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## Image and Text in the Writing Process: Levels of Relation

### Abstract

This article examines an early stage of collaboration between image and text – in the creative process in literature and humanities. Based on the work of several writers and one philosopher, four types of relation are distinguished, which show the different role of the image toward the text in the writing process: from a preparation tool, through an aid, to an essential function in the creation of the text.

**Keywords:** image, drawing, text, manuscript, creative process

We have gotten used to coexistence between image and text in literary and scientific works. We do not wonder at book covers, or at the illustrations (drawings or photographs), the maps, or various schemes, tables, and diagrams that are sometimes included in the texts. However, perhaps we are not so aware of the fact that the fruitful collaboration between image and text starts in a much earlier stage: in the process of creating the work. We can see the signs of this earliest collaboration in writers' manuscripts, and sometimes in authors' statements about their own working process. If we focus on this initial stage of collaboration between image and text, we will see that it is a varied and complex phenomenon, which is very important for the final result – the completed work.

In this article, I will present one possible classification of the types of relations between image and text in the writing process. They are ordered gradually – from a less to more significant role of the image. As an example of each type, I will use the work of a writer or a philosopher to remain close to the fields of literature and the humanities. (The connection between image and text in the other arts and in science is beyond the scope of this article.) The examples presented here could be multiplied, but these

are sufficient as an illustration and as a starting point for further research on this topic.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Drawings for preparing the writing process

This type of relation between image and text is not direct, and yet it is very important for the creative process of some authors, such as Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin. His manuscripts include hundreds of various drawings: of portraits, landscapes, calligraphy, weapons, ships, animals, plants, and more.<sup>2</sup> Most of them were not planned in advance or intentionally created. As Pushkin pointed out, his hand drew them automatically and very fast, and that is why some researchers call him *bystryy karandash* 'quick pencil' (see, e.g., Муза 1974) – a phrase that the poet himself often used in his texts, including in descriptions of his artists characters. These drawings of Pushkin appeared at some moments of his creative process: when the author readied himself to start writing, during short pauses in writing, when he was not satisfied with the text he had written, when he was searching for a suitable rhyme, or simply while he was thinking about the development of the plot of a certain work. This is a special method for creative concentration, which consists in redirecting part of the resources of the consciousness to another activity – in this case, drawing. Thus for Pushkin these drawings, or the process of creating them, was essential for writing.

## 2. Image as an aid in the writing process

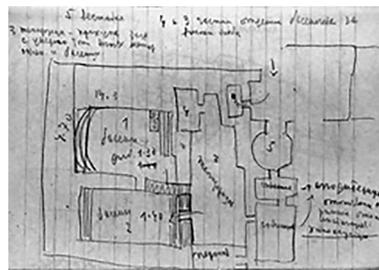
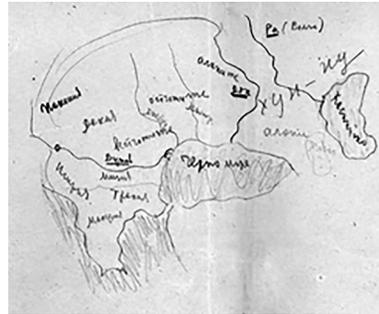
This function of the image toward the text can be observed in the creative process of the Bulgarian writer Fani Popova-Mutafova (1902–1977). She was a translator from Italian into Bulgarian and the author of over forty books in various genres. She wrote short stories about her time, essays, plays, and works for children, but she became especially well known for her historical novels and short stories, as well as her literary portraits of great Bulgarians from the recent and distant past. Typical of Popova-Mutafova's creative process was her pedantically thorough study of historical sources for the period and the persons she was writing about. The author kept working until the end of her life, and she left several unfinished novels, including the trilogy *The Great River*, which traces the history of the

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<sup>1</sup> For copyright reasons, some of the manuscripts and illustrations discussed in this article may not be reproduced. In such cases, footnotes indicate where readers can find the images in published texts.

<sup>2</sup> An impressive collection of over 400 drawings from poet's manuscripts are published in ПУШКИН 1996.

land from Thracian times to the creation of Bulgaria in the seventh century. Many notes and drafts for this novel were kept in her archives. They clearly show her impressive erudition and pedantry toward details, but also the important role of the image in the writing process. Popova-Mutafova's manuscripts are filled with various schematic images and drawings made by her: from family trees of chieftains, through tables and maps, to drawings of various objects (walls, buildings, layouts of houses, pottery, potters, adornments, and people). Some of them even contain numbers, which signify the size of the object.



Pages from the manuscript of Fani Popova-Mutafova's trilogy *The Great River*

The author presumably copied part of these drawings from library books, and the others were her own. Unfortunately, the novel remained unfinished because of Popova-Mutafova's death, and we cannot see the final result of this serious preparation, but these manuscripts lead to the conclusion that – in order to be clear, correct, and precise in her word descriptions in the novel, to be authentic and convincing in what she was writing – she passed through images (i.e., drawings) as an aid. They did not influence the conception and the overall content of the literary work, but rather functioned as auxiliary, technical elements for its better realization. Such use of images in the writing process presumably applies to many authors.

There is another variety of this type of relation between image and text, which can be illustrated with the work of J. R. R. Tolkien. The action of

his best-known fiction books takes place in Middle-earth – a complex imagined world with its own inhabitants, history, and geographical characteristics. Tolkien himself wrote in a letter to Naomi Mitchison in 1954 that he started his novel *The Lord of the Rings* with drawing a map and then developed the plot. “The other way about lands one in confusions and impossibilities, and in any case it is weary work to compose a map from a story...” (Tolkien 2013: Letter 144).<sup>3</sup> Then Tolkien’s maps were redrawn by the publishers and professional cartographers, and they were printed as part of his books to facilitate readers. Thus, to the three basic functions of the maps in fantasy books, distinguished by Björn Sundmark (2017: 223–224) – to produce fictional space, to refer, and to be part of the fictional universe itself – we can add one more, which is not directed to the reader: maps may help the author him/herself in the writing process. Of course, this fourth function is not applicable to every case. There are many authors that drew maps for their own books for different reasons (Jonathan Swift for *Gulliver’s Travels* and Robert Louis Stevenson for *Treasure Island*, for example), and each of them should be analyzed separately.

### 3. The “drawing-thought”

The phrase “drawing-thought” (Russian *risunka-razmyshleniya*) was introduced by the Russian literary scholar Konstantin Barsht (Баршт 1989: 162). He used it to describe a special feature of the creative process of Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky. It is well known that there is a very close relation between the novels of the so-called Pentateuch of Dostoevsky (*Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, *Demons*, *The Adolescent*, *The Brothers Karamazov*) and the Orthodox Christian doctrine. However, less well-known to those that have not specially studied the famous Russian author is the presence of many sketches of churches or some of their elements together with the text in his manuscripts.<sup>4</sup> The Bulgarian Dostoevsky specialist Nikolay Neychev comments that it is “as if these are not manuscripts of novels, but notes of construction plans for building a church” (Нейчев 2001: 119). As an engineer that studied drawing and architecture, the writer had the training and knowledge to make these images. This unusually strong and imposing with its repetition presence of such drawings (stronger than the drawings in Popova-Mutafova’s manuscripts, for example) is a sign of their fundamental role in Dostoevsky’s creative process. They were neither illustrations for preparing the writing process, nor aids

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<sup>3</sup> About 200 of Tolkien’s original drawings and illustrations, including maps of Middle-earth, are published in Hammond & Scull 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Most of Dostoevsky’s drawings commented on below are published in Достоевски 1997, as well as in Нейчев 2001: 120–127.

for better technical realization of the text; they were a special method of creative work. As Barsht's definition indicates, these drawings were part of the Dostoevsky's mental process; they participated in and contributed to clarifying the conception of the work. In his manuscripts, the writer expressed his ideas not only through words, but also through images, and the interaction between them gave birth to his works, which we know in their final published version. Text and image exist and develop parallelly, as equivalent things. Drawings often directly correspond to the idea of the text, as in some pages from the manuscript of *Demons*, for example, where the expansion of the Western ideas is expressed both by the text and by the Gothic architecture.

Churches are not the only illustrations in Dostoevsky's drafts. He made other drawings as well: floral elements, portraits of some characters of his literary works, portraits of his contemporaries, and even portraits of famous philosophers. However, they were always connected with what he was writing about. A portrait of Immanuel Kant, for instance, appears in the manuscripts for *Crime and Punishment*, where the writer thought about moral law. Thus, the drawings in Dostoevsky's manuscripts exert a direct influence on the conception and content of his works, although we do not see them in the printed versions of his books.

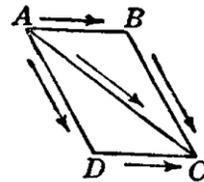
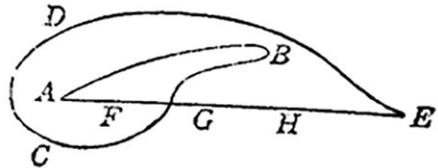
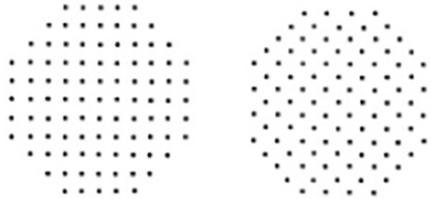
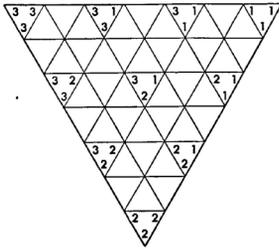
#### 4. The image-idea

Whereas in the first two types of relations the image is an aid in the process of creating the work, and in the third type the image and text are equal in clarifying its conception, in this fourth type an idea appears as an image, and the text is a secondary, auxiliary medium for its expression. We can observe this type of relation in the works of the American philosopher and founder of pragmatism and semiotics Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914). This is a specific way of thinking, which Peirce himself described as follows: “I do not think I ever reflect in words: I employ visual diagrams, firstly, because this way of thinking is my natural language of the self-communion, and secondly, because I am convinced that it is the best system for the purpose” (MS 619: 8, 1909, “Studies in Meaning. The Import of Thought: An Essay in Two Chapters”). He added: “Diagrammatic reasoning is the only really fertile reasoning” (CP 4.571)<sup>5</sup>. The phrase “di-

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<sup>5</sup> This article follows the established international norm for citing Peirce. “CP” is the abbreviation for *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, and the following numbers indicate the corresponding volume and paragraph. “MS” is an abbreviation for unpublished manuscripts of Peirce, followed by the number given in Richard Robin's *Annotated Catalogue*, the page, the year, and the title of the manuscript. Full bibliographic information appears in the reference list.

agrammatic reasoning” includes all kinds of images (diagrams, schemes, formulas, tables, etc.), which Peirce drew in his manuscripts. On some of them in addition to diagrams we can see sketches of faces, which belong to the first type, illustrated with the work of Pushkin.<sup>6</sup> Hence, in one and the same author, and even in one and the same work, the presence of several different types of relations between image and text is possible. Some of Peirce’s images also remained in his published texts.



Peirce’s diagram of the 10 classes of signs (CP 8.376)

Images from Peirce’s paper “How to Make Our Ideas Clear” (CP 5.398, 404)

In short, the philosopher’s working process went as follows: he first “saw” the idea as an image, sometimes he drew this image in his manuscripts, and then he tried to describe his idea with words. This long chain from the origin of Peirce’s ideas of genius to their textual presentation is probably one of the reasons for his challenging style, difficult to understand, and for his unusual expressions, including special words and terms invented by him. That is why, if a reader wants to understand Peirce’s complex philosophical system, s/he should give priority to the images, think

<sup>6</sup> Great examples of Peirce’s manuscripts with drawings can be seen in Leja 2000.

about the images, and try to explain Peirce's ideas through the images. It is no accident that there are publications dedicated especially to the possible visual presentation of some of Peirce's ideas (see, e.g., Farias & Queiroz 2017).

These are the four types of relations between image and text that I distinguish. However, where would this classification contain cases, in which the authors officially illustrated their own works (such as *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *We, the Sparrows* by Yordan Radichkov, *Dashenka* by Karel Čapek, *A Little Expressionist Calendar for the Year 1921* by Geo Milev, and many others)? Or the manuscript of the play *Jacob Ruda* (1898) by the Slovenian writer Ivan Cankar, in which the author drew small portraits of the main personages at the beginning of the text? All these illustrations could potentially belong to each of the four types. For their exact classification, each work should be studied separately. The researcher should find out when and why the illustrations were made, when the text was written, and what their role was in the creative process.

Even this brief survey shows that the relation between image and text in the creative process is very important, and that it deserves more attention – as a starting point for analysis of a particular work and as a window into the creative process of the authors.

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