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## Children's literature books and photography as promoters of visual literacy and readers training

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## Introduction

The current study is based on the assumption that the image is shown as a text, a visual text, which informs, narrates, incites dialogues and, above all, stands out for its formative aspect. Based on Jacques Aumont (2012), the meaning of the image is often related to the fact that it represents an event located in time and space, which makes it a narrative image. In this aspect, we understand the intimate connection that exists between visual representation and the artistic sphere that reinforces it as an instrument of communication and expression.

For this reason, it is essential to understand the role of visual literacy in the trajectory of human formation, considering that images, as well as written words, tell stories, since the art of reading images can be mediated by different supports, including the book. Thus, the book of Children's Literature associated with the photographic language as an illustration technique is pointed out, which gains wide spaces in the discussions and analyses in this area, since it enables the integration of other artistic visual manifestations in the supports of literature books.

## Methodology

This theme refers to a doctoral investigation still in progress and the present work illustrates an excerpt of this research that at first has as methodology a qualitative approach, of the exploratory type in a documentary analysis about a reflexive analysis of five works of Children's Literature illustrated with the contribution of photographic art. They are: *Como cozinhar uma criança* from the author Afonso Cruz, *Há um fantasma nesta casa* by Oliver Jeffers, *Dragão Jeremias* from Maria João Viegas and Carlo Giovanni, *Alice in Wonderland* by Susy Lee and *Balas Mágicas* by Heena Baek.

The research aims to know and analyze five Children's Literature books, awarded or indicated by PNL, illustrated with photography and that can potentially contribute to the development of children's visual literacy and to the process of readers training. To this end, we seek theoretical foundation in the studies of Susan Sontag, Lucia Santaella, Jacques Aumont, Sophie Van der Linden and finally Ligia Cademartori.

## Analysis of the books

Visual literacy involves the ability to understand, use, reflect and learn in terms of images, it includes the ability to signify images and think visually, explains Silva (2019). To think about both visual literacy and readers training, the book for children stands out. Children's literature is characterized by the way it addresses the reader, and verbal and visual languages must be in accordance with the child's life experiences and reading skills, describes Cademartori (2010). And it is in this aspect that the selection of hybrid works was made – moving between the literary, the photographic and the plastic – which are now analyzed.

The first work presented is entitled: *Como cozinhar uma criança*, authored by Afonso Cruz is recommended by the PNL2027 of 2020 and suitable for children from 9 years old. The narrative is presented in the form of a dialogue between two cooks and a boy and a girl, who combine statements in the real sense and in the metaphorical sense of words and ideas, always related to the act of cooking and the choice of ingredients that will make up the recipes.

Image 1: Front cover of *Como cozinhar uma criança* by Afonso Cruz

It can be seen that the illustrations are shown as "isolated images" because they are not associated with each other in a sequential sense. In addition, they are not directly related to the text that is positioned on the opposite page, which is a characteristic of the so-called "books with illustration", describes Linden (2011).

The second work under review is called: *Há um fantasma nesta casa*, by Australian author Oliver Jeffers. Published in Portugal in 2022 by Orfeu Mini, it is recommended by the PNL2027 of the year 2023 and suitable for children aged between 3 and 8 years. By turning pages, the reader can interact with the book object and also with the story, going not only visually, but also synesthetically through a trajectory of surprises and discoveries.

Image 2: Front cover of *Há um fantasma nesta casa* by Oliver Jeffers

The third work of children's literature selected for analysis is called *Dragão Jeremias*, by Maria João Viegas and Carlo Giovanni. It was published by the Portuguese publisher The Poets and Dragons and is recommended for readers between the ages of 3 and 8. Giovanni, the illustrator, was nominated for the National Big Authors of Guimarães Award, the World Illustration Award Shortlist, in addition to receiving international awards for the prominence of his art.

Image 3: Front cover of *Dragão Jeremias* and Photograph of a scene from the process of creating one of the book's illustration.

Unlike a painting, photography, while capturing and eternalizing time and space, enables the reproduction and distribution of copies. It is an image that proves and attests that the scenario or the character made of paper really exists. For Sontag (2004, p. 16) "(...) A photo is equivalent to incontrovertible proof that something has happened", it is a testimony of reality, it is more than an image, it is an interpretation of reality itself, it is a vestige and a document.

The fourth work under analysis is classified as a wordless picturebook or silent book, that is narrated solely by images, which according to Linden (2011) are illustrated books without written text, which have a discourse and require enunciation. It is shown to be a prom

oter of verbal discourse, as its reading requires the search for words and an appropriate vocabulary for its presentation.

Created by award-winning South Korean artist Suzy Lee, it was first published in 2002 and inspired by Lewis Carroll's original story, *Alice in Wonderland*. This work had its second edition in 2009 by the Italian publisher Corraini.

Image 4: Book cover of *Alice in Wonderland* by Suzy Lee and a double-page spread that is part of the narrative

The work is narrated by photographic images of scenarios and characters of mixed constitutions: paper cutouts, drawings, fabrics, bottles, people, curtains, plants, puppets, among other artifacts. The narrative navigates through black and white photographs that evoke a world of illusion and reality in which the photographic image is the only text available, requiring the reader to look, examine, perceive and ultimately read what is seen.

The fifth and last book under analysis for this work, called *Balas Mágicas*, published in Brazil by Editora Companhia das Letrinhas, was created by the award-winning South Korean artist Heena Baek and it is recommended for children aged 5 to 8 years old. Its narrative addresses the story of a boy who, by eating candies that look like marbles, acquires a special power to hear what he couldn't hear before that.

Image 5: Front cover of *Balas Mágicas* of Heena Baek and A double-page spread of the interior of the book.

All the characters and scenarios are small sculptures, idealized, created and organized by Baek and then photographed by herself, who thus becomes the writer and illustrator of the entire work, as is the case cited by Cademartori (2010, p. 18): "the illustrator is also a narrator and, in many circumstances, the author of the two texts is one (...)".

## Final Considerations

In all these cases analyzed in the children's literature books for this work, photography stands out as a fundamental instrument for the composition of literary illustrative art, as it allows the apprehension of the three-dimensional image and transport it to a two-dimensional surface, which can be printed, replicated and handled by readers.

Photography brought into the classroom through children's literature books can bring children closer to the most varied expressions of visual arts, broaden the interest in the written text that accompanies that image, increase the child's attention in the book object and thus contribute to visual literacy and the formation of readers based on the undeniably transformative competence of books.

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