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A Graphic Novel as a Popular Genre of Book Publishing in the Context of Modern Design

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Abstract---The relevance of the research is due both to the lack of research that would comprehend a graphic novel as an independent phenomenon and subject of art history, the youth of the genre, and its relative non-proliferation in the Ukrainian literary space. The vast majority of Russian publications touch on the analysis of specific graphic novels in the context of modern literary studies, which focuses on the narrative and ideological components of individual works without taking into account the role of the visual component for the genre as a whole. In this regard, the article is aimed at identifying the essence of the graphic novel, its differences from the classic for book design relationships of illustration and text, clarifying the nature and role of its communication and semantic saturation taking into account the functions of design as a form of communication, highlighting the unique characteristics of the genre against the background of the traditional genre means and searching for the information and aesthetic potential of the graphic novel in the practice of Ukrainian book design.

Keywords---book illustration, emanate, graphic narrative, multimodality, synergy.

Introduction

The linguistic turn in twentieth-century philosophy played an important role in reforming the theoretical and methodological foundations of modern humanitarian knowledge. New methodological foundations, based on the theory of signs, conceptual metaphor, and hermeneutical interpretation and structuring, constructively contributed to the humanitarian discourse in solving problematic issues of our time. However, with the development of information and multimedia technologies, signs and texts began to be involved in the communication process, which performed separate functions but did not proceed from the language foundations (Flewitt et al., 2019). The growth in the number of non-linguistic codes has led in turn to the formation of discourse and corpora that go beyond

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the usual oral or written language and do not obey linguistic laws, and the dominance of visual code leads to a decrease in the share of verbal means and the displacement of previous ways of perception of the world (Omelyanenko & Remchukova, 2018). The phenomenon of multimodality demonstrates a change in the rules of communication by opening alternative channels of information, which in turn transforms established cultural codes, affects the interpretation of existing texts, determines the specifics of creating new texts and hard-to-predict interaction of established and new cultural codes with future ones (Kress, 2016).

The study aims to track trends in multimodality in social semiosis in the context of book design. The emergence of new modes in the usual communication channels and the understanding of traditional means of artistic expression as such corresponds to a multimodal semantic paradigm, going beyond the established communication channels contributes to both the development of new categorical and conceptual apparatuses, and the rethinking of existing ones (Kress, 2009). Changing the paradigm of the current discourse by its paradigmatic modes strongly affects the rest, but this influence cannot be analysed without taking into account the components, their causes and consequences. As a synthetic graphic and literary genre on the verge of comics, books, cinema and making up the object of research, the growing popularity of graphic novels can be considered a modern example of multimodality (Ogar & Kopilchak, 2018; Belov, 2020). However, the question of the essence of multimodality and the nature of iconic interaction remains poorly understood in a graphic novel, the vast majority of research focuses on individual foreign and domestic comics and graphic novels, even based on tangential principles. Although they stand out for their thoroughness, such studies are rather philological and art history in nature, and their conclusions are valid only concerning the history of the genre and the analysed work of an individual author, but such research material is not suitable due to the chosen methodology.

When it comes to multimodality, its presence is observed wherever there is a significant interaction of more than one type of means of expression (Perez-Gonzalez, 2020), but the study of the nature of semiosis should begin with the foundations of the process, that is, the sign resources involved and their sources alternately as parts of the whole, where the production of new meanings is carried out (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2018). Modern design may be one of the examples of multimodality, which has some communication-semiotic, structuring, as well as formative and semantic functions. Without involving transgressive communicative and mental apparatuses, the process of creating new and actualising old cognitive constructs is impossible to the extent necessary for this study. If earlier design appeared only in the cross-section of derivatives of Fine Art and conformal social communication, such areas as the field of electronic information technologies also issued a request for design as a mediation between Interactive Systems, hardware and mass users, for which the interface and “user experience” (UI/UX) are designed fundamentally different from everyday practices (Bernsen, 2002). However, in addition to establishing multimodality through new areas of design in the fields of science and information technology, historically established industries, such as printing design, which also changed at the turn of the Millennium, remain relevant (Oliylyk, 2017).

Materials and Methods

In the research, both general theoretical methods were used, such as analysis, synthesis, generalization, concretization, modeling, and analogy, as well as less standard methodological complexes. The historical method together with discourse analysis was used to highlight the genealogical relationship of the graphic novel with past and modern popular types of graphic narratives such as comics and manga, and by comparing based on formal criteria, methodological parallels were drawn, positioning the graphic novel as a unity and integrity of the narrative and graphic component, concluded by a complementary set of means of expression of both literary and visual arts, synthesizing a fundamentally different reader experience that requires its research (Gbaguidi & Allagbe, 2018; Widana et al., 2020). Comparison of a graphic novel with tangential genres as the mentioned alternative verbal-visual synthetic art forms, and indirectly related genres such as theatre and film art through a system-forming conceptual metaphor allows us to determine its multimodal potential. The resulting transformation of the reader's experience does not rely on the traditional linear perception of the text but uses typography and layout to convey a wider range of emotions, dynamics, and so on.

As approaches, structuralism and semiotics were used together to deconstruct and establish the iconic and communicative nature of the design. The results of structural analysis of a graphic novel were fixed by syntagmatic analysis for the interaction of signs of a graphic narrative with each other and their layout from a set of graphic and text elements into a synergistic text, where the result of interaction of design, graphic and literary means is not equal to their sum. Design, as a unity of emanating and page layout, acquires the status of a communicative code used for decoding and interpreting signs, becomes an intermediate structure between signs and signified and between signs-symbols and the author's idea, and therefore performs generalizing, conceptualizing and system-forming complex system functions relative to other elements. This categorical and terminological apparatus closes the hermeneutical circle, allowing you to identify and analyse the functions of design as an organisational structure arbitrarily based on the identified structures and the nature of the relationships of individual components of complementarity of signs, meaning-forming codes and derived communicative experiences (Kulinska et al., 2021; Kasinathan et al., 2021).

Although a graphic novel fits into a structural-semiotic model, the metalinguistic nature of the code of its signs makes it impossible to analyse only literary or art history tools. The mass nature and speed of development of the book craft determine the need for a conceptualisation of formal and stylistic analysis of individual works of art to confirm the frame function of design within the genre. The revealed cholic nature of the multimodality mechanism allows us to pay attention to the complexity and consistency of sign interaction, and the harmonious combination of arbitrary available modes according to the principles of necessary diversity and complementary communication for a synergistic factor that draws attention to the most neoclassical scientific paradigm in general and transdisciplinary methodology in particular. The emphasis on metaphorical, self- and mutual Organization of components of a complex communicative system formed by the mechanisation of newly formed semiotic ties in the socio-cultural

space encourages us to look at multimodal design as an internal transgression of the existing sign system, a transformation of the design language with going beyond the established conceivable standards and restrictions. Metalinguistic design structures multimode modes (Adler, 2011; Junaidi, 2018; Mateo, 2015).

Results and Discussion

Before moving on to the direct object of the research, we should start with the context, essence and characteristics of the design to establish the relationship between it and a graphic narrative. When it comes to graphic design in English, there are no clear non-recursive definitions of what it is. Starting with the Greek "graphein", that is, drawing marks, the French "designer" and the Italian "disegno", which meant drawing itself, the latter two start with the Latin "signum" – sign. Barnard (2013), points out the overlap between “graphic” and “design” since both are related to the visual space and the application of signs and symbols that indicate a tautology. Without communication that involves both the actual application of signs and their transmission, understanding graphic design as something different from just art is impossible. Art is not limited to purely classical types and genres, as indicated by the proposed definitions “intermediary... means of communication... use of words and images on anything, anywhere” and “a form of visual communication... choosing and applying signs and placing them on surfaces to convey an idea”, and the conceptual difference between an artist and a designer is the mechanical reproduction and deliberate wide availability of the latter's works (Barnard, 2013).

For the graphic design function Barnard (2013), defines informational, persuasive, decorative, magical, as well as metalinguistic and phatic functions. The informational one, also known as epistemic, involves providing certain information, which can be either simple, complex or multi-valued, depending on the nature of the signs used in the semiosis. The persuasive function, or rhetorical, consists in the influencing graphic materials on thinking or behaviour, where the belief in the reliability of a particular information is an example that mutually connects this function with the informational one. The decorative function, that is, aesthetic, is realised by endowing the design object with aesthetic value, that is, it makes it valuable from the point of view of beauty as an independent category. The magic function is carried out not through literal ritualism, but in the body of visual culture, the magic of design is expressed in “access to the sacred” and “creating something different from what it is”, that is, giving the object of design new (including sacred) properties through a change in the dimension of symbolic, or a fundamental transformation of its essence. Metalinguistic and phatic functions most appeal to the communicative aspect of graphic design. While the phatic design function, like the function of the phatic act, is aimed at establishing, maintaining and completing contact through conventional “excesses”, signs without semantic load, the metalinguistic function does not work with disparate signs directly, but with codes that determine their understanding by the communicant (Barnard, 2013; Yus, 2019).

It is important to distinguish between signs and codes in both semiotics and design. Both structures are "cultural bases for message and meaning", but the sign is the correspondence of the signifier and the signified, which are reflected in

graphic means of expression and arbitrary contextual meaning in the design, respectively. The variability of meaning is additionally provided by the cultural code within which the sign is interpreted, and the sign (in linguistics and semiotics in particular) is arbitrary (“arbitrary”) due to the lack of a direct or natural relationship between the sign and the meaning. At the same time, arbitrariness is compensated by convention, that is, by the unconditional consent of the participants of the cultural community about the meaning. Here the culture acts as a key unifying factor for such arbitrary signs because communication codes are distributed and imitated precisely within certain communities. Although the above functions are distinguishable and explained in the study, M. Barnard points out that they are much more difficult to separate within the actual design; individual functions can both interact with each other and overlap the functionality of each other. In the context of design, communication and semiotic theories, design acts as a communicative code in which the socio-cultural construction of the meaning of the design object takes place (Barnard, 2013).

Taking into account the above functional plane of the design, we should take a closer look at the essence of a graphic novel and the differences between it and related genre forms, such as manga and comics. Zanettin (2018), separates all three as distinct types of graphic narratives and links their history to prehistoric drawings, medieval tapestries, and later modern printed “protocomixes”. Historically, European comic book culture originates from the American one and was inherited through the translation of the American repertoire. As noted by Zanettin (2018), the visual codes of the metalinguistic aspect of graphic narratives predate American comics, and their transformation into the code now inherent in comics took place through translation practice. Historical conditions were also added to the differences in visual codes and audience, in particular, the censorship of comics, as well as any other literature in large countries (we are talking not only about totalitarian ones) in Western Europe. Early comics are characterized by a short duration, emotional immaturity and an overwhelming entertainment function, which have now become a stereotype of graphic narratives, in the twentieth century. Art is not perceived as such, and the comics themselves, along with other ideologically inconvenient for individual European countries, were first replaced by separate text and musical works, which led to weak development of comic culture in these territories (Zanettin, 2018).

Manga is a type of graphic narrative is associated with a combination of both the American post-war comic tradition and the “substrate of the pre-existing national tradition of graphic narratives”, became one of the largest comics industries in the world and outlined its subspecies-genres that depend on the age category of the audience, thematic and ideological direction, etc. The complexity of speech against the background of a deep visual orientation of culture (the culture of contemplation, the tradition of one's descriptive engraving, the role of the aesthetic in spiritual life with explications on everyday life) caused a rapid increase in the popularity of the genre, and the flair for illustration compensated for ignorance of a particular hieroglyph, especially during the post-war crisis, when the educational situation was not in the best state. By analogy with the American-European situation of mutual influence, manga through translation and cultural exchange affects both the industry, complementing its graphic and cultural-historical codes (Zanettin, 2018).

According to [Zanettin \(2018\)](#), it was the popularity of the manga that ensured the popularity of the graphic novel. It should be noted that the genre appears almost in parallel in America and Japan 20 years apart in favour of the latter, and the actual term “graphic novel”, popularised by W.E. Eisner, the value matches the entered by Y. Tatsumi term "gekiga", in which both authors tried to capture the seriousness and maturity of their works and the problems raised, as opposed to the more mass Graphic Literature, which was mainly aimed at Children. Thus, the conclusion of the graphic novel as an independent adult genre with its inherent volume, plot complexity and non-series brought graphic narratives to the level of generally recognized literature ([Zanettin, 2018](#)). The growth of aesthetic requests of the audience and author's ambitions brought manga from unambiguous literature for children and adolescents to the level of self-understanding of manga as an artistic phenomenon, the inversion of individual directions of which led to the formulation of “mature” problematic issues with the further development of the genre.

Similarly, in the process of analysing the phenomenon of a graphic novel, one can point out its relationship with literature, visual arts and cinema, but the design is still the cornerstone. Following the genre affinity of graphic novels with comics based on the use of the main pictorial storyboard method, it is advisable to draw parallels with cinema concerning both genres, in particular, movies and television series themselves. The expediency of comparing comics and television series arises based on some criteria, among which it is necessary to emphasize Episodic, Short Duration, and common content at certain points, whether it is a plan or a plot. In comparison with a separate TV series, a movie is much more concentrated and time-consuming. The implication from a given pair, in contrast, deduces a separate graphic novel as a self-sufficient, plot-integral and complete work, which, due to some differences from comics, together with a short, but rich historical tradition of creating individual works, justifies the graphic novel as an independent genre ([Solodovnikov, 2016](#)). It is worth noting that the role of cinematic metaphor is rather methodological and analytical here, taking into account the historical primacy and multiple representations of graphic narratives in the history of synthetic arts, but at one time with the help of the latest technology at the time of creation, cinema appeared, which appeared from the principles of dynamism of visual art and separated into a separate art form ([Zanettin, 2018](#)).

Although comics and graphic novels have a reader common principle of communication with readers – a sequence of frames-panels supplemented with literary accompaniment in stylised text fields with appropriate means of expression inherent in both visual and literary forms of art, graphic novels can be called “longer and more masterful versions of comics”, and the sophistication of the plot together with a wider ideological and thematic content operate fundamentally different from classical literature and graphics proper range of means of expression, which together opens up new prospects for understanding the phenomena presented in the works. The principle of complementarity of text and illustration forms a complete synergistic multimodal text, where the gap between emanate as a code and syllabic signs affects the gap between the original author's meaning - the idea and the reader's perception. The increased multimodal complexity of the text is a noteworthy aspect but the semiotic pragma

remains valid (Smith & Pole, 2018). Multimodal communication, although emergent concerning monomodal communication and the apparent arbitrariness of signs is compensated by convention. Deconstruction and remodelling of the general foundations of such a communication channel will face the problem of fixing the point of bifurcation and intra-language transgression in the process of becoming a multimodal one.

Meyer & Jiménez (2017), offer a list of components of a graphic novel: characters, colours, including their shades and saturation, borders, the “graphic weight” parameter, spaces, lines, panels, and text. The given means of graphic expressiveness, such as colours, the number of graphics and lines, together with the means of design as a composition, i.e. spaces, lines and panels, provide a visual and contextual landscape for placing characters in the place of action that fit into the given visual plot through text (Campbell, 2018). Regardless of the existing cultural conventions, the process of creating a work of art by the available means involves the creation of its sign system, where syntagmatic relations, the mutual context of denotes and denotes, the existing socio-cultural context passes into the meta context, and active sign relations of the verbal-visual work through the existing modes create a new artistic reality, which is expressed in the multimodal experience of art. Each new work, each new atypical combination of means of expression affects not only direct perception in the present but also forces you to rethink your key, that is, the sign code, previous experience in other modalities (Nanay, 2012).

A proper understanding of the multimodality of design and its components in the structure of a graphic novel is possible in the context of the communicative functions of design that determine involvement in the signing process. Kalaykova (2021), offers a classification of multimodality, which is possible through a design text as an array of means of expression makes up the path of reproduction and is more of a metaphorical text than a real one, but at the same time, it is a sign complex of communicative acts and a separate discourse. Within the framework of design, structural multimodality is the holisticness of the semiosis of existing modes, citation multimodality lies in simultaneity and intertextuality, and a priori multimodality appeals to bodily and mental simulations (Kalaykova, 2021). The main role for the interpretation of a graphic novel as a synthetic art is played by a priori multimodality since we are talking about the involvement of the reader not only through passive perception, but also about speculation of non-obvious metaphors and following the simulated dynamics of the layout. Structural multimodality here exhaustively characterizes the interaction of verbal and visual modes. Given by Kalaykova (2021), quotation multimodality will be appropriate in the case of “postmodernity” of a graphic novel, that is, with content (and form) that would appeal to other design texts, which is typical even for mass culture only partially.

In addition, it is noted that the multimodal design text as the author's idea is not identical to what is perceived by viewers. This thesis is true for advertising design, does not use narrativisation but is based on the available “short-term” means of expression. However, the target field of advertising design completely coincides with the functional space of the actual design. The target field of advertising design completely coincides with the functional space of the design itself, but

advertising can be considered successful if it is carried out by a convincing design function following the products or services offered, while other design functions, and therefore aspects of multimodality, although experienced by the subject, fall out of the field of full-fledged communication. At the same time, the author's idea does not put commodity-money relations as a priority in a graphic novel, the basis of multimodality of art is the process of communication, where through the atypical interaction of graphic and verbal modes, the idea is (very generalized) transmitted gradually during the presentation of the plot, in the process of passing through the narrative, whether it is empathy for characters or distanced understanding of events (Verleysen & Engels, 2014; Unsworth & Mills, 2020).

It is at the stage of compositional deconstruction of the page design into its components that the key difference between the visual material of a graphic novel and an illustration follows: the work of art retains its independence and is supplemented with an illustration mainly with an aesthetic and convincing function to create proper demand. Adapting to the content, the text remains the main mode and means of communication between the author and the reader, while the graphic novel relies both on the page design to ensure the effects of dynamism and non-linearity, on illustrations, which in the context of the layout by frame sequence and other means of graphics allow you to set the tone and rhythm of further perception of text content (Johnson, 2017; Grolig et al., 2020; Hoang, 2019). The text of a graphic novel cannot be considered as an independent text, as a written play concerning theatre and literary and director's scripts about cinema: such a text does not exhaustively convey the author's idea, because from the very beginning it was conceived as an integral part of a synthetic work of art.

A. also insists on multimodality as an interaction of verbal and visual components (Matiishin, 2020). In particular, many comments are valuable in the design context on the nature of multimodality. Thus, design appears as one of the four spheres of multimodality, “the conceptual aspect of expression, including a combination of semiotic components”, next to discourse and acts of creation and dissemination, and consists of several modes, the same type of channels for transmitting meaning (Matiishin, 2020). While zero multimodality is inherent in texts with one mode, and a partial text can contain several relatively autonomous modes, one of which will necessarily be dominant relative to the other, full multimodality arises as a synergistic phenomenon based on the complex complementarity of the graphic with the verbal. In terms of partial multimodality, semantic connections between the text and the illustration are present, but they have rather a parallel direction, and in the construction of the narrative, the text has an advantage as the dominant model. At the same time, the graphic component prevails in graphic novels since the visual saturation parameter “competes” with the traditional text and turns into semantic saturation. Thus, a graphic novel has full or partial multimodality, where the first is provided by the continuity of graphics and text, where the frame of perception and narrativization is a combination of layout and synthetic text-visual metaphors, and the second occurs when the semantic saturation of the visual prevails over the text part (Matiishin, 2020).

The multimodality of the text goes beyond linguistic rules, relying on the meta-language of design, a visual metaphor that in graphic novels, in addition to the

actual syntactic-semantic dimension of illustration, can also be expressed in the location and features of typography (Matiishin, 2020). While an independent artistic illustration is a visual modus and verbal text, layout and typography can be subjects of separate visual and literary arts, respectively. These two components, based on a set of cultural and historical conventions, provide distanced from both types, but at the same time synergistic types of creativity. While the layout is based on metalinguistics concerning text and illustration, using text as a partial model of visual composition, typography transfers the visual component to the text, providing a partial visual mode of verballity (Clark & Camicia, 2014; Rocamora-Pérez et al., 2017).

Ukrainian graphics find their place on the border of cultural semiotics and multimodality. Illustration at a certain stage of the book's life cycle as a complex sign becomes an integral part of it and begins to be closely associated with a specific publishing product or the publishing house itself. A replicated copy sign of a single author's graphic work with transfer to another replicated copy sign of a literary work with active semiosis acquires new properties, mutually converting the object of illustration into symbolic or index signs. The collapse of the Soviet Union – the collapse of a totalitarian discursive formation through the introduction of other cultural codes – affected both individual human destinies and peoples, and individual areas of activity in which the usual ideological pressure of the repressive machine, including on the intellectual and artistic plane, disappeared. This easing of pressure also affected Ukrainian graphics and book design in particular. Changes in the political, economic, and socio-cultural fields have had a mixed impact on the industry, but there is a noticeable emphasis in the discourse of book illustration on historical, dramatic, and children's subjects (Oliytryk, 2013; 2017). Intergenerational Semiosis based on hierarchical compensation transformed the idea of domestic graphics, bringing its stylistic features and narratives into a metanarrative, which means turning an illustration sign into an illustration code.

In contrast to the Soviet book illustration, which can be characterised by its mass character and strict serial isolation, the current Ukrainian illustration has gained originality and recognition among readers. The popularity of this kind is embodied in the use of book illustrations in other typographic products, including advertising, which repeats the informative and convincing functionality of product design in a certain way using popular cartoon characters on children's products to increase demand (Oliytryk, 2020). An emphasis on the recognition, popularity and mass character of a book illustration is necessary because it is not only about the aesthetic value of such a publication and evidence of the artist's skill. Identification of a particular literary work by illustrations and vice versa indicates the formation of its cultural code, which is transferred to the sign plane and marks the belonging of a particular illustration to the tradition of Ukrainian graphics, concludes socio-cultural conventions on the perception of visual and multimodal art, which is based on the national code (O'English et al., 2006; Babaian & Chalian, 2014).

Conclusion

Being transferred from the discourse of artistic texts and graphics to the body of culture through the rhetorical and informational pragmatics of design, Ukrainian illustrations become a valuable cultural code, it comes into contact with the modern national corpus of texts in the process of semiotic transformations on the social cross-section, essentially transforming works of art with “branded” illustrations from reputable artists. Texts with partial multimodality, accompanied by the mentioned illustrations, in the process of active social Semiosis approach the full modality expressed in the convention of the corresponding literary texts as code texts. Through the persuasiveness and fatality of its design, a text artefact is combined on an iconic level with the design, acquires an iconic iconicity in national design, illustrative and general reading discourses. While classical Ukrainian illustrations do not yet carry the structural and organisational role of a mode equal to the text, cultural and communicative practices assert it as informational and aesthetic attributes of domestic book design.

The layout of the graphic novel layout and typography go beyond texts with zero multimodality and fall into the communicative and semantic field of design, where traditional visual and text materials are actualised, and the natural placement of materials in the context with the output of the narrative from outside the dominant mode (visual or textual) gives texts complementarity. Independent graphic and linguistic artistic details are a kind of multimodal text in the process of layout and stylization form a graphic narrative. Historical and socio-cultural features have determined the interactive nature of individual cultures with multimodal buildings, which in turn has affected the development and modern perception of graphics as an attribute of text.

The communicative function of design is closely related to transgression and multimodality. The three proposed types of multimodality of design-text – structural, citation and a priori – are closely involved in semiotic connections in the process of constructing a graphic narrative, where structuring as an active implementation of design unites through the synthetic interconnection of graphic and verbal elements, citation multimodality through references to external enclosures provides attachment to common cultural codes, which can include structural conventions inherent in the layout of certain types of graphic narratives, and a priori relies on the reader-interpreter himself, his ability and desire to cover multimodality through the intent invested by the designer in the product.

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