation, a family, readers, stamp collectors, a religion, bird watchers, chocolate lovers). Personal identity is broadly understood as how we perceive and identify ourselves; that is, our individual qualities (such as intelligence, rebelliousness, curiosity, goofiness, etc). Interestingly, illustration, because of its dual collective and intimate nature, provides reader-viewers with the means to construct and reinforce both layers.

In order to investigate the role of illustration in individual identity formation, I will today first look at the role of illustration as a shaper of culture (broadly our social identity), then at its role as a shaper of readers (roughly our personal identity). I will then present some lines of enquiry I would like to develop further during my time in the special chair.

## I – Illustrations as a Shaper of Culture

In my previous work, I have explored illustrations as intersemiotic translations. Roman Jakobson, in his seminal text, 'Linguistic Aspects of Transla-

tion', distinguishes between three forms of translation: intralingual, or reformulation within one language; interlingual, translation in its usual understanding from one language to another; and intersemiotic or transmutation, which is translation from one sign system to another. Intersemiotic translation can be fruitfully applied to illustrations: it helps us think about them in a different way. If we accept that all illustrations are to some measure a translation, the fundamental problem of illustration is that of finding equivalence between the verbal and visual languages. And just as with any translation, an interpretation of the original takes place. And as with any translation, an adaptation to the illustrations' public takes place; that is, to the reader-viewer's social, cultural and political contexts. This visual reception of the text is privileged because of the instant impact of the image on the spectator and because of its prominent place in the book alongside the text (so much so that sometimes it prevails over the text itself). This gives the illustrator's translation, interpretation and adaptation a particular authority and makes illustration a crucial cultural reception tool (Sitzia, 2012).

Furthermor, Johanna Drucker, in her recent book *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production* (2014), distinguished between images that produce knowledge – that are generators of knowledge – and the ones that display existing knowledge – making visible, for example, a specific narrative or existing prejudice or bias. Illustrated books walk a thin line between these two types of images. They have the potential to simultaneously display existing knowledge – for example, by representing a key narrative moment in the story – and to create new knowledge – such as an alternative parallel narrative or to display a character not described in the text.<sup>6</sup>

How do these two theoretical frameworks (intersemiotic translation and various forms of visual knowledge production) impact on our understanding of the role of illustration as a shaper of culture? Do they help us go beyond the well-established trope of illustration as a cultural marker?<sup>7</sup>

### *a – Illustrations: Story retold, re-appropriated, updated*

I have been researching illustration since 1999, last century ... As a young researcher, I was studying the German and French illustrations of Goethe's *Faust* from the 1850s.<sup>8</sup> I was fascinated by how images in books were discussing, commenting and arguing with the text they accompanied while promoting a certain way of reading the text. For *Faust* in particular, I was interested in the variety of illustrations and, specifically, how the German illustrations were clearly building a national icon at a key moment in their national history, while the French illustrated and promoted *Faust* as a Romantic myth. I

loved that Faust, depending on the illustrator and national and cultural context, could be strong, blond, muscular and confident ... and dark, skinny, tortured and emotional. Seibertz's (1853) and Johannot's (1847) illustrations are good examples of the cultural adjustments allowed by illustration: through the choice of scenes, the composition of images and stereotyping of the characters, Goethe's story was adapted by the illustrators, and appropriated and retold for a certain cultural, political and social context. This is when I then started looking at illustration as intersemiotic translations, finding ever-more interesting connections, discussion and debate between the images and text in the microcosmos that books are. The adaptation to the cultural environment that takes place within intersemiotic translation is such that it impacts on the reading and reception of the text itself. This creates a sort of cultural loop: the illustrator interprets and adapts the text to its readership, and in turn the reading of the text is impacted and shaped by the images. In this context, illustrations are not simply a marker of social, political, historical and cultural periods, they are also contributing to what we previously agreed was the social identity of the reader-viewer. Through the images, reader-viewers recognise and adopt Faust either as a part of their national identity or cultural group belonging.

This research into how images were used to challenge and complete the text led me, to work on other topics that were as fascinating and entertaining. One of my, and the students', favourites is this 'realist' illustration of Perrault's fairy tale *Cinderella*, realised by Doré for the 1862 Stahl-Hetzl edition.<sup>9</sup> In an age dominated by scientific reason, marvelous scenes and magical characters are represented with as much realism as possible. But what does realism look like in a fairy tale? It is an aging prince, a pompous courtier, an elderly wrinkled godmother. The fairy godmother is represented here, knife in hand, carving the pumpkin, rather than waving her magical wand in a swirl of sparkles. Doré focused our attention on the limits of the godmother's magical powers: she needs to carve the pumpkin herself.

The images also offer a commentary on the narrative and the fictional characters, relating them to contemporary social, cultural and political events: the prince looks remarkably like Louis Napoleon and Cinderella like Eugénie. The images by Doré interpret and adapt the text for its intended audiences and comment on the significance of this particular tale in nineteenth-century cultural life, and in turn influence how this text is read and understood by the public. This re-interpretation of the fairy tale as a 'realist' contemporary love story reinforces existing knowledge: the sense of the tale as belonging to the French canon also contributing to the social identity of the reader-viewer as belonging to a specific national group. But it also reinforces other types of



existing knowledge that anchors the tale socially: the bias about female identity and marriage in a nineteenth-century French context. This bias contributes once again to the social identity formation of the reader-viewer as it shifts the tale from the imaginary realm to that of contemporary politics and gender identity issues.

Another example of the contribution of illustration to social identity formation on the level of cultural groups are Manet and Redon's images of Edgar Allan Poe's work.<sup>10</sup> They clearly show the shift in the reception of Poe's work in the French cultural landscape and his adoption as a figurehead by two groups: gothic and symbolist artists and writers. In his illustration of the Raven (1875), Manet presents Poe's poem as a gothic narrative (with an emphasis on motifs from gothic fiction and the gradual development of the narrative). This reading of Poe is close to Baudelairean romantic ideals. Through his illustration, Manet reinforces the romantic cultural appropriation of Poe. On the other hand, Redon's 'A Edgar Poe' (1882) presents the writer's work as symbolist poetic evocations, a fantastic assemblage of signs and psychological insights. Through his illustration, Redon claims Poe as a father of the arts of imagination, as a symbolist writer. The two illustrations claim Poe for two distinct (but related) artistic movements and in turn influence his work's reception. Whether these illustrations are creating new knowledge or reinforcing existing knowledge or bias is difficult to assert, but they are certainly contributing to a specific reading of Poe's texts. In terms of identity formation, Poe's work then becomes part of the social identity of two distinct cultural groups depending on the reader-viewer's exposure to Redon or Manet's illustrations.

As we have seen in these three examples, illustrations can be perceived to have an influence on the reader-viewer's social (and to some measure on their personal) identity formation. But illustrations also have a social function as rallying images, as symbols of position-taking.

### *b – Illustrations as position taking, rallying images*

Another aspect that contributes to illustrations as shapers of culture is their public nature. It is well known that many visual artists use their images to take a position in society and engage in political, cultural and social debates. Artistic innovation often goes hand in hand with an artist's social and/or political engagement. Illustration, as with other fine art forms, can be used as an early warning system for society. But because of its very public nature and instant impact on the viewer, illustration engages society at large in a different

way than text. The history of illustration has often displayed radical practices when it comes to position taking.

Victor Hugo is an interesting case here, as he was a vocal opponent of the death penalty and had both drawn and written to defend his views – his most famous literary output on the topic was his novel *Le Dernier Jour d'un condamné* (1829) (Badinter, 2002, p. 59).<sup>11</sup> Hugo inserted an empty chapter tracing the biography of the condemned man (Hugo, 1888-1926, p. 304) as he wanted a message that was not case dependent. Rather, it was to be a general argument against the death penalty. Because of this chapter, the novel was not very well received by the critics. However, Hugo's image *Ecce* was very well received. For this image, Hugo, was inspired by the condemnation of John Charles Tapner in Guernsey in 1854. In the same way as with the novel, Hugo anonymises his hanged man: no specific features are seen and the background and context are withheld from the viewer. The image has a universal message and an instant emotional impact. The success of his image, as opposed to his novel, seems to have irritated Hugo (Rodari, 2008, p. 20). But the success of the image was such that Hugo allowed it to be re-used to defend John Brown, the American abolitionist (Georgel, 1998, p. 16; Rodari, 2008, p. 21).

Yet, it is no surprise that this image was more successful than the novel: illustrations are designed and distributed to reach a broad public. They are often reproduced or mass-produced and are distributed through a wide range of media to increase access; illustrations are firmly anchored in the public realm. Their compositions are also intended to be direct and broadly understood. Here, the simplicity of the composition mirrors a 'Christ on the cross' with its angled lighting evoking religious iconography. The dark background gives the image its emotional charge, creating a suspended, contemplative space. The use of the word 'Ecce' at the bottom of the composition clarifies the comparison further by referring to Pontius Pilate's formula 'Ecce Homo' when demanding the crucifixion of Christ. This image is meant to be decoded easily and clearly by a majority and to engage the viewer in the death penalty debate not only intellectually but emotionally, calling to the empathy of the viewer. The illustration has the advantage over the novel that its impact is instantaneous, as the idea is delivered and contained on a single page, taken in with a single glance. As Drucker mentions, images have the potential to present existing knowledge and present new knowledge simultaneously, reinforcing the potential for images to argue a political or social position in a challenging and convincing manner. The novel needed to argue and convince, whereas, to be efficient, an illustration touches viewers emotionally and networks cognitively; that is, it links with existing images and narratives in the viewer-reader's mind.

Illustration can therefore act as a summary of an idea coupled with the affective associative power of images. Illustrations then become icons of ideas, carriers of values: think of protest posters of 1968. People assemble and reassemble around illustrations; they use them to convey new and old ideas. Illustrations are then shapers of cultural and social values and as such impact on social identity while creating intimate empathy and defining values at a personal level.

## II – Illustration as a Shaper of Readers

As my research progressed, I became increasingly interested in how images impact their viewers, especially in museum environments. I researched the importance of narrative in discursive and immersive exhibitions and identity formation, the terrible conundrum of book exhibitions, the process of knowledge creation in art museums and issues of participation for art audiences. I particularly focused on art as a means of learning cognitive information, learning affective information, and learning psychomotor information (Falk and Dierking, 1992). Issues of identity, especially personal identity, led me to have a closer look at children's picture books.

### *a – Impact on the reader: Hyper-personalisation, animalisation, projection in picture books*

In picture books intended for children,<sup>12</sup> the dynamic between text and image is slightly different as the impact on the intended readership (young children) gives primacy to the image rather than the text (LeMen, 1992, p. 17). Indeed, the practice of reading picture books is often either collective reading – adults read the text and the children listen and look – or individual – children look at the images first, if they engage with the text at all. Therefore, in picture books, images are more than reception and interpretation of the text. They are an integral part of the narrative and of the perceived identity of the character.

The characters presented in picture books can be seen to fall into three categories that impact on the young (and older) reader in various ways. The heroes of children's picture books are often illustrated as hyper-personalised, such as Marcel Marlier's Martine or Ingrid Vang Nyman's Pippi, as animalised, for example Tove Jansson's Moomin or Peggy Fortnum's Paddington, or they leave room for projection, as with Fiep Westendorp's Jip and Janneke.

Hyper-personalisation – that is, when a character has strongly recognisable specific features and attributes – comes from the character types in folk and fairy tales (little red riding hood) and religious texts (the lamb of St John the Baptist). These fictional characters are given attributes (in the text or the image) that become a code, a sort of shorthand, for the whole story, such as Pippi's socks, or Madeline's hat. Some of these elements come from the text, others don't. They became illustrative tradition, visual codes that are themselves grafted onto the literary narrative – as, for example, is Sherlock Holmes' deerstalker hat or Alice's blue dress and white pinafore. The hyper-personalisation creates an easily recognisable 'other'. There is a comfortable distance between the young reader and the character. This strategy promotes empathy and discursive and reflective distance. The reader-viewer can look, judge and evaluate the situation and place themselves in regards to that 'other'. This helps the reader-viewer define characteristics – bravery, like Madeline – that then contribute to their individual identity formation – how much am I like Madeline? I am little, I am not afraid of mice ... Individual identity is formed 'in comparison with', through empathy and recognition of parts or layers of identity. For example, children might admire and aspire to Pippi's independence but not recognise themselves in her physical strength.

Animalisation of children's book characters comes from fables (and the art historical tradition, more generally). Animals usually have a moral signification – as does the cunning fox, for example. The animality of the character allows the writer and the illustrator to deal with moral and emotional topics, again creating a comfortable distance for the reader-viewer. For example, no one is ever outraged at how Curious George is taken away from his natural environment and brought to the city, or how Peter Rabbit steals greedily from Mr McGregor. Furthermore, stuffed animals, a staple of children's worlds, create a familiarity and a sort of continuity for the dressed-up animals from the imaginary paper world to the imaginary embodied world. Through these animalised characters, empathy is fostered but a discursive and reflective distance is also maintained. As with the hyper-personalisation, the identity formation works through the identification of features: helpful like Moomin or polite like Paddington. It helps the individual contextualise and identify specific individual features that then contribute to personal identity formation. It also marks, to some measure, what is accepted socially. Animalisation creates discursive spaces, 'that foster negotiation and debate, polarize and politicize space and invite discussion fraught with contradictory views' (Macalik, Fraser & McKinley, 2015, p. 1).<sup>13</sup> Such illustrations are meant to emphasise cognitive learning (without denying an emotional dimension).

Projection with silhouettes and black-and-white figures works in a slightly different manner. They find their origins in the tradition of the silhouette (a purely visual tradition), which were used, for example, to illustrate Lavater's book on physiognomy studies or for portraits in eighteenth-century Europe. In the nineteenth century, silhouettes made their entry into children book's illustration through the works of Arthur Rackham and William Heath Robinson. The motivations behind the use of silhouettes is partly aesthetic and partly practical: it is cheaper to produce and longer lasting. So it started for Fiep Westendorp too. The black and white figures are efficient at embodying and summarizing characters. Like the hyper-personalised or the animalised characters, they are easily identified by young readers.<sup>14</sup> The upturned little noses, unruly hair, pigtails and striped shirt are signifiers of Jip and Janneke. But the stylised figures leaves room for a type of projection of the reader into the image, especially in the context of the daily life described in Schmidt's narratives. Discursive empathy is not at the core of the viewing experience here (as the features and details are obscured) but rather projection is; it is a form of immersive experience. It is then not about something that happens to someone else but reader-viewers project themselves into the image and the narrative situation. Immersive practices aim to create knowledge in the realm of experience and affective information and they look, as Belaens explains, 'to mobilise the visitor's sensations and imagination by integrating them into universes' (Belaens, 2003, p. 27). As such, such illustrations have the potential to enter the reader-viewer's autobiographical narrative. There, the impact on personal identity formation is very important as the values or individual features are not carried in comparison with a clear 'other' but as oneself being projected into situations.

### *b – The learning gap between image and text*

The images in picture books contribute to the construction of the narrative, of the characters and the young reader's identity. Picture books contribute to the individual identity formation of the child by promoting empathy and giving a frame of reference to the child's emotional learning.<sup>15</sup> Yet, the images also contribute to the social identity formation of the child as reading-viewing creates a community of practice as described by Wenger. To this educational theorist, learning is anchored in social experience and is based on the idea of 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 2009). This concept is independent from the kind of experience: communities of practice can be found in discursive or immersive contexts. Communities of reader-viewers can be any group of people reading together – whether it is inter-generational or institutional (like

schools, libraries, and so on). As a community of practice they can question, reflect and socially validate certain specific personal traits. To Wenger, 'learning happens in the relationship between the social and the individual' (Wenger, 2014, p.23).

Illustration is therefore a key tool in the formation of identity in children as it dynamically encourages communities of reader-viewers to question and agree on norms through the gap that is created between text and image. As Clement underlines, this gap between text and image allows for 'symbolic variations' (Clement, 2013, p. 54), which gives the possibility of multiple interpretations, discussion and consensus. Picture book can therefore impact on the reader-viewer beyond national types and stereotypes and can question the very notion of nationality, genre or moral norms. They potentially can, for example, help avoid the danger of the 'single story' and can question internalised codes or create alternative readings of space.<sup>16</sup>

### III – Future Lines of Enquiry

As you can see, the topic of illustration and identity formation is very rich and is in need of further research. So far I have outlined some of my previous and current research. I will now look forward to key questions I would like to work on in the next few years.

#### *a – Definitions and methodologies*

First, I think you have noticed by now that my definition of illustration as a field of research is very fluid. It encompasses book illustration, picture books, posters, comic books, cartoons and graphic art where word and image interact. I think deeper reflection is needed on what is actually meant by illustration today. A closed definition leads to a narrowing down of the field, which is not necessarily desirable. Current illustrative practices encompass many hybrid forms, such as traditional illustrators using digital tools or the incorporation of illustration in VR experiences and animation. It is an exciting time for illustration but more work is needed to define the boundaries of the field and explore innovative practices currently being developed.

Further development of interdisciplinary methodological and theoretical tools is also necessary for the field to develop. Intersemiotic translation, knowledge creation theories, and critical semiotic analysis are a few examples of what can and has been used to analyse illustrations.<sup>17</sup> But as the field of

study develops, and as the medium itself evolves, so too should the tools to analyse this field. I hope to do more work in that direction too.

### *b – Histories*

Historical studies are still remarkably rare for the area of illustration.<sup>18</sup> For the field to flourish, it needs to ground itself and establish its own history. Saskia de Bodt started mapping a history of twentieth century Dutch illustrators with her book *De verbeelders* (2014).

Books by Kiefer (1995), Lewis (2001) and more recently *New Directions in Picturebook Research* (Colomer, Kümmerling-Meibauer, Silva-Díaz, 2010) paved the way for new interdisciplinary approaches and established and popularised the idea that children's book illustration is a complex art form and should be studied as such. My contribution to the history part will be to work more extensively on twentieth-century illustrations, in particular, women illustrators depicting the daily lives of children in book series. I am particularly interested in studying the work of Fiep Westendorp and putting it in a broader European context of women illustrators of the period, such as Tove Jansson (Moomin series), Ingrid Vang Nyman (Pippi Longstocking series), Gunilla Bergström (Alfons Åberg series) and Peggy Fortnum (Paddington bear series), as well as related male illustrators, such as Marcel Marlier (Martine series) and Ludwig Bemelmans (Madeline series).

This topic allows me to merge several aspects of my research: social issues, such as women artists' careers and the place of illustration within them and various forms of representations of childhood and motherhood; aesthetic issues, such as the dynamic relationships between text and images in picture book series, the links between illustrators and avant-garde artistic and literary movements as well as popular culture, or the links between women illustrators' visual vocabularies and the popularisation of interior decoration patterns in popular media); and cognitive processes, such as the impact of illustrations on learning processes, the learning gap opened by the dichotomy between text and image in picture books, or the contribution of illustrations to the development of visual literacy and knowledge creation.

### *c – The exhibition of books*

As I briefly mentioned, exhibiting illustrations is a challenge. I will be exploring a variety of ways of exhibiting illustrations and books. I will study the impact of different modes of exhibition (such as discursive, digital, immersive

or participatory) on public engagement. To start this research, some students of the illustration course and I have been working on a small-scale experimental participatory exhibition now on show at the Bijzondere Collecties. 'Rebel girls: Illustrating identity' was designed in collaboration with MA students Catherine Buckland, Christine Lai, Izanna Mulder and Emma Yandle. This exhibition examines the rebel girls of children's literature through their representation in illustrated books: Matilda, Pippi, Otje, Zazie, Madeline, Mafalda, Momo and many more. Whether physically strong, free-thinking or unruly, it explores what being a rebellious girl means for the young adults of today and how illustrated characters contributed to this image. With this exhibition, we wanted to question stereotypes of femininity and investigate how illustrations of fictional rebel girls contribute to identification and identity formation processes.

The exhibition is an experiment in participatory practice: we aim to collect and share stories. We decided to focus on a specific sample of young adults born in the 1990s. This allowed us to cover a more international range of characters, as well as giving us more opportunities for in-depth discussions, as the memories and potential impact of these characters are relatively recent. We collected stories broadly, first through an online form asking participants to name their favourite rebellious illustrated character and to try to explain how they relate to that character. We then conducted and recorded in-depth audio interviews (in English and Dutch) with selected participants. The individuals were selected for the interest of their story, their broad appeal, but also to insure the representation of a variety of characters/impact/identities. Having a limited space and timeframe, we did not aim to be exhaustive in the various forms of feminine rebellion represented. This participatory approach allowed us to gain a snapshot of this generation of readers and their relationship to illustrated rebellious characters. This approach also fostered personal engagement and reflexivity from the public with the topic at hand. Ultimately, the exhibition aimed to encourage the public to ask themselves if the books they show to and read with children reflect their own set of values when it comes to female representation and identity formation and to reflect on how they themselves have been influenced by such illustrated characters. Go have a look! If you can't make it (it closes on July 6), then visit our website, which will run and collect stories for a year.



## Grateful Acknowledgements

It is now time for me to pause and gratefully acknowledge all the people without whom I would not be here today. Of course I will start with the Fiep Westendorp foundation for supporting me and for having such a great chair and a lovely team. I am also grateful to all the teachers and mentors that guided my academic career and nourished my various interests over the years. For trusting me at every turn and for their words of support when I needed them, I would particularly like to thank Segolene Le Men, Philippe Bordes, Stephane Guegan, Bengt Noven, Barbara Lonqvist, Liliane Louvel, Karen Stevenson, Joop de Jong and Alan Male. Also, a thank you to my colleagues at the Åbo Akademi University and the University of Canterbury for their patience and for allowing me to test ideas on them. To my colleagues of the University of Amsterdam, thank you for welcoming me so warmly in your midst. To the colleagues and friends of the University of Maastricht, thank you for allowing me to embark on this new adventure. To the students, thank you for keeping me on my toes and helping me think and clarify foggy ideas. To my friends, old and new, thank you for your patient discussions and making me laugh (especially librarians, artists and illustrators for keeping me in line). I especially want to thank Enzo, Ludwig, Sarah, Marjorie, Julien, Anna, Melinda, Marlies, Adeline, Tessa, Willem, Stephen and many more I may have forgotten (and I am sorry in advance). Thank you to my parents and brothers for their ongoing support and always taking an interest in my research, no matter how strange it sometimes seemed to you. And finally, thank you to Micky for always being there and to Maxime for being such a great kid and letting me borrow her books.

To conclude, I would like to thank you all for coming today and I would like you to take a minute to think about one illustrated character that mattered (and maybe still matters) to you. Go back home and look at the pictures and you'll be surprised at what you will find and how much you still care about these characters, because illustration is everyone's mother tongue.

Ik heb gezegd.

## Notes

1. Enzo Pérès-Labourdette is an illustrator living and working in Amsterdam. <http://enzo.studio/>
2. My thanks go to all illustrators and readers who waste their precious time in discussions about this with me. They are core to helping me reflect and think about the nature of illustration and the nature of its impact on viewers.
3. See for example the work of Françoise Forster-Hahn or Peter W. Guenther on *Faust*.
4. For more on this see, for example, J.A. Holstein and J.F. Gubrium, *The Self We Live By: Narrative Identity in a Postmodern World*, Oxford, 2000.
5. For various perspectives see, for example, J.F. Morales, C. Huici, C. Heyle, W.B. Swann Jr. and A. Gomez (2009) or Falk (2016), or Vigotzky (1978) or Dawson and Jensen (2011).
6. The usual example for such cases is Pat Hutchins' *Rosie's Walk* (1968).
7. Throughout my research, it became clear that nineteenth-century France was a key moment in the development of the word/image relationship. The nineteenth century saw the gradual independence of the visual from the literary field. While the literary field looked more and more to images as a source of inspiration, illustrations and the way in which illustrations were considered in the cultural field played a key role in this development. As stories were retold, re-appropriated and updated and as the images claimed more independence from the literary field, the impact of illustrations as shaper of culture increased. For more on this see E. Sitzia, *Art in Literature, Literature in Art in 19th century France* (2012).
8. This paragraph is based on existing research. For the complete study see E. Sitzia, *Les illustrations du Faust de Goethe en France et en Allemagne au milieu du XIXe siècle*, unpublished thesis, Nanterre, 2001 and the book chapter 'Illustration, revolution' in E. Sitzia, *Art in Literature, Literature in Art in 19th century France* (2012).
9. This paragraph is based on existing research. For the complete study see E. Sitzia, "'Where is the Prince?'" Unlocking Doré's Illustration of Perrault's Cinderella' (2010).
10. This paragraph is based on existing research. For the complete study see E. Sitzia, 'Imag(e)ining Poe: The visual reception of Poe in France from Manet to Redon.' In: S. Aymes, N. Collé, B. Friant-Kessler and M. Leroy (ed.), *Book Practices & Textual Itineraries: Illustrations and Intermedial Avenues*, Nancy, 2017.
11. For more details see E. Sitzia. 'Romanticism and the sister arts' In: *Art in Literature, Literature in Art*.
12. We will not engage here in the debate between picture book and picturebook (see Clement, 2013, p. 53). For the purpose of this article and because my focus is on the impact of the images rather than the dynamic between image and text, I will use the term picture book.
13. Jana Macalik, John Fraser and Kelly Mckinley, 'Discursive Space,' *Curator: the Museum Journal*, no. 58 (2015): 1. Of course, this quotation is about exhibition spaces but what is illustration if not an intimate sort of exhibition space?

14. The impact of silhouettes and black and white figures on viewers have their equivalents impact in fine arts. As with Honoré Daumier or Jean François Millet's faceless characters, they create general types of specific socio-cultural categories, creating a sort of universality for the character.
15. For more on this, look at various emotions in learning theories (especially Robert Zajonc's and Richard Lazarus's works), Jack Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, David Kolb's experiential learning, Peter Jarvis's learning from primary experience and Etienne Wenger's social theory of learning.
16. Recent comic book re-interpretation of Nancy Drew by Kelly Thompson or the mapping of Amsterdam by Jan Rothuizen in *De zachte atlas van Amsterdam* are examples of such opening up through illustration.
17. For issues of methodology see Schapiro (1973), Louvel (2002), Pereira (2008), Sitzia (2010), or Male (2017).
18. Of note are the books by Rümman (1930), Simon (1942), Melot (1984), Hillis Miller (1992).

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