

**REFLECTION OF THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE EUROPEAN IDENTITY
ON EXAMPLE OF STUDYING THE ARTISTIC VALUES OF ILLUSTRATIONS
FOR LITERARY SKETCHES, SHORT STORIES AND NOVELS SIGNED BY
MOLDAVIAN ARTIST ILIA BOGDESCO⁴**

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ABSTRACT

The pictorial, illustrative heritage, its narrative and symbol parts, philosophy and aesthetics of the XX and XXI centuries reveal to us a complex image of the world that gives the consistency of the imaginary, also represented in various book graphic forms. The study of book graphic works signed by the visual artists, as was Ilia Bogdesco (1923-2010) for the art and culture of Republic of Moldova, illustrating the creation of the great writers recognized universally aims to convey to specialists and the large public a perspective on the dynamics of the formal systems of modern and contemporary art, plastic languages and artistic typologies, in relation to the demands of the cultural and technological framework of European modernity. The article points out the evolution and the most important aspects of the illustrations signed by the Moldavian visual artist Ilia Bogdesco, which are included in the rich repertoire of works made in this field. The synchronicity presentation of the manifestation of book graphic works within the framework of various repeated editions offers new perspectives and deeper interpretations of artistic processes and major cultural phenomena of contemporaneity.

Keywords: image, art, narrative, symbol, book, graphics, aesthetic,value, European identity.

INTRODUCTION

Every time, starting to work on the artistic presentation of the next book, Ilia Bogdesco asked himself the question: would it captivate him so much that he would no longer be able to imagine his life without it; will he be able to say something new through it compared to his predecessors, artists-illustrators of this literary work, and will he be able to solve it at the level of the contemporary tasks that are put in front of book designers? [2, 3]

The graphic artist was aware of the importance of the distribution of content, decorative, letter and illustrative accents in the book, so that all of them, taken as a whole, contribute to the

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broader expression of the character and ideational content of the work and to discover artistic images and faces of the main characters.

In the arsenal of Ilia Bogdesco there was a lot of possibilities for an individual approach to each of the new cards. The artist easily discovered them within his own artistic individuality.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The illustration or the book graphic art image (opera/fine art creation) in different historiographical approaches is related with: aesthetic, artistic, social-cultural, pedagogical, ethnic, hermeneutics, ontology and other values. The aim of this article is to establish the artistic value of illustrations of Ilia Bogdesco and to put them in the list of other remarkable artists who illustrated universal literature, and that one which is representative in the European context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Fine art master Ilia Bogdesco illustrated «Сорочинская ярмка»/„Sorochinsky Fair” by N. Gogol (1950-1951), the collection «Русские очерки»/„Russian Sketches” (1953), the novel «Русский лес»/„Russian Forest” by L. Leonov (1961), „Selected Works” by C. Negruzzi (1972-1982), the novels „Crime and Punishment” by F. M. Dostoevsky (1972), „Anna Karenina” by L. Tolstoy (1977), „Gulliver’s Travels” by J. Swift (1978, paper, copper engraving), „Praise of Folly” by Erasmus of Rotterdam (1977, paper, etchings), «Зверобой» / „The Deer Slayer, or The First Warpath” by F. Cooper (1982, paper, ink, pen), „Diamond Kidnappers” by L. H. Boussenard (1982, paper, ink, pen) etc. From 1984 to 1996, the artist created 36 chisel engravings of „Don Quixote” by M. Cervantes, some of which entered the collections of the National Art Museum of Moldova. In a set of illustrations published in Saint Petersburg in 2008, along with engravings, his sketches, drawings and preventive compositions are presented that reveal the process of creating the face of Don Quixote and other characters of M. Cervantes. As Ilia Bogdesco once mentioned, the attempt to illustrate A. Pushkin’s poem «Цыганы»/ „Gypsies”, which was his optional work in the fifth course of the faculty, proved to the artist that he still does not have enough experience for such design concepts.

As Ilia Bogdesco mentioned once, the first his attempt to illustrate A. Pushkin’s poem „Цыганы”/„Gypsies”, which was his optional work in the fifth course of the faculty, proved to the artist that he still does not have enough experience for such design concepts.

After that, Ilia Bogdesco started to illustrate «Сорочинская ярмка»/„Sorochinsky Fair” by N. Gogol (1950-1951). The choice of the book «Сорочинская ярмка»/„Sorochinsky Fair” by N. Gogol was a spontaneous and random one for the particularly responsible moment of selecting the theme of the bachelor's thesis, when Bogdesco simply did not know which book to choose. Reading that book taken absolutely by chance from the shelf, the artist had the impression that he was not reading but remembering and recognizing already seen and well known images. At that moment, Bogdesco was already no longer thinking about his bachelor’s thesis, he seemed to see the Ukrainian fair, the types described by Gogol, smooth and solemn landscapes, and he did not connect these images with Ukraine, but with Moldova, the Dniester and the Butucenii born. Already much later, the artist realized that he chose „Sorochinsky Fair” because Gogol’s images and characters are very close to our Moldovan ones. The next day Ilia Bogdesco went to Sorochintsy (Gogol’s native village, Big Sorochintsy – Великі Сорочинці, once simply called Sorochintsy), and re-reading the book on the way he came to the conclusion that the paintings created by Gogol cannot be composed only according to the motifs of the book, they must be observed directly from life. The type, composition and state of nature must be seen concretely in life, only in this way you can create convincing images. Having no experience,

the artist believed that he had chosen a correct method. Although the book had once been read by Bogdesco, this time it was read by him in the pose of a visual artist, not an ordinary reader.

The magic of Gogol's texts and language so vividly and powerfully influenced the painter's imagination that the choice to create documentary drawings, from the scene, proved to be not innovative, but very correct for Bogdesco at that stage of creation [7, pp. 7-9]. After a month or so of work, Bogdesco returns to Leningrad. The accumulated material could serve to illustrate an ethnographic album, only after accumulating it the artist starts working on the model. The graphic artist would imaginatively overlay his drawings with the key moments of the content, keeping their connection to the context and the canvas of the subject.

Different as the character, format and technique, his drawings were organically related to the text, intertwining with its overall fable. Group scenes with genre compositions are alternated with portrait scenes, depending on the subject the illustration has the character of a vignette or frontispiece, etc. Unfortunately, the State Publishing House for Artistic Literature voluntarily changed the format of the book and some illustrations, thus destroying the original layout. The other shades of the title correspond to the brown and silver tones of Gogol's watercolor portrait, considered one of the best in the writer's iconography. Bogdesco tends to reflect the historical period in which the text of the book was written, rendering Gogol as a participant in all the events described in the book. The critic of the guy highly appreciated this work signed by Ilia Bogdesco and his ability to see Gogol as a realist writer, a true „painter of the word” [7, pp. 9-36]. This popular series accentuated the essential characteristics of Ilia Bogdesco's subsequent creation. Bogdesco's interest in everyday life and human characters, his ability to present them with fine humor and his predilection for romance were felt in it. Performing many preventive drawings from nature, the artist created a gallery of beautiful portraits with human patterns observed in everyday life. Created in a free manner in black watercolor, pencil, linocut or ink, through various processes, they are laconic and emotional, thus choosing not only the right image or face, but also the technique that most successfully reflected his ideas. In his skilfully crafted drawings, one can observe a contemplation of the images with simplicity and naivety identical to Gogol's treatment, and a personal attitude of the author can be perceived, a vision of the graphic artist towards Gogol's characters. Illustrations for „Sorochinsky Fair” offer an original treatment of the faces described by Gogol, emphasize their humor and lyricism, facilitating the deep understanding of the great writer's ideas [5, p.180]. In the works of Ilia Bogdesco, the ideological-artistic searches of the Soviet graphic artists in the field of artistic presentation of books were reflected. Illustrating the works of Soviet Russian and Moldovan writers, creating artistic presentation and design (at that time artistic construction), Ilia Bogdesco solved a series of difficult tasks specific to the Soviet period, contributing a lot to the development of the quality of Moldovan book art.

In creating the illustrations, the artist relied on the easel method and its specific tonal manner, creating a narrative plan for presenting the story. Treating specific characteristics of images and patterns, the artist finds appropriate artistic means. The skillful application of hatching and lines accentuates the grotesque and thus symbolic features, bypassing the grotesque caricature, even though the characters drawn are realistic. There are not so many portraits of Nikolai Gogol in Soviet Russian art. To the praise of the young Bogdesco at the time, the watercolor portrait of Gogol for the frontispiece of the book was characterized as one of the best [6, pp.13-16]. The graphic artist spent a month and a half in Sorochintsy to prepare the material from nature. From his drawings executed in Sorochintsy (Великие Сорочинцы), the most successful were the faces of Cherevyk and the compatriot Tsybulea [4, pp. 45-47]. In the commission for the defense of Ilia Bogdesco's bachelor's thesis were present: Kuprianov from „Kukryniksy”, Evgeny Kibrik, Konstantin Burov from „Goslitzdat” (State Literary Publishing House) and

other reference visual artists. They appreciated Bogdesco's work and decided to publish it as a tribute to Gogol's centenary. Some of Bogdesco's drawings were published in the magazine «Огонёк»/„Ogonek” as a „model of contemporary Soviet graphics”, the young artist immediately becoming a full member of the Union of Fine Artists of the USSR. In the same way and with the same success, Ilia Bogdesco created the drawings for the stories of Dmitry Mamin-Sibireak (1952). To illustrate this book he worked in Vologda, spending a month in the village of Voskresenskoe, walked through nearby villages, entering houses, drawing peasants, their interiors, household items, etc. [4, p. 47]

The novel «Русский лес»/„Russian forest” by L. Leonov was an important event, of enormous value for the entire Soviet literature, which addressed topical issues of a social, moral and philosophical nature. The novel includes the image of Soviet contemporaneity, in its multi-layered complexity, and was appreciated for the issues of time raised in the book. It is about conflicts of ideas and debates on life topics, homeland, relations between generations, about responsibility and duty, patriotism, moral understandings, struggle between ideologies and as Leonov himself expressed „human purity”. The author's thoughts about the „eternal” questions intertwine and intersect with the narrative related to the complicated fate of each character, which faced each other in the struggle to preserve the eternal beauty of their part embodied in the face or visual image of the Russian forest. The text is original in its compositional structure, the author's specific language with multiple metaphors, similes, symbols, epithets and invented words, associations inspired by folklore, popular songs and bylines, etc.

In 1957, after finishing the work on the illustrations for „Gypsies” by A. Pushkin, Ilia Bogdesco starts working on the novel «Русский лес»/„Russian Forest” by L. Leonov, which became a really painful trial for the artist. At that time, the graphic designer realized that the basic task was to find the ideational message of the book, the coloring and the multifaceted character. However, the artist wanted to accomplish this task through his own language, being faithful to his own style in creation and in the ways of approaching the subjects, the use of certain accents, the choice of techniques, etc.

In three years of work on the series of illustrations to Leonov's novel, Ilia Bogdesco created two completed variants and completely different in approach (without design). In the preparation stage for the illustration process itself, Bogdesco roamed the villages and forests of Novgorod, Smolensk, Vladimir, Gorky, the forests near Moscow and Kerjenets. Each completed drawing had about 20 preparatory sketches from nature [7, p.85].

The first variant in the series was thought by the artist on the combination of illustrations with portraits with frontispieces that describe the subject or continue the textual canvas making the visual connection between the chapters. The artist includes some landscapes, and the portraits created tend to the concrete approach to the characteristics of stylistic figures and artistic images. After the completion of the work, at the beginning of 1960 Bogdesco came to Leonov, to Moscow, to Peredelkino. The rather austere writer reacted to Bogdesco's drawings. He made a series of observations, which were more about details than artistic images, but they were about the essence of things. Thus, regarding the „Migrants” cartoon, the writer mentioned that the peasants do not go over thousands of kilometers to new places of living and their carts are empty and non-resistant - such things are not typical of the peasants who do not go on long journeys without durable equipment. One of Leonov's advices the artist used in the frontispiece for the book – when dissecting the forest do not cut down all the trees, but leave two or three trees so that the forest will continue to grow. Bogdesco found such observations important and useful, but it was difficult for him to realize that his mulch was not appreciated by Leonov, who wanted the images to be conceived differently. For Bogdesco this failure was complicated to accept

and the artist was already ready to abandon work on the illustrations, but the support of his colleagues from the State Literary Publishing House saved him during the crisis and the artist decided to create a new version of the illustrations.

The working method remained the same: creating the model based on material from nature as in Pushkin's „Gypsies”. The artist took into account Leonov's words about the „hidden part of the iceberg”, metaphorically speaking, it could be said that the first version of the illustrations created by Bogdesco for the „Russian Forest” did not reveal the „underwater part of the iceberg”, which more meaningfully observed in the artistic images and faces of the main characters, isolated from the ambience and deprived of their basic activity. Bogdesco was aware that this was a big shortcoming and he also proposed to solve the symbolic-poetic line of the landscape, to which the author gave a heroic and great role.

Based on these ideas, Bogdesco again redesigns the model and again goes to the forests of Smolensk, Kerjenets, Gorky and Novgorod, Kaluga region, creating a series of sketches from nature, studying the forests, talking with the foresters. Further, everything was checked in the composition of the layout, many drawings served him for landscape illustrations.

Thus, twenty-three (23) vignette-type illustrations were included in the second version of the layout, placed according to the chapters and designed to solve together the penetrating line of discovery of the book's subject. At the same time, some of them additionally correspond to the key moments of the subject, emphasizing the emotional part and the intonation of the author. The six (6) landscape drawings of a symbolic and lyrical character are designed to reflect the „emotional atmosphere” of the chapter. The characters of the heroes are revealed in relation to their environment and activity. In the second version of the series, the artist does not isolate the heroes of the novel from their surroundings, which was found to be a mistake in the first version. The artist unites the fates of Vihrov, Polea and Grachiansky in one line, considering that this is more correct and necessary: one of the specific characteristics of the novel consists in the originality of its composition: each main hero exists and works among other people. The evolution of the conflict between Vihrov and Grachiansky naturally affects each secondary character according to the principle of stepwise repetition. The foreground characters are reflected alongside those of the second and third planes, emphasizing the author's narrative and symbolic line.

On the frontispiece the artist places a strip illustration which in his conception corresponds to the key idea of cutting down the forest. The gray clouds reproduce the atmosphere of regret by covering a „cemetery” of the „giants” of the forest, fallen in unequal battle with man. And the felled tree trunks associate with tombstones in the picture are scattered to the horizon line. The fragmentary nature of the composition complements the borderless dimensions of the emptying of the place.

RESULTS

The Moldavian book artist Ilia Bogdesco studied a lot the everyday life and human characters, as well as his ability to present them with fine humor and his predilection for romance were felt in it. Performing many preventive drawings from nature, the artist created a gallery of beautiful portraits with human patterns observed in everyday life.

After illustrating Dostoevsky's novel „Crime and Punishment”, through which the artist created an expressive, original and truthful treatment of the images and faces of the characters, discovering the philosophical subtext of the novel, Ilia Bogdesco was appreciated as a skilled psychologist, true researcher of literature, able to analyze things in depth [8, p. 6]. However, Bogdesco's artistic skill and drawing capabilities should not be excluded from this context of

appreciation. Some of the illustrations in this novel were mentioned with the gold medal at the competition of artists-illustrators of the works signed by Dostoevsky in Leipzig [9, p. 15]. The elegance of the illustrations for „Selected works” by C. Negruzzi accentuates the artist’s desire to compare them with Pushkin’s drawings. The features are precise, the procedures are laconic and stylistically processed, as the critic Rufin Gordin mentioned in the introductory text for the album dedicated to the master’s creation.

The sharp and innocent character of the satirical generalizations is specific to the illustrations of the novel „Praise of Folly” by Erasmus of Rotterdam, the poetic aspect of the artistic images and the faces of the characters are also typical of the drawings for the novel „The Deer Slayer, or The First Warpath” by F. Cooper. Every time the artist chose subjects that corresponded to own tasks and creative searches. „True master of the grotesque”, this is how the critic Dmitri Golțov qualified Ilia Bogdesco, analyzing the artist’s illustrations to „Don Quixote” by M. Cervantes [8, p. 6].

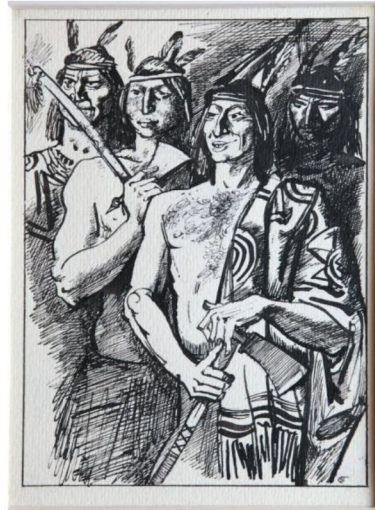
CONTRIBUTION

The visual artist Ilia Bogdesco created an expressive, original and truthful treatment of the images and faces of the characters, discovering the philosophical subtext of the books illustrated by him.

Colleagues, disciples, Russian [1] and Moldovan critics appreciate the value of the talent of the visual artist Ilia Bogdesco, who through his creation favored and intensified the development of national book graphics, emphasizing the problems of book art in the Republic of Moldova. The study of the works signed by the visual artists, as was Ilia Bogdesco (1923-2010) for art and culture of Republic of Moldova, illustrating the creation of the great writers recognized universally convey a perspective on the dynamics of the formal systems of modern and contemporary art, plastic languages and artistic typologies, in relation to the demands of the cultural framework of European book graphics.



Ilia Bogdesco. Sketch and illustration to „Sorochinsky Fair” by N. Gogol (1950-1951). Collection of National Fine Art Museum, Chisinau



Ilia Bogdesco. Illustrations of „The Deer Slayer, or The First Warpath” by F. Cooper, 1982.
Paper, ink, pen. Collection of National Fine Art Museum, Chisinau



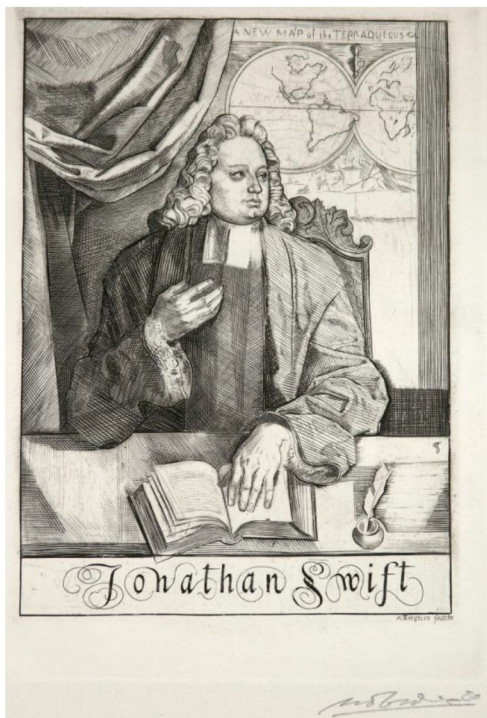
Ilia Bogdesco. Illustrations to the novel „Crime and Punishment” by Dostoevsky, 1972.
Collection of National Fine Art Museum, Chisinau



Ilia Bogdesco. Illustrations on „Praise of Folly” by Erasmus of Rotterdam, 1977. Paper, etchings. Collection of National Fine Art Museum, Chisinau



Ilia Bogdesco. Illustration to „Selected works” by C. Negruzzi, 1972-1982. Collection of National Fine Art Museum, Chisinau



Ilia Bogdesco. Illustrations to „Gulliver’s Travels” by J. Swift, 1978. Paper, copperplate. Collection of National Fine Art Museum, Chisinau



Ilia Bogdesco. Illustrations to „Selected Works” and novel-poem (prose poem) „Dead Souls” by N. Gogol, 1980. Collection of National Fine Art Museum, Chisinau



Pia Bogdesco. Sketches and illustrations to „Don Quixote” by M. Cervantes, 1988, 1989 (1996? 2008?). Paper, copperplate, chisel. Collection of National Fine Art Museum, Chisinau

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