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Nina Goga, Sarah Hoem Iversen
and **Anne-Stefi Teigland** (Eds.)

VERBAL AND VISUAL STRATEGIES IN NONFICTION PICTUREBOOKS

Theoretical and Analytical
Approaches

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Verbal and visual strategies in nonfiction picturebooks

Nina Goga, Sarah Hoem Iversen and Anne-Stefi Teigland

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Scandinavian University Press

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Introduction

Nina Goga, Sarah Hoem Iversen and Anne-Stefi Teigland

Nonfiction for children and young adults has existed alongside fiction ever since the very first texts for children appeared. Clearly recognized on a par with fiction picturebooks, nonfiction picturebooks have been honoured with their own category for awards at least since the 1990s. However, there are comparatively few critical, theoretical and analytical studies on children's and Young Adult (YA) nonfiction generally and nonfiction picturebooks particularly. There may be several reasons for this neglect or marginalisation, but the main reason over time seems to be the unwillingness to include the many verbal and visual strategies of nonfiction within the concept of children's literature. A telling and influential example is the often-quoted narrowing down by Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott (2006):

[s]ince we are interested in the way words and pictures collaborate in telling stories, we will concentrate on narratives, leaving aside, for instance, picture dictionaries, illustrated poems, the many nonfiction books with pictures, and other kinds of illustrated books, which demand special attention. (p. 26)

While it is perfectly valid to concentrate on narratives, it is problematic that the list of what Nikolajeva and Scott leave aside indirectly proposes that nonfiction picturebooks may not contain narratives. The more troubling consequence of this approach has been to rule out nonfiction picturebooks as a topic of interest within the field of picturebook theory. There is, as Nikola von Merveldt (2018) has pointed out, still "a general critical bias in favour of fiction over nonfiction" (p. 241). This, von Merveldt argues, is "partly due to the grand narrative according to which the history of children's literature should be seen as a triumphant emancipation from instruction to delight" (p. 241). Consequently, "scholars of children's literature have considered carefree fictional literature as the more worthy object of study" (p. 241). Rather than further dwelling on the reasons behind this lacuna within children's literature research, there is a need to bring together studies that attempt to remedy this deficiency, and to establish a theoretical framework or starting point for

systematic and inventive approaches to various kinds of children's and YA nonfiction in general and nonfiction picturebooks more specifically.

While earlier studies on children's and YA nonfiction were preoccupied with defining and explaining nonfiction in contrast to fiction, more recent research tends to define the category of nonfiction by examining actual examples, focusing on the content of these texts, and the ways in which this content is visually and verbally presented to the reader (Mallett, 2004; Larkin-Lieffers, 2010; Mallan & Cross 2014; Sanders, 2018; von Merveldt, 2018; Grilli ed., 2020). Most existing studies are either national overviews or limited to a few examples on a specific topic. Only a few studies aim at a thorough theoretical approach (e.g. Sanders, 2018) and so far, only one has a specific interest in nonfiction picturebooks (Grilli ed., 2020).

Central to the investigation of nonfiction picturebooks is the construction and validation of knowledge and the acknowledgement that the dissemination of knowledge in nonfiction picturebooks varies according to the context (time, place, function) in which the text was created. Questions for inquiry include the kind of knowledge that is examined and why, and the ways in which knowledge is presented and organized in the book. It was these questions that the 7th International conference of the European Network of Picturebook Research aimed to answer by focusing on the verbal and visual strategies in nonfiction picturebooks. The conference took place in September 2019 at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences in Bergen. It was organized by the editors of this book: all three with a special interest in dictionaries (Hoem Iversen), biographies (Goga), and mediation of nonfiction (Teigland) for children and YA. The conference gathered around 80 children's literature scholars, teachers, and students and offered 35 papers on the topic of nonfiction picturebooks. The present edited volume comprises 18 peer reviewed chapters which elaborate and build on a select number of these conference papers.

In addition to the need for increased knowledge about the verbal and visual strategies in nonfiction picturebooks, another justification for examining nonfiction picturebooks is related to the increased attention directed towards children's and young adults' reading of nonfictional texts. Reasons for this change of focus include the need to foster critical literacy to confront misinformation, given the expanding uncertainty about which sources to trust when historical events, social analysis, biographical information, or visual documentation are presented. While critical literacy is often taught in schools in relation to news, social media and textbooks, little educational and academic attention has been paid to other text sources, such, as children's and YA nonfiction books and nonfiction picturebooks, which may be studied in school, but are most often read freely at home by curious young readers. Moreover, children's nonfiction should not just be considered from

the point of view of the dissemination of information and knowledge but should also be examined for their aesthetic qualities.

The variety of example texts discussed in this volume showcase the immense diversity that characterizes the field of nonfiction published for young readers. The main purpose of this edited volume is to provide the field of children's and YA literature research in general, and the field of picturebook research in particular, with the theoretical tools necessary for evaluating and analysing nonfiction picturebooks. Tools, typologies, and theoretical frameworks that exist for fiction and narrative picturebooks cannot necessarily be directly applied to nonfiction picturebooks. This volume provides new insight into a neglected field. Overall, the chapter authors demonstrate different ways to approach nonfiction picturebooks for children and YA.

Fully aware of the reasons presented for using or finding alternative terminology (e.g. *informational texts*), the editors of this volume adopt the standard term in English, namely *nonfiction*. However, the purpose of this book is not to decide on a final term or concept that will work for all different kinds of nonfiction picturebooks. Instead, we are interested in acknowledging the immense variety within this heterogeneous category. This is reflected in the chapters selected for this volume, in which contributors use and explore alternative terms, such as *informational* and *descriptive* picturebooks. Thus, this book may be considered an ongoing dialogue about the terminology and theoretical approaches that can be applied to a rich, vast, and varied corpus of nonfiction picturebooks.

The present volume is aimed at an international field of study, whether within children's and YA literature research, nonfiction literature, pedagogy research, knowledge production and dissemination, or visual design and scientific visuality. The chapter contributors come from different countries and different academic disciplines and represent diverse academic cultures. What they all have in common is an urge to provide the research field with new, relevant, and explorative theoretical approaches to better understand the many ways in which knowledge is presented verbally and visually in children's and YA nonfiction.

Selecting, presenting and organising knowledge for any reader is a challenge, and deciding on the most adequate way to organise the chapters of a book *about* nonfiction picturebooks is no exception. The selected chapters propose typologies, models and analytical tools for encountering and interpreting both contemporary and historical nonfiction picturebooks. The overall structure of this volume should be seen as an attempt to attain thematic coherence.

A central issue within the field of nonfiction revolves around the ways in which narrative and non-narrative structures are employed in texts. Three chapters have

been organized under the heading *Semiotics and Stylistics of nonfiction and non-narrative picturebooks*. The first chapter uncovers and examines the stylistic strategies that are mobilized and exchanged with other fields of knowledge in order to inform children about birds. Arguing that nonfiction can be as aesthetically rewarding and complex as fiction the second chapter investigates examples of artistic nonfiction picturebooks. Finally, the third chapter is dedicated to the discussion of a possible semiotic model of the nonnarrative picturebook.

These chapters are followed by four chapters which examine the ways in which ideologies are perpetuated in words and illustrations in nonfiction picturebooks. There has been considerable research on ideology in children's fiction (e.g. Stephens, 1992), but less attention has been paid to ideology in children's nonfiction. The chapters collected under the heading *Ideology* in this volume challenge the established idea that children's nonfiction is typically fact-based or fact-oriented, an idea that might suggest that such texts are objective representations of reality (see e.g. Løvland, 2016). The four chapters deal with books about important national sculptures, representations of gender in picture dictionaries, translations of controversial topics, and language ideologies and the implied reader in New Zealand picturebooks about suffragettes.

The next section entitled *Biography* comprises two chapters. Biographies are one of the most widely explored nonfiction genres for children and young people. As well as drawing on previous research, these two contributions offer new perspectives on this genre, not least as regards the relationship between verbal and visual dissemination of knowledge. In line with a current tendency within biographies for young readers, both chapters deal with biographies of acknowledged artists, namely the painter Frida Kahlo, and the poets William Carlos Williams and E. E. Cummings, respectively.

Traditionally, most nonfiction texts for children and young adults have centred on science topics. Many of these books have a fairly standardized format and may lack nuance regarding what is presented as facts, with little awareness of the ways in which verbal and visual presentation may influence the dissemination of knowledge. The four chapters in the section entitled *Animals and environment* shed light on such aspects of the dissemination of knowledge and explore traditional perceptions of what nonfiction literature for children and young adults is or can be. The theoretical approaches span from content analysis via ecocriticism to visual analysis, with example texts ranging from books about farms, wild animals, and coal, oil, and gas.

The two chapters in the section *Architecture and city maps* both deal with a specific field within nonfiction literature for children and young adults that is

becoming gradually more widespread, namely spaces and places, geography, city maps and architecture. The growing interest in these areas of children's nonfiction is perhaps not unexpected, given that its focus on the spatial aspect of texts in itself organizes and explores the very concepts that distinguish nonfiction texts from, for example, narrative fiction such as novels and short stories. Not only do the two chapters in this section explore different parts of this particular field of knowledge, they also contribute different theoretical perspectives that correspond with those presented in the third chapter in this volume. The first contributor presents a taxonomy for classifying narrative strategies in books about architecture, whereas the second chapter discusses the relationship between fact and fiction in city maps.

The final section labelled *The pictorial turn* refers to the increased awareness of the importance of illustrations in nonfiction for children and young adults (von Merveldt, 2018). The section comprises discussions and analyses of visual, sensorial, and aesthetic strategies in nonfiction picturebooks. The first chapter discusses how guided and embodied experiences in nonfiction picturebooks can reinforce children's engagement with works of art. The second chapter examines the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction through analyses of literary and artistic strategies. Finally, the third chapter examines ways in which visual strategies are used to communicate knowledge to different possible child readers.

Altogether, the chapters in the present volume contribute to increased understanding of the verbal and visual complexity of nonfiction picturebooks for children and young adults. Although not all possible subjects and perspectives are covered, it is our hope that this volume contributes theoretical frameworks and analytical tools that may benefit further research in the rich and exciting field of nonfiction picturebooks across the world.

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SEMIOTICS AND STYLISTICS
OF NONFICTION
AND NONNARRATIVE
PICTUREBOOKS



1. Stylistic strategies in children's nonfiction books

Marcus Martins and Celia Abicalil Belmiro

Abstract This chapter asks, “what stylistic strategies are mobilized to inform children about a subject?” Two Brazilian and two French books are analysed. The categories ‘direct citation’ and ‘allusion to technique’ explain the influence of scientific illustration, while ‘movements of interaction’ points to the relationship between verbal and visual languages. The results provide possibilities for new levels of reading and the association of scientific education with that of artistic education.

Keywords nonfiction, children's book, style, scientific illustration, artistic education

INTRODUCTION

Nonfiction books for children have offered a variety of proposals that combine the artistic, the literary and the nonfictional. Thus, the question of what stylistic strategies are mobilized to inform children about certain subjects is intended to help us understand how nonfiction books can unite childhood, information and fiction. The increase in books whose visual composition are influenced by scientific illustration on visual composition, whether by direct citation or allusion to technique, provides a new focus for research on editorial production decisions. Furthermore, the “movement of interaction” between fiction and information on the doublespread, which thus enables the constitution of the off-screen resource, is another valuable aspect.

The prevalence of analysis on the style of illustration in children's literature (Nodelman, 1988; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001; Van der Linden, 2006; Hunt, 1991; Belmiro, 2014) is noteworthy. However, there are still only a few studies on the style of illustration in children's nonfiction books such as Carter (1993, 1997) who states that the style joins the subject, while the structure controls the theme, whereas McClure (2003) and Colman (2007) relate the style of literary fiction to the structure of a nonfictional text.

For this reason, editorial projects were selected that aggregate verbo-visual structures considered innovative in the field of nonfiction. The first of the analysed books is *Abecedário de Aves Brasileiras* (2009, Brazilian Bird Alphabet), by Geraldo Valério, which reveals typical birds of Brazil. This work is organized in alphabetical order, in which each letter represents a bird. On each doublespread there is a verbal text discussing habits, food, habitat and other characteristics, as well as a visual representation of the described bird. Secondly, *Plume* (2012), by Isabelle Simler is a compendium of descriptions of more birds, from the familiar, such as the chicken and pigeon, to the exotic, such as the ibis and the common jay, constantly through the watchful eye of Plume, the cat. *Oxiseau* (2017, Birds) by Francesco Pittau and Bernadette Gervais, presents more sophisticated visual resources with characteristics of different birds, such as body parts, feathers, eggs, and body structure. Finally, *Zoo* (2012) by Jesús Gabán, shows animals in their different habitats. On each doublespread there is an animal highlighted in the foreground and, around it, others with common characteristics.

Recognizing how illustrators and writers create their own styles or carry out stylistic exchanges with other fields of knowledge, shows the importance of these projects. In this sense, to understand the “ways of expressing” (Kiefer, 1995) both in verbal and visual contexts, that is which stylistic strategies are present, it is necessary to focus on the topic of scientific illustration and picturebooks which will enable more thorough interdisciplinary analysis.

THE INFLUENCE OF SCIENTIFIC ILLUSTRATION

In the article “*Créer des livres, choisir des images*” (Create books, choose pictures) Coblenz (1997) develops the notion of documentary illustration; for him, the presence of this type of illustration helps to clarify the subject, and must correspond to some criteria, such as suitability for the reader and the subject addressed by the book. To illustrate his article, the author uses the image of *L'art de faire éclore les poulets* (The art of hatching chickens) in *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (1751–1772, Encyclopedia or a Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Craft), in which there is the use of a typically naturalistic illustration.

Throughout the article, the author uses another computerized image entitled “*Le nid, L'œuf et L'oiseau*” (The nest, the egg and the bird), published in the Gallimard series of nonfiction books, which alludes to the illustration by Diderot et D'Alembert. Although the author does not discuss some points arising from this inter pictorial play, the first approximation of nonfiction studies with scientific illustration is noted.

This example indicates the possibility of scientific illustration manifesting itself in children's nonfiction. Included with this is the frequent presence of stylistic references to the technique, either by borrowing style, as in *Oxiseau* and *Plume*, or by allusions to the technique, as in *Abecedário de Aves Brasileiras* and *Zoo*, all analysed in this chapter.

Thus, it is worth highlighting some points related to the art of "drawing living forms" (Bruzzo, 2004). According to Correia (2011), "creating a scientific design is, above all, an act of reflection" (p. 226). In his perspective, scientific illustration, as a model or representative image, unequivocally exposes inaccessible or hidden natural domains, since this technique permits the observation of contours and models unattainable by the naked eye or by a camera. As Bruzzo (2004) reasserts, many images present in scientific books are in no way similar to the forms visible with the naked eye. "They do not resemble known shapes, and do not maintain any proximity to our ordinary visual experience; they constitute a world that we can only imagine" (Bruzzo, 2004, p. 1361).

Bruzzo emphasizes the power that scientific drawings have in biological description, making it possible to replace pages of text with succinct, vivid, and memorable illustrations of information. Thus, this way of illustrating is the "most effective way of formatting images for the communication of scientific knowledge" (Bruzzo, 2004, p. 1363). However, despite the objectivity of the illustration, Olson (1994) recalls that "To create representations is not merely to record speeches or to construct mnemonics; it is to construct visible artifacts with a degree of autonomy from their author and with special properties for controlling how they will be interpreted" (p. 196). The author warns that the visual representation, despite seeking verisimilitude, collides with its polysemic character, which allows for multiple interpretations, whether of the author or the countless viewers.

It is at this moment that scientific illustration tends to approximate the set of visual arts. Papp (1968) explains that the scientific illustrator has a very restrictive connotation – a scientific illustrator is an artist, but not all artists are scientific illustrators. In the author's understanding, the term "scientific" restricts the scientific illustrator to draw what he observes, omitting any impression, while the artist is allowed to use his imagination and record his interpretations and impressions of the objects.

Papp's comment (1968) reveals one of the great challenges of scientific illustrators – namely, the debate between the scientific description of a more artistic nature and others that emphasize the more taxonomic character of the technique. Bruzzo (2004) proposes that by focusing on the images of naturalists "we can perceive some peculiarities in the figures that accompany their accounts and recognize

some differences regarding the way of observing the natural world and the ways of structuring knowledge for its dissemination [...]” (p. 1363).

The differences regarding the ways of observing the world are perceptible in these two currents, which, despite being markedly present in the 19th century, are still clear in current scientific drawings. Blum (1993) researched zoological illustration in the 19th century, examining the relationship between the work of naturalists and that of artists and identifies the predominance of one or another expression, distinguishing naturalist illustrator and naturalist artist. This distinction explains the tension between the narrative representation and the description based on the taxonomic ideal. The latter, according to Bruzzo (2004), “seeks to isolate the animal from its surroundings [...] to present the animal not as an individual organism, but as a representative type of the group of beings of its species” (p. 1367).

Direct citation

Blum's naturalist illustrator (1993) can be seen in *Oxiseau*, which suggests some stylistic features of scientific illustration of a taxonomic nature. In general, the animal is presented in the lateral perspective, in the negative scenario, and in many cases it is perched. The illustrated position refers back to taxidermy, so that the visual representation highlights the characteristics of the birds. As Correia (2011) suggests, illustrating a species “implies drawing the ‘ideal’ individual that brings together, in a single image, the maximum taxonomic characteristics which typify it and facilitate its comparative recognition of its intraspecific peers” (p. 231).

The *Cornelle Noire* (Carrión Crow), which illustrates the first doublespread, is an example of accuracy and precision in the design of the general shape of the beak with differences between the jaws (jawbone and mandible), and shading to highlight the different parts of the beak, in addition to the wing feathers and the disposition of the eyes (see Fig. 1.1). Furthermore, the legs have well-defined proportions in relation to the rest of the body structure.

In addition, there is a specific texture when depicting the scaliness of the skin, claws and paws encouraging a particularization in the visual description. The detail of the reflection is also found in the design of the eyes; according to Papp (1968), “after you finish drawing eyes, put ‘life’ on them, adding highlights (reflection)” (p. 51).

It is also worth mentioning the play of light and shadow that builds a visual artifice by which the image approaches the naturalistic way of illustrating. As Nancy Halliday (2003) mentions, “All actual colors (called the local color) must be subordinate to the shape, and the light and shadows that fall on it. Sunlight will whiten

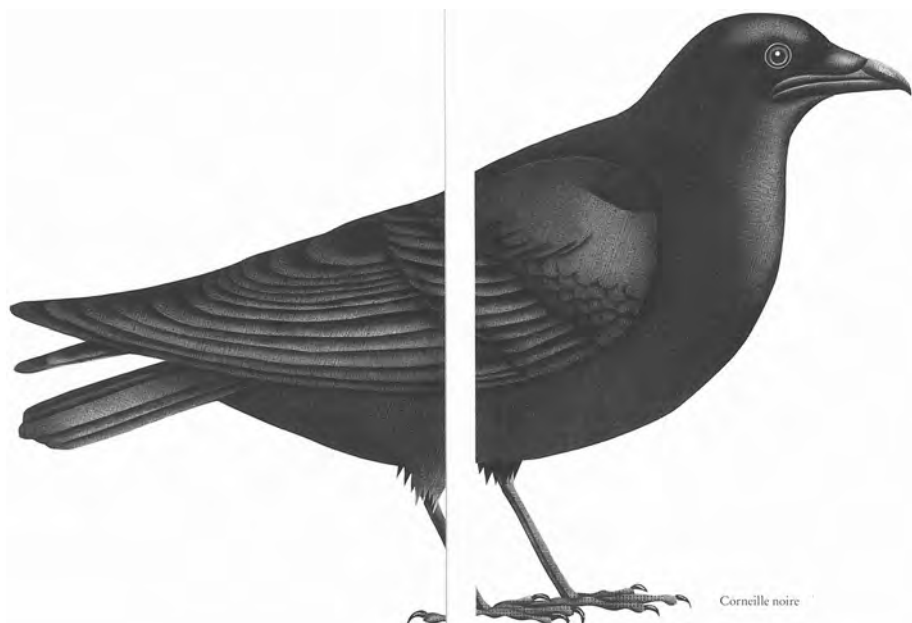


Figure 1.1 *Oxiseau* (2017), by Francesco Pittau and Bernadette Gervais, *Les Grandes Personnes*.

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the color, shadows will darken as well as intensify them” (p. 419). This visual strategy is found in many of Pittau and Gervais’s birds, as in *Manchot Royal* (King Penguin), which presents yellow, black and white as local colours, while the light source on the right illuminates black and highlights white and yellow of the bird.

Following Blum’s (1993) classification, the naturalist artist is highlighted in the construction of a passionate prose in the “figuration of animals” (Kemp, 1998; Bruzzo, 2004). Visual representation tends to build more artistic exchanges, uniting scientific concepts with aesthetic choices. This position is endorsed by Zweifel (1988) when commenting that “every effort should be made to produce a picture that is artistically pleasing as well as biological correct. Not everyone will achieve technique of professional quality, but there are many things you can do to produce an attractive illustration” (p. 27).

The union between scientific and artistic nature in the production of an image can be seen in *Plume*. Simler’s attention to describing the feather’s morphology is significant, as such stylistic strategies definitely bring the visual description of scientific illustration techniques closer together. Two moments of intersection between the artistic and the scientific can be seen: the first is the attempt to clearly

represent the structure of the feather. Simler's successful undertaking of this complex allows the diversity of its chromatic patterns, size, and thickness to be distinguished. In the sequence of pages, there is a gradual increase in visual descriptions, from one to two feathers of the goose and peacock, and ending in the hen and duck with nine examples. The second moment of dialogue is in the front and back endpapers of the book, in which we see the illustrator's handling dimensions and proportions, an important aspect of scientific illustration considered by Papp (1968).

It should be noted that in *Plume* the visual representations of the birds do not follow the scientific model, but are illustrated with rounded and non-uniform bodies; visual arts are added, such as the predominance of colder tones of colours, which are associated with the use of the pencil technique. The set of characteristics creates a scenario for a fictitious world – the world of representation – which is different from the description in reality – the represented world. In the image of the guineafowl, there is a rounded body and a head that deviates from the proportion of the shapes of a bird. Furthermore, we do not see the spots on its feathers or crest (see Fig. 1.2). For Nodelman (1988), “we associate certain



Figure 1.2 *Plume* (2012), by Isabelle Simler, Editions courtes et longues.
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emotions with certain shapes, the shapes of visual objects as they relate to their background and to the other objects can create tensions and thus imply meaning in themselves” (p. 126).

On the right page, the artistic representation of birds associates them with the field of fictionality. On the left page, the technique used for the respective bird's feather is similar to the style of scientific illustration, such as the use of splashes of colour, the concern with pencil strokes and the most reliable format of the scientific object. The crossover of styles, markedly, with the artistic and scientific manifestation to express the world, brings together two realities and, above all, allows transcribing in visual form what Romo (2008) affirms: “the truth is not the privilege of science, nor the beauty of Art” (p. 74). In other words, the work associates factual information with poetic devices (Kesler, 2012).

The exchange between artistic expression and the scientific dimension is not explicitly noticeable only in the visual text. In some cases it is possible to find implicit stylistic references to the mode of scientific drawing.

Allusion to technique

Abecedário de Aves Brasileiras and *Zoo* are examples of allusion to stylistic features of scientific illustration. Both are characterized by being illustrations of high aesthetic content, which distort the scientific representation of living beings. However, allusions to the technique of scientific illustration can be seen, as in the visual composition of *Oleiro* (2009, Red Ovenbird), by Geraldo Valério (see Fig. 1.3). The text explains the origin of the bird's name, which corresponds to the shape of the nest, similar to the clay oven, which is a typical Brazilian object. The collage technique was chosen to illustrate the bird and, to create the illusion of movement, the illustrator utilizes the visual resource that Van der Linden (2011) calls “instant movement”, that is, “capturing the essence of an action means giving the bird back this briefest moment, reducing the represented duration to a minimum” (p. 104).

This visual device in the picturebook is similar to the technique used by naturalists to enhance the vividness of visual representation and capture the bird's behaviour in the environment. This shows an artistic immersion rather than a systematic analysis (Kemp, 1998). In this way, Valério's scenario suggests a depth necessary for the chick to have half its body out of the nest waiting for food.

In *Zoo* the use of ink and watercolour constitutes two techniques of scientific illustrators to achieve precision and further detail the drawing. This is the case



Figure 1.3 *Abecedário de Aves Brasileiras* (2012), by Geraldo Valério, WMF Martins Fontes.

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of the visual representation of the Rhinoceros, with different textures to distinguish the parts of the animal, such as the neck, ears, and above the structure of the legs.

In both cases, *Zoo* and *Abecedário de Aves Brasileiras*, the construction of the *shading convention* (Zweifel, 1988) is observed. This is a common visual resource in naturalistic scientific illustration allowing the viewer to visualize the drawing and interpret it more easily. Its use is seen, for example, in the play of light and shadow in Valério's bird and Gabán's Rhinoceros. The light source in *Oleiro* highlights the nest and the chick, while in the Rhinoceros, the textures are accentuated by the shading.

Some approximations that nonfiction books maintain with scientific illustration, either by direct citation or allusions to technique, were therefore observed. The use of stylistic strategies expands the visual repertoire of the child reader, as it allows the assimilation of a scientific technique, represented in an artistic way, in a semiotic object.

THE MOVEMENTS OF INTERACTION

The dialogue between fiction and nonfiction mainly characterizes the strategies of style used by writers and illustrators, so that it becomes routine to find fictional elements in the contemporary production of nonfiction books for children. The stylistic effect that we call “movement of interaction” incorporates this procedure in the visual and verbal text. Thus, the presence of visual indexes or linguistic devices with a strong fictional intention is observed, with the objective of expanding the construction of information and, above all, the reading experience.

The movements of interaction, therefore, are visual and verbal indications of the presence of one or more characters that move, so that the composition of each doublespread suggests some sign of its presence, mainly by the interaction it establishes with the main object of the scene. The existence of these visual and verbal elements amplifies fictionality in a nonfictional setting and, above all, allows for humorous situations and piques the curiosity of the child reader.

The movements of interaction can present themselves as visual indices in the composition with what Zapaarín (2010) designates as *off-screen*, which “is a spatial ellipsis which excludes a scenic portion (characters, decoration, sound or atmosphere) that is significant for the story” (p. 160). In other words, the whole unframed reality would be positioned *off-screen* in relation to the main object of the frame, allowing the construction of a metonymic process of the part for the whole, “since in *off-screen* the blank space in itself is not used but rather how it relates to what has been selected” (Zapaarín, 2010, p. 165).

The *off-screen* can also cooperate towards the development of the polysemy of the image, guiding the reader, but without depriving the minimum information necessary for the scene to happen. Absences, by accentuating the reading experience, contribute to the progress of the plot. For Zapaarín (2010), establishing a frame or window

is the founding act through which the representation chooses the significant portions and confronts them with those rejected. It consists of a cut with its subsequent montage, either when creating the page with the frame (internal montage) or when sequencing various pages (external montage). This immediately generates the *shot* of the selected portion that in turn leaves the rest off-screen. (p. 166)

In this sense, such a device, while initially only spatial and the result of scenic isolation, creates subjective and aesthetic effects. In the case of nonfiction

books, the presence of the *off-screen* brings about changes in the orientation of the information, as the tendency is for the reader to look at the multiple events on the doublespread, thus providing different ways of entering the reading experience.

Zaparaín (2010) indicates six modalities of *off-screen* in which the relationships between on frame and off frame are observed. They are: *external objective off-screen*; *external omniscient off-screen*; *external subjective off-screen*; *internal off-screen*; *sonorous off-screen* (*sound in off*) and *interstitial off-screen*. It is noteworthy that the first modalities are established within a frame, and only the last can be performed in a sequence. In this chapter, two modalities of *off-screen* are employed: the first, *external objective off-screen*, present in *Plume*; the second, *internal off-screen*, in *Zoo*.

The first modality “is what is not seen of the observed either because the scene does not refer to it, because it is momentarily off-scene or because it leaves one part outside the scene” (Zaparaín 2010, p. 168). Simler employs this visual action in *Plume*: the cat, who takes part in the scene, is not fully exposed until the end of the work, when he presents himself, “My name is Plume”. The existence of the cat is a visual artifice, produced in a humorous way, which creates expectation in the reader-viewer, encouraging them to look for the signs of his presence on the doublespread: on the cover we see his face, on the frontispiece we see the whiskers and in the first scene we notice his nose.

On the doublespread dedicated to the duck, there are some paw marks, which can be associated with Plume, the cat. This metonymic visual game, full of humour, goes on until the back cover. This artistic solution establishes a particular dynamic in the plot, since the static visual description of the birds contrasts with the movement of the cat when going through the book. Plume is our guide on this tour – he is the ornithologist who shows his favourite species, corroborated by the verbal passage “and ... me? I collect feathers”.

The participation of the reader-viewer, based on this movement of interaction, is reinforced by the graphic design, whose absence of frames facilitates the reader to enter the scene. Furthermore, the existence of negative space in the background impacts on visual perception, as the visual details that the illustrator wishes to emphasize in the imagistic text are noted.

The second modality, *internal off-screen*, “is what is not seen of the shot, a surprising absence because the privileged eye of the observer accepts not seeing beyond the scene however does not expect things to be hidden from him in the scene” (Zaparaín, 2010, p. 171). In *Zoo*, the boy follows the animals on each page. His existence is not perceived by living things, since they are all in the foreground



Figure 1.4 *Zoo* (2012), by Jesús Gabán, Projeto.

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and looking in the direction of the reader-viewer (see Fig. 1.4). The boy, in contrast, directs his gaze, most of the time, to the animals.

The interplay between the boy's presence/absence in *Zoo* takes place from the intersection of eyes, as the viewer sees the boy, but the characters do not. This movement of interaction is structured in the confluence of the visual statements of the scene. According to Zaparaín (2010), the use of *internal off-screen* allows the hierarchical overlap of elements within a focal pyramid, provided, above all, by the use of depth. The use of this device is seen on the page with nocturnal animals. There is the presence of the lighthouse, the moon with a human face and the owl positioned in the very foreground with its gaze directed towards the reader, as well as other animals, such as lemurs, owls, moths and fireflies, around it. The boy appears in the lower right corner, shrunken and mixed with the colour tones of the animals and the scenery. However, the privileged eye of the reader pursues his existence, above all for his search that he carries out on each corner of the page – thus assuming the character of the hunter (Certeau, 1980).

CONCLUSION

The question that justifies this study could be answered by analysing a set of works that establish bridges between scientific and artistic representation, and which results in the construction of a varied informational and imagery repertoire on the part of the child. Despite the innumerable benefits for children's visual and scientific literacy, studies and research on nonfictional books need further study, since the lack of sedimented theoretical constructions seems to emerge from a dichotomous relationship between fiction and nonfiction. In this sense, fiction would boast a plethora of possibilities, since it carries with it the aesthetic contributions of literature. Nonfiction, in contrast, would be predisposed to the rationality of science, given that the concern with the construction of a concept, according to many scholars, goes hand in hand with the writing of nonfiction for children.

In a lot of academic, editorial and educational discourse, there has been a failure to appreciate the role that these works have in the development of the child reader. The arguments are based on the idea that books present didactic and educational content, since they favour disseminating information or a concept. The concept inherent to this idea is that the communication of information between children and adults is reduced only to the school environment, or even to the relationship between teacher and student.

Current nonfiction books overcome this perspective, offering different ways of expanding the informational repertoire that can be approached in different environments, such as in the library, at home, in the park or in other non-school locations. Thus, an information network extends to other mediators, uniting scientific and artistic procedures, fiction and information, and allowing the child to access a wide range of knowledge that would hardly be possible only through materials connected to the content of the school curriculum, such as textbooks.

Nonfiction for children, on the contrary, enables the expansion of world culture, access to free knowledge, and the extension of children's experiences. Furthermore, and above all, there is the possibility of combining scientific education with the assumptions of artistic education. The benefits associated with other collections (artists' books, wimmelbooks, concept books, abc books) and environments such as libraries, museums, zoos and art galleries will enable the development of the scientific, aesthetic and artistic spirit, since such works can normalize the exposed world view with lightness and organicity.

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2. The artistic nonfiction picturebook

Giorgia Grilli

Abstract This chapter analyses the extent to which a picturebook can be considered a nonfiction product even when its aim is not to provide definitive answers, but rather to question accepted definitions of the world, encouraging the reader to take part in the process of knowing and making sense. The examination of four picturebooks shows that nonfiction can be about learning how to think, more than teaching what to think, and about involving the readers actively in the definition/understanding of reality.

Keywords picturebooks, nonfiction, art, hybridity, critical thinking

ARTISTIC NONFICTION PICTUREBOOKS

Over the last decade, one of the most interesting and innovative events in international children's publishing has been the production of more and more nonfiction picturebooks, notably of particularly inventive or, more broadly, 'poetic' nonfiction picturebooks. Not a previously unknown object in itself, the visually and conceptually sophisticated nonfiction picturebook can be considered a 'new' publishing phenomenon because of the systematic willingness to experiment with its form and the distinct awareness of its potential on the part of authors, illustrators, and publishers today. Informative books for children have a long tradition, but only recently has the attempt to conceive and design them in a radically creative way become the challenge at a global level (Grilli, 2020).

For this reason, even though the overall corpus of nonfiction picturebooks has become increasingly copious, with the entire genre requiring critical investigation, my attention will go to this particularly ingenious, imaginative, deviceful nonfiction picturebook, which deserves detailed analysis and possibly even

a specific definition. I suggest ‘artistic nonfiction picturebook’, fully aware that this is a somewhat paradoxical expression. Art and nonfiction are two fields of human experience and communication based on very different, even opposite, premises, at least according to the most common and widespread understanding. Books built upon their possible and surprising intersection can therefore be considered interesting for many reasons, not least for the fact that bridging the gap between seemingly distant dimensions – and mindsets – can foster deep, all-encompassing involvement of the reader (McGilchrist, 2009; Nikolajeva, 2018). Artistic nonfiction picturebooks are, to all intents and purposes, hybrid creations (van Lierop-Debrauwer, 2018), or, in Bakhtinian terms, dialogical books (Bakhtin, 1981). To understand what they look like, how they work, or how they are even possible, given their supposed inner contradiction, we shall start by considering the different premises of nonfiction and art.

THE PREMISES OF NONFICTION

According to Joe Sutliff Sanders (2018), the majority opinion is that nonfiction is and should be a literature of final answers, meaning by this a truth-telling literature, a literature of facts, a literature in which accuracy of information and reliability of what is stated are the most important elements. Sanders wrote his book, titled *A literature of questions*, to explain why it shouldn’t necessarily be so – “nonfiction doesn’t have to be a literature of facts; indeed, it shouldn’t be” (2018, p. 34) – but throughout the book he observes that, nevertheless, most adults consider nonfiction as the shelf to which children can go whenever they want to learn true facts and acquire certainties about the world (both the natural and human world).

In the field, notes Sanders, there is an urge to produce – and to look for – authoritative information. Critics of nonfiction very often judge it according to how truthful, how reliable, and how accurate the books are in terms of verified data. Over the years, I’ve had the chance to witness many discussions of international juries gathered for the BolognaRagazzi Award, and when it comes to nonfiction, the issue is always the same: is the book authoritative enough, reliable enough as regards its subject matter? Is its message clear and objective, in other words ‘unquestionable’?

Sanders’ considerations find constant validation: nonfiction for children is still valued by most people for its ability to provide answers more than for its ability to prompt questions; for its ability to solve doubts rather than raise

doubts. Children's publishers promoting new titles of nonfiction normally use expressions like 'The Big Books of Answers' in their press release.¹ Even when promoting extremely stylized cardboard books for very young children (be they on volcanos, bees or trees), the promise behind them is to reveal 'the truth' about the world, to unveil its 'secrets' and give children 'the answers' about reality and its workings.

In general terms, nonfiction is still considered the realm in which children can find objectivity, factuality, a knowledge of the world that presents itself as solid and certain, as opposed to debatable, revisable, and open. I choose the word 'open' not by chance. In fact, it allows me to move on to the analysis of the premises of art.

THE PREMISES OF ART

Speaking about art and its distinctive characteristics, Umberto Eco, in *Opera aperta* (*Open Work*) (1962), explains that a work of art is defined by its ambiguity, by its plurality of meanings, by a structural opening that is also an openness, a willingness to be interpreted in more than one way. Art is such, according to Eco, when it does not provide final answers, but opens itself to dialogue, when it *demand*s a dialogue, an engagement, a personal involvement (both cognitive and emotional) on the part of the reader.

Art's aim, Eco suggests, is not to convey any authoritative message, but rather an elusive, evocative one; one for which a negotiation with the readers/spectators (with their previous knowledge and their sensitivity) is required.

In line with Eco, a work of art is open because, from a structural point of view, it needs a reader/spectator to be 'finished', to say what it has to say. It is an opposite stance to that underpinning nonfiction, which, in theory, doesn't even need a reader to state its message, because the message in nonfiction is already there, in the text, and is supposed to be the same objective message for whoever reads it.

In art, every fruition is different. And in Eco's opinion it is precisely this kind of fruition – subjective, active, revisable, as opposed to passive and reproducible – that is the specificity of art. Art is art, according to Eco, when it calls for inferences,

1 The sentence was highlighted in the press release of the Italian publisher Gallucci, sent to me via email while I was writing this chapter.

connections, hypothetical explanations, multiple interpretations. When its meaning is not straightforward, univocal, or unequivocal.²

If nonfiction, in the opinion of the majority, is the accurate transmission of pre-determined knowledge that the reader should memorize and store, with no interpretative freedom because the message is presented as objective, demonstrable and somehow indisputable, a work of art is, in terms of its message, a field of possibilities that depends on readers' unpredictable interpretations (Eco, 1962). Art is ambiguous and open to a plurality of meanings, or it isn't art at all.

Which brings us to the seemingly unbridgeable gap between nonfiction and art.

HYBRIDITY IN NONFICTION PICTUREBOOKS

Over the last few years, several books have been published that are, paradoxically, both nonfiction products and works of art in Umberto Eco's sense: i.e. open works, works calling for interpretation, integration, and co-construction of meaning on the part of the reader; indeed, works that encourage readers to become co-authors.

These books have the real world and information about the real world (as opposed to a fictional story) as their focus – which makes them by definition 'non-fiction' – and yet they invite the reader to take part in the process of making sense of and explaining the world, as if the world needed to be understood and defined again and again and information about it re-thought, revised, and discussed; as if the meaning of reality were open to negotiation and the function of nonfiction to help children see things differently rather than make them memorize definitions and data mechanically. More and more nonfiction picturebooks have recently been published that, though dealing with aspects of the real world, do not provide any ready-made information about it. On the contrary, they create for the reader a dialogical space, an openness as to their message, just as art does. Inferences, implications, connections and not discrete figures, definitions, and other kinds of data are the core of these artistic nonfiction picturebooks.

2 Writing about open works, Eco refers mostly to 'modern' literary works, and especially to books written after the dissolution of certainties brought about by the philosophic theories of Nietzsche, Bergson, Freud etc. Yet, for the purpose of our analysis, we can extend his definition of openness to include art in general, because art, even in its more controlled examples (the 'readerly' texts, in Roland Barthes' words (1974), different from the 'writerly' texts because of their seemingly unitary, fixed or pre-determined meaning), is always somehow subject to interpretations which are other than final or 'authorized', it is always inherently, or in any case partly, more 'open' than any distinction between classical novels and twentieth century works may lead us to think.

The artistic nonfiction picturebook is a hybrid form of literature which encourages children to think critically about the world (Sanders, 2018), because it does not provide final answers, but rather invites readers to question common knowledge, opening it up to doubt, dialogue, and revision, as we shall see through the analysis of some exemplifying titles.

VISUAL/TEXTUAL STRATEGIES IN FOUR ARTISTIC NONFICTION PICTUREBOOKS

To show how artistic nonfiction picturebooks work, and what their visual/textual strategies are, or can be, I will analyse four titles: *L'imagier des gens* (People), by Blexbolex (2008), *Saisons* (Seasons), by Blexbolex (2009), *Avant Après* (Before After), by Anne-Margot Ramstein and Matthias Aregui (2013) and *Chaque seconde dans le monde* (Each second, in the world), by Bruno Gibert (2018). All of them are French books, and all of them can be considered books for young children, because they are apparently very simple. Yet they are also, to all intents and purposes, cross-over books (Beckett, 2013), since they are conceived in a very sophisticated manner. They represent the world not in a conventional, but rather in a deconstructive way, which helps readers go beyond stereotyped visions and invites them to take part in the re-definition/re-signification of reality.

There is something in the very structure of these books that invites critical participation: the use of very little written text (sometimes just one word which, because it has been selected so carefully, becomes important and enlightening), and the juxtaposition of two images that somehow clash with each other, or don't match in any obvious way, so that it is necessary for the reader to think about their association.

At first glance, the examined books could be considered language-learning tools, or concept books (Kümmerling-Meibauer & Meibauer, 2018). However, they don't fit simply and easily into this category. Rather, they should be defined as widening-concept books. And if they *are* language-learning tools, their teaching of language is not straightforward but challenging, provocative, conceived in ways that invite the reader to think about words (and concepts) with critical eyes, rather than according to their most common meaning/use.

The technique of placing two images next to each other, used by all four picturebooks, suggests comparing one illustration with the other or wondering about their relationship. Placing two images in each doublespread, and repeating this layout over and over, provides multiple opportunities for thoughtful contrast. Every couple becomes another occasion for critical engagement, because each of them, and their accumulation, encourages the reader to consider obvious and not

so obvious connections between things/words, rather than learn about them in an isolated and unreflecting way.

Moreover, these books, each in its own way, are particularly ingenious in the technique of coupling two things/images/words/concepts within the same doublespread. The pairings are surprising, intriguing, the authors' aim clearly being to break the conventions of accepted language and definitions, play with expectations, challenge stereotypes, beliefs, taboos, and offer children the chance to think critically about the world, as well as learn the meaning of many words.

L'IMAGIER DES GENS, BY BLEXBOLEX

I first realized that nonfiction was changing and offering different possibilities than the traditional approach to knowledge when *L'imagier des gens* by Blexbolex came out in 2008. The visual/textual strategy used in this book is the one mentioned above: conceived as a gallery of human types, categories, jobs, occupations, it doesn't just name many of them one after the other in a supposedly neutral way, but artfully matches two kinds of people in each doublespread, thereby suggesting bewildering comparisons between them. The more so, because some fit but others don't fit into the same group, or frame of reference, at least according to the most common way of thinking and classifying. By coupling two kinds of people who are not usually seen together, the book does not provide objective, factual, undebatable knowledge or information, but invites critical engagement, encourages a process of questioning, discussing, making hypotheses, allowing many possible interpretations as to why those human types are together on the same page.

The more a book gives readers interpretative freedom, the more it moves from a didactic to an aesthetic function (Sanders, 2018). This is extremely clear in Blexbolex's book, which is a nonfiction picturebook stepping into art and poetry, a picturebook whose very structure invites children to re-think standard definitions and see the world (and the people in it) in a more critical way than that envisaged by traditional (language-)learning processes. Readers are implicitly asked to find the possible link between two human types, they cannot but wonder why these persons are depicted together and what they have in common, this common element being unobvious and therefore open to question. As the image containing some random but subsequent doublespreads of *L'imagier des gens* shows (Fig. 2.1), the book starts in a rather plain way, matching people who are commonly seen as belonging together or normally associated ('a gentleman / a lady'; 'a mother / a baby'). But then it suddenly couples 'a father / a family' (with the image of a very specific kind of father, and a very specific kind of family) and we are left



Figure 2.1 *L'imagier des gens* (2008), by Blexbolex, Albin Michel.

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3 For graphic reasons it was not possible to insert more than 4 illustrations in the chapter. I thank the author/illustrators and publishers who very kindly allowed me to use these images for their improper use/reproduction.

wondering. Are there different traditions, different beliefs in different cultures as to what a family is? Are there cultures in which only your father represents your family? (If you are a boy, maybe? Or from a certain age on, possibly?) Relativism of parental bonds is introduced, as are hints to a possibly stereotyped representation of the word 'family'. In the page coupling 'a corpse / a grandmother' taboos concerning death and the proximity to death are faced in a very easy way. At the same time, nothing in the image of the grandmother makes this connection obvious, the old lady being represented as a very lively woman. In the page matching 'amateurs / an inventor' the interesting comparison is suggested by the visual code as much as by the text (we are indeed talking about nonfiction *picturebooks*): some children are shown as awkwardly trying to put together a precarious construction, but it is the supposedly professional scientist who in the end seems to be doing a more dangerous and threatening experiment. In the page with 'a curious boy / a spy', we are left wondering about the desire to see what we are not supposed to see: is it a good or a bad drive? Is it precious when it is spontaneous in childhood, and ethically controversial if driven by money in the adulthood? The 'a speaker / a snake charmer' pair is also interesting due to the way it is visually conceived, with the microphone wire on the left page resembling the snake of the right page, to further stress the fact that the two men are possibly doing the same thing: enchanting someone (a crowd or an animal) that will follow their lead in a somehow entranced way. A similar consideration applies for the couple 'an orchestra leader / a tyrant'. Very smart too, is the matching 'a football player / a rascal': shouldn't we explain to children why we, as a society, give so much importance (and money) to adults whose job is basically to kick a ball, yet are generally bothered by children who play ball whenever and with whatever they can? 'Dancers / warriors' point to rituals and how strong and unconscious ritual expressions can be (not to mention how similar looking) in times of peace and war. 'Party goers / a hermit' make readers think of the dual human desire to be a cheerful part of a community, included in a group but also sometimes to be alone, far from the madding crowd, focused on deeper thoughts. When looked at together, the two representations counterposed in the book can be felt as both part of one's own needs. Striking too, is the contrast between 'a myth / a docker': two men basically performing the same endless physical effort, one destined to become some sort of hero, the other to lead a harsh uneventful life. 'A homeless person / a camper' is another thought-provoking association: we want to be homeless sometimes and experience a freer more essential way of life, but mostly this is true if we *have* a home we can go back to. Shall we wonder about a privilege that is also sometimes a prison? – the page seems to suggest.

The couple ‘a hunter / a soldier’ may seem obvious: what they have in common is a rifle, used for a different purpose. But – we may ask as we see them so closely associated – would it be easier, in different circumstances, for someone who normally kills animals to also kill people? A very crucial doublespread, topical in our days, is the one showing ‘a traveller / a migrant’: they both have luggage, they both leave their home and head for a faraway, possibly unknown place, so what is it that makes them different, so much so that we need two words to name them? Is ‘choice’ the divide?

These are only a few of the many pairings and the many possible questions (and I stress the word ‘questions’) that *L’imagier des gens* arouses. We can read, play, discuss and ponder with children endlessly over its pages, and children will not only undoubtedly become acquainted with a lot of words about people while looking at it, but will also discover how to be critical about definitions, labels, and concepts, which are systematically dismantled and never taken for granted thanks to these clever, thoughtful associations.

SAISONS, BY BLEXBOLEX

In this picturebook about the four seasons (a nonfiction topic for young children *par excellence*), Blexbolex uses the juxtaposition of images in each doublespread, but also the accumulation of hints leading to a constant turning of the page as a technique to achieve both knowledge and poetry. The four seasons are not presented by means of accurate and precise information concerning their characteristics, but by means of a sequence of textual and visual elements characterized by a very vague connection with one another and with a specific time of the year. Again, the reader is left to ponder their possible relationship, meaning and pertinence, which is by no means self-evident. Yet, every element represented (every word and every image) has something to do with our perception of Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, with what they mean and imply in terms of specific objects, fruits, natural phenomena, weather (a sprout, a caterpillar, a plum, gloves, a scarf, a beach umbrella, a watermelon, a t-shirt, mushrooms, a thunderstorm, a snow-fall...), as well as the physical reactions (an allergy, a cold...), and feelings (sadness, solitude, love...) involved.

Some associations within the doublespread are particularly striking, such as ‘a queue (of cars) / a colony’ (of caterpillars), when the things of Summer are being defined and portrayed. The meaning of the pairing is strengthened by the fact that it is preceded by ‘a departure / a breakaway’, ironically alluding to the desire to leave and get away from it all, a desire soon to be frustrated by the amount of people going

on vacation at the same time. Very subtle and open to interpretation are pages like the one displaying ‘love / obstinacy’, an association possibly implicating that love can sometimes be the result of stubbornness. Or that love may be a seasonal phenomenon (bound to end even if we don’t want it to). This page is also interesting because of the images used to convey these two abstract words: a deer and a doe on the left and, on the right, a tree which, when every other tree is bare, holds its dead leaves as if not wanting to let them go. Out of metaphor: don’t we all tend to do so?

Figure 2.2 showcases a very small selection of the seemingly endless progression of ‘impressions’ connected to the changes (in the landscape, sky, our daily routine,



Figure 2.2 *Saisons* (2009), by Blexbolex, Albin Michel.

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and in people's minds) brought about by the cyclical passing of seasons as portrayed in this book. Imitating this endless process, the book begins by displaying words and images related to Spring, progresses to things to be found in Summer, Autumn, and Winter, only to start all over again several times.

AVANT APRÈS, BY ANNE-MARGOT RAMSTEIN AND MATTHIAS AREGUI

The visual strategy used in this picturebook is again the pairing of two different images on each doublespread. As in *Saisons*, it is also possible to detect certain narrative threads throughout the book, with elements that return and are recognizable for those who pay attention. The specificity of *Avant Après* is that the title serves as the entire text of the whole book, with all the coupled images referring to it: they all represent, by means of an exclusively visual code, the 'before' (on the left page) and the 'after' (on the right page) of some situation. The topic of this nonfiction picturebook is clearly time, or rather, the effects of time (on objects, landscapes, persons). It shows children how things change – seasonally, historically, spatially – and why. The rigorous before/after rule, which might seem limiting, in fact surprisingly expands the ways in which time and its passing can be represented. In these pages, time appears not just as a measurable thing, a chronological sequence or abstract unit. Rather, it is shown as the frame within which weather change, climate change, technological progress, natural metamorphosis, artificial transformations, processes of growth and decay, moral actions (when behaviours have consequences) and much more come about. Time and the changes it brings, in as 'simple' a book as this (wordless books are often considered simple (Terrusi, 2017)), is shown in all its complexity: as something physical, psychological, sentimental, and perceptual. Time is a dimension that affects the natural and human world, distancing things but also unexpectedly approximating them, as in the case of the 'rocking horse / rocking chair' page where childhood and old age are related in a truly poetic way. *Avant Après* is another example of how a nonfiction picturebook can be at the same time informative and poetic (Fig. 2.3). Resourcefully combining an exclusively visual code according to a given temporal pattern, it triggers critical thinking (How similar can childhood and old age be? How important is a bridge to foster communication?) and offers specific information and knowledge (How is chocolate obtained? How have writing devices evolved?).

The book is also full of extra-textual references for the reader to discover and delight in, as in the case of the straw house that gets blown away, the wood house that gets easily destroyed, and the brick house that stays the same – except for the



Figure 2.3 *Avant Après* (2013), by Anne-Margot Ramstein and Matthias Aregui, Albin Michel.

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fact that a following doublespread shows a solid house well kept on the left, and the same house falling apart on the right, having been clearly abandoned for a long time. Nothing really lasts forever, the book seems to say, although never outright. Isn't this a totally nonfiction (i.e. objective) message as much as it is intuitive, revealing, and emotional?

CHAQUE SECONDE DANS LE MONDE, BY BRUNO GIBERT

Chaque seconde dans le monde is, once again, at least superficially, a nonfiction picturebook about time, conceived with yet another creative perspective. All the images and data presented in the book are about events/facts that happen in the world in just one second, and every second (Fig. 2.4). Interesting per se, this information is made more surprising, enlightening and open to discussion by the appealing pairing of two of these facts on each doublespread. In the same time



Figure 2.4 *Chaque seconde dans le monde* (2013), by Bruno Gibert, Actes Sud Junior. Reproduced with permission.

lapse, and on each doublespread, two things happen that are somehow connected, leaving readers to wonder how and with what implications (as in the case of ‘4 babies are born / 2 persons die’, or ‘14 books are sold / 40 smartphones are sold’, ‘450 \$ are invested in humanitarian aid / 53.500 \$ are payed on weapons’ etc.). It is this pairing, this implicit association created by the very layout of the book that makes what would otherwise be cold data, figures, and numbers suddenly meaningful and not abstract and somehow ungraspable. Although objective and quantitative, the information about the world offered by this book is theoretically neutral, but no longer dispassionate. Displaying the figures concerning two phenomena side by side in this unexpected manner encourages readers to compare them and think critically about what they really mean in broader (social, cultural, anthropological) terms.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the artistic nonfiction picturebook chooses knowledge of the real world as its subject matter using a well devised combination of words and pictures, it is clearly more interested in teaching how rather than what to think. Its aim is, very often, to make readers familiar with the process of connecting things that are apparently far-fetched, distant, unrelated: a crucial process both in the arts and sciences at their deepest level. It is by connecting elements, facts, data, and anecdotes that are apparently uncontinuous with one another that scientists make interesting discoveries and reach new and enlightening visions of the world; it is by finding metaphors or comparisons (i.e. associating different images), by linking words together in unexpected ways, by connecting distant thoughts, that poetry is created.

The artistic nonfiction picturebook is both a learning book and also an artwork. It favours knowledge of the real world, but encourages the reader to be critical and creative, so that knowledge does not coincide with a passive acquisition of data and information but is the result of a co-construction of meaning on the part of the reader. Because of its very structure, the artistic nonfiction picturebook can only function by means of inferential and interpretative activity of the reader; it only makes sense if the reader, each reader, integrates what it has to say. The process of knowing is conceived as a shared activity within its pages, one which involves children intellectually, emotionally, and aesthetically.

My focus in this chapter was to analyse the extent to which a book can be called a nonfiction book (i.e.: credibly informative about the world) even when the author/illustrator deliberately leaves its message open to interpretation – as is typical of

art. The research question was: is encouraging multiple interpretation and being structurally dialogical with the child reader still a way of being informative about the world? My answer is that this is possibly the best way of being informative about the world, if we understand the world not as a given entity that has already been satisfyingly classified, but as a revisable reality that children can contribute to define, interpret and construe while learning about it.

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3. A semiotic model of the nonnarrative picturebook

Smiljana Narančić Kovač

Abstract This study starts from two pairs of categories: narrative vs. nonnarrative, and fiction vs. nonfiction. It proceeds to create a semiotic model of the nonnarrative picturebook in analogy with the previously established model of the narrative picturebook founded in the theory of the narrative. Nonnarrative meanings (items of knowledge) are communicated in (both fictional and nonfiction) nonnarrative picturebooks through the verbal-visual relationship of two discourses and their respective voices.

Keywords knowledge, narrative, nonnarrative picturebook, semiotic model, voice

Both nonfiction and fiction picturebooks may be narrative or nonnarrative, and border cases are always possible. Yet, scholars sometimes tie the nonnarrative with nonfiction, implying that such texts offer fact and truth rather than invented or fanciful content. For example, Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott (2001) distinguish narrative and nonnarrative books so that they, “on the verbal side” (p. 8), detect “either a story or a nonnarrative text (a poem, a dictionary, a nonfiction text), and on the visual side a picture narrative [...] or an exhibit book” (p. 12) (nonnarrative and nonsequential text). Jörg Meibauer (2015, p. 152) divides picturebooks into descriptive (nonfiction) and narrative (fiction) texts. However, many examples reveal that this issue is not so simple. In *A family guide of house monsters* (Marijanović, 1998), the focus is on metaphors of the bad habits of children and adults, with monsters such as Dr. Mislplace, Oopsaloo, Instantania, Stupido Blento, and others. Dirty, envious, impatient, the monsters appear one by one in delightful verbal descriptions and explanations and in even funnier visual depictions of their bodies knocked together from incredible components. While fully descriptive, this picturebook is nevertheless fully fictional, even fantastic. As Frank Zipfel (2014) puts it, “[n]ot all fictional worlds are necessarily storyworlds, thus there can be fictional texts without a story” (p. 111).

From a semiotic perspective concerned with the structural and communicative aspects of texts, the focus here is not on fictionality (or nonfictionality), as fictionality depends on meanings of specific texts: “fictionality is not a semantic property of texts, nor a stylistic one, but a pragmatic feature; a feature that tells us what to do with the text” (Ryan, 2010, p. 10). Generally, if a narrative text refers to a storyworld which exists at the same level as the real author and the real reader, it is nonfiction, just like nonnarrative texts which refer to objects, persons, events or other elements of the real world (Narančić Kovač, 2020, p. 70). A large number of nonfiction picturebooks are nonnarrative as well. They include different kinds of concept books, topic books, children’s reference texts, etc. (Mallett, 2004). However, there are also many narrative nonfiction picturebooks, such as historical overviews, biographies, etc.

The meaning potential of nonfiction has been appreciated in recent research. Joe Sutliff Sanders (2018) focuses on those spots in children’s nonfiction “in which texts are more or less open to dialogue with their readers” (p. 18). He underlines that nonfiction is not committed to finished knowledge, but rather “becomes a place where experiments happen” (p. 41). Similarly, Nikola von Merveldt (2018) explains that *information(al)* books, as she calls them, “go far beyond facts, readily available elsewhere, to awaken curiosity, inspire awe and nurture community” (p. 232). She introduces this term explaining that nonfiction tends to “fall into the trap of the fact/fiction debate” (p. 232). The present study adopts the term *nonnarrative picturebooks* exactly because it incorporates both fact and fiction, and as it is an appropriate complement of the term *narrative picturebooks*.

While the semiotic structure of narrative picturebooks and the narrative strategies found in their discourses receive considerable attention (e.g. Nodelman, 1988; Sipe, 1998; Kümmerling-Meibauer, 1999; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001; Painter, Martin & Unsworth, 2013), nonnarrative picturebooks have rarely been considered from that viewpoint. The semiotic model of the narrative picturebook used here as a starting point is rooted both in classical narratology (Genette, 1980; 1988; Chatman, 1978; 1990) and in the recent findings of transmedial and media-conscious narratology (Herman, 2004; Ryan, 2004; Grishakova & Ryan, 2010; Ryan & Thon, 2014), as well as in picturebook scholarship.

The aim of this study is twofold: first, to establish a semiotic model of the nonnarrative picturebook in analogy with the previously established model of the narrative picturebook (Narančić Kovač, 2015; 2018); and, second, to explore the characteristics of nonnarrative picturebook discourses to establish how they may present nonfictional contents.¹

1 See more on nonfiction picturebook discourses in Narančić Kovač (2020).

THE SEMIOTIC STRUCTURE AND THE FALLACY OF THE UNNEEDED NARRATOR

The following passages explain the circumstances of the construction of the above-mentioned narrative picturebook model and set the grounds for the development of a nonnarrative one. The need for a clarification of the semiotic structure of the picturebook was recognised during an investigation of narrative perspectives (Narančić Kovač, 2011). The understanding that picturebooks often embrace different perspectives has been widely accepted among picturebook scholars, but analyses have often led researchers to a dead end, mostly because of the common fallacy of the unneeded narrator.

The duality of the picturebook format was the starting point in most studies in the early years of picturebook scholarship and it was considered crucial for the process of semiosis. Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) assert that the “unique character of picturebooks as an art form is based on the combination of two levels of communication, the visual and the verbal” (p. 1). Lawrence Sipe (1998) explained that “the total effect depends not only on the union of the text and illustrations but also on the perceived interactions or transactions between these two” (pp. 98–99). Yet, except in isolated studies,² attempts to explain narrative perspectives in picturebooks have regularly failed to yield clear or reassuring results, despite the researchers’ familiarity with the theory of the narrative.

As understanding the notion of narrative perspectives was crucial for the (narrative) model in question, their theoretical relevance is explained below to clarify the process of discovery and to justify the model itself.

Gérard Genette (1980, pp. 189–190) defines perspective as a characteristic of the *narrative voice*, the narrator (the question “who speaks?”), and introduces the term *focalisation* (the question “who sees?”) to replace the more traditional term *point of view*. He distinguishes among three basic types of focalisation depending on whether or not the voice focalises the narration. Zero focalisation appears when the narrator does not restrict narrative information. Restrictions appear when the narrator filters narrative information either through the consciousness of a character (internal focalisation) or from a point placed “within the diegetic universe chosen by the narrator, *outside every character*” (external focalisation) (p. 75, emphasis in the original). The narrator (the voice) is the central concept, and focalisation

2 For example, Angela Yannicopoulou’s analysis of narrative perspectives in picturebooks is based on Genette. She detects two narrative voices in a dialogic relationship, but finds written and illustrative “narratives” (2010, p. 66) within a book which is a narrative itself. The lack of a clear semiotic model renders the consistency of such a theoretical approach less convincing.

(the narrative perspective) appears during narration as its attribute. Genette (1988) also explains that focalisation types rarely apply to entire works “but only to one or another segment, sometimes very brief” (p. 175). As perspective is a feature of the narrator, it follows that the presence of the narrator is a *sine qua non* of the existence of narrative perspectives in this theoretical approach.

In its beginnings, narratology was fully dedicated to literature, and the notion of *narrator* was understood as exclusively belonging to the medium of language, which led to the *fallacy of the unneeded narrator*, the term used here to refer to the widespread misunderstanding that non-linguistic media can and do narrate without a narrator. Even Seymour Chatman considered the possibility of “unnarrated” narratives that “do not give the sense of the narrator’s presence” (1978, p. 34), but he soon corrects himself and introduces the notion of the “cinematic narrator” as an impersonal agent and a composite of several expressive devices of the visual and the verbal “channels” used by the film medium (1990, pp. 135, 138). Thus, Chatman abandons what Genette considers to be “[t]he myth of the narrative without a narrator or of the story that tells itself” (1988, p. 98).

Picturebook scholarship was rather misleading in its approach to the notion of narrator, often seen as exclusive to the verbal discourse. For instance, a discrepancy was noticed “between the narrator’s subjective view of what is happening and our objective understanding of what the pictures show us” (Nodelman, 1988, p. 238), where the subjective perspective is ascribed to the one and only “narrator”, and objectivity to depersonalised pictures. Sometimes the link between the narrator and the focalisation is broken: “we should probably treat the words as primarily conveying the narrative voice, and pictures as primarily conveying the point of view” (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001, p. 117). The next claim goes a step further, arguing that the voice and the perspective in children’s literature “seldom coincide, since the narrative voice belongs to an adult while the point of view is that of a child” (Nikolajeva, 2003, p. 11).

Nodelman (1991) encountered the problem of explaining different presentations of the character who takes on the role of a first-person narrator in the verbal layer, and is fully visible in the visual layer: “the pictures undercut the autodiegetic quality of the text, and make the words part of a larger narrative that can best be described by Genette’s term ‘heterodiegetic’” (p. 11). He concluded that any picturebook contained at least three stories: “the one told by the words, the one implied by the pictures, and the one that results from the combination of the first two” (Nodelman, 1991, p. 2). Many found two different stories in *Rosie’s Walk* (Hutchins, 1968): the hen’s story in the words, and the fox’s story in the images (e.g. Schwarcz, 1982, pp. 16–17; Arizpe & Styles, 2003, p. 28; Anstey & Bull, 2004, p. 332). Nikolajeva and

Scott (2001) add that these two stories are told “from two different points of view” (p. 18). This finding is revealing, as will be explained below.

THE NARRATIVE AND THE NARRATIVE PICTUREBOOK

The problems in interpretations of individual picturebooks caused by the fallacy of the unneeded narrator can be resolved through the application of Chatman’s model of the narrative (Fig. 3.1) on the picturebook format. Chatman shows that all narratives share the same basic structure, i.e. the elements of the storyworld (characters, events, happenings and settings) and that story is told by a narrative discourse.

In individual narratives, elements of the storyworld and the medium of narration are specified and unique: the characters have names and fictional personalities, and the plot is conveyed by means of a system or a combination of systems of signs (combined media, e.g. film, opera, etc.). The narration depends on the expressive possibilities of the specific medium. This implies that any story can be retold in another medium: “[a] storyworld often migrates from medium to medium” (Ryan & Thon, 2014, p. 19). The agent that selects elements of the story and arranges them in a specific order to construct the plot and tell the story is the *narrator (voice)*. The narrator is a component of the discourse, so that a narrative discourse necessarily includes a narrator. Therefore, each of the picturebook discourses incorporates a narrator. These two narrators, the verbal and the visual, tell

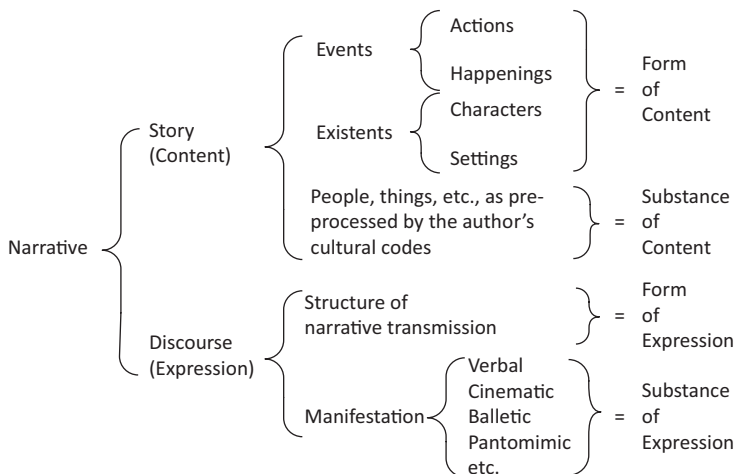


Figure 3.1 Chatman’s model of the narrative (1978, p. 26).

stories in cooperation. Both select and arrange elements of the same story differently in their respective discourses. The picturebook narrators are independent in their selection and combination of types of focalisation, and of other attributes of the narrating instance (narrator), i.e. person, narrative level, distance, time of narrating (Genette, 1980). The narrative strategies of two picturebook narrators differ because they depend on the narrative potentials of the respective systems of signs. The semiotic model of the narrative picturebook, based on these assumptions, is shown in Figure 3.2. The picturebook is a multimodal form because it depends on different modes of expression. However, this format is special. Unlike the combined discourses of other multimodal narratives, the discourses of the picturebook are separate and work together to tell the story. Besides, picturebook discourses exchange features, and thus both become multimodal; they are tailored to the needs of the picturebook format (Narančić Kovač, 2015, p. 440), which is an intermodal entity: “[a]n intermodal relation is present when one mode has a definable influence on the expression, semantic, and/or stylistic properties of another mode in a specific text” (Siefkes, 2015, p. 115).

Our model clearly shows that *Rosie’s Walk* conveys only one story, not two. It is, indeed, told “from two different points of view”, as quoted above, but different types of focalisation are chosen by two different narrators, not one. Because both discourses share the same elements of the same storyworld, there is only one story. The narrators use different perspectives: the heterodiegetic verbal narrator focalises

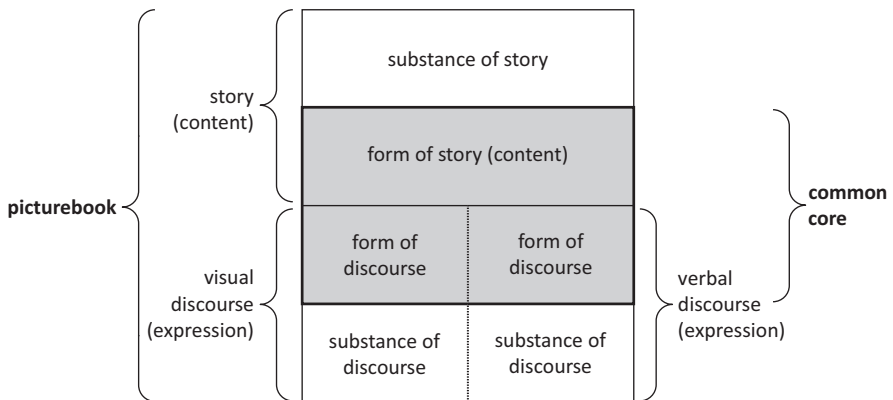


Figure 3.2 The semiotic model of the narrative picturebook (Narančić Kovač, 2018, p. 412)³

3 This model was first discussed in Narančić Kovač (2011).

the telling through Rosie. She does not know that a fox is following her, so the narrator cannot reveal this piece of narrative information without betraying the internal focalisation of the verbal discourse. The heterodiegetic visual narrator does not restrict narrative information, and thus applies zero focalisation. This example of a fictional narrative picturebook supports the validity of the model and the efficacy of its simple structure in explaining semiotic features of the picturebook format. Nodelman's problem with the homodiegetic verbal narrator simultaneously presented in the "objective" visual discourse is also easily explained now: it is possible and even common to encounter narrators of different kinds in two picturebook discourses, such as the homodiegetic verbal narrator and the heterodiegetic visual narrator. It is not surprising that the verbal narrator/character is shown by the visual narrator.

THE NONNARRATIVE PICTUREBOOK

The model of the nonnarrative picturebook (Fig. 3.3) is only slightly different from that of the narrative picturebook because both belong to the same intermodal form. The models differ in the nature of the content and voices. The cooperation of the visual and verbal voices in conveying the meanings is very similar in both models.

Identifying the content common to all nonnarrative picturebooks, equivalent to *story*, is the main difficulty. As mentioned above, nonnarrativity has often been associated with factuality in children's literature scholarship, but these two concepts are not interchangeable. While nonnarrative picturebooks do embrace facts, they may also be about beliefs, or fictional entities. Margaret Mallett (2004) states that the main intention of information texts is "to impart knowledge and ideas" (p. 622). However, items of knowledge and ideas do not necessarily refer only to factual reality, but rather include fictional worlds, abstract ideas beyond simple concept books, opinions, interpretations, etc. It appears that knowledge functions well as a common denominator of different kinds of nonnarrative picturebooks, whether fictional or nonfictional. Zins (2007) lists definitions of knowledge by 45 information science scholars. The definition that is closest to the idea of knowledge appropriate for our model is offered by Charles H. Davis:

Knowledge involves both data and the relationships among data elements or their sets. This organization of data based on relationships is what enables one to draw generalizations from the data so organized, and to formulate questions about which one wishes to acquire more data. That is, knowledge begets the quest for knowledge, and it arises from verified or validated ideas. (Zins, 2007, p. 482)

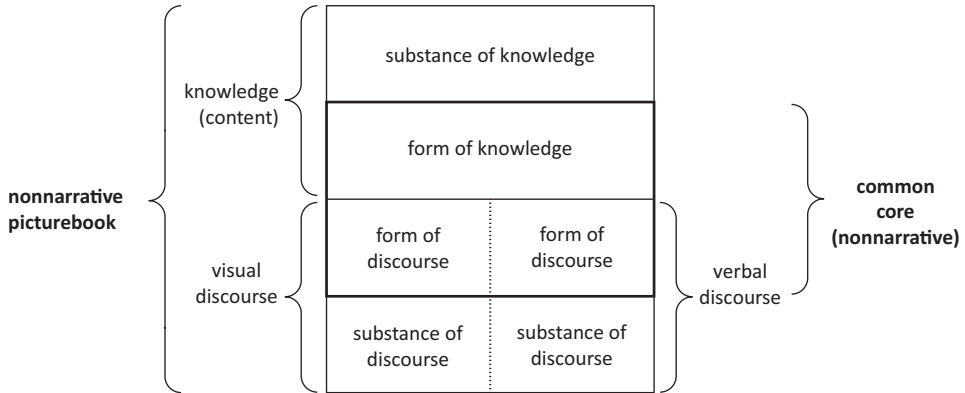


Figure 3.3 The model of the nonnarrative picturebook.

While the story is defined by its elements, knowledge can be represented by items of different kinds (sometimes overlapping): facts, data, information, processes, concepts, ideas, beliefs, skills, principles, instructions, etc. They may be acquired or learned during the reading process.

As shown in Figure 3.3, knowledge is conveyed by means of nonnarrative discourses. The traditional classification of texts embraces four categories: descriptive, argumentative, expository and narrative, combined in specific texts. Depending on different contexts and criteria, various lists can be compiled. Mallet (2004) names several types: “recount, report, explanation, instruction, discussion and persuasion” (p. 623). Narration is the only type of text that is not relevant for the nonnarrative picturebook. While narrators use narrative devices and principles to organise narrative information, nonnarrative voices apply logical or scientific methodological principles to do the same: they compare, classify, describe, explain, etc.

The role of the visual and verbal voices is to select and organise the items of knowledge to inspire the reader and invite a dialogic relationship. The term *utterer* for both verbal and visual voices is used here in analogy with the term *narrator*. The two utterers present content simultaneously, in active cooperation.

Examples from nonnarrative ABC picturebooks are analysed below to assess the potential of their discourses to convey complex meanings and engage the reader. ABC books are used for two main reasons. Firstly, this picturebook genre has a long history. According to Patricia Craig (2000), “[f]rom 1750 on, the alphabet was dressed up and decked out, animated, ornamented, narrated, and consumed” (p. 64). The analysed examples are primarily old ABCs, with a few Croatian 20th

century items. This selection is representative of the nonnarrative picturebook in general, just as more recent titles would be. Secondly, as Nodelman (2001) shows, ABC books, often considered simple and unchallenging, demand sophisticated skills from young readers:

Understanding what the eye meets in the context of culture and language always requires more than meets the eye. [...]. The simple text is accompanied by an unspoken and much more complex shadow – a text not actually there but implied and required in order to make sense of the actual text. (p. 243)

This implies that discourses of nonnarrative ABC books offer an array of strategies to convey meanings. Most are nonfiction, but the line between fictional and nonfictional may be thin. Besides, narrative ABC books are also common, such as Wanda Gág's *The ABC bunny* (1933) which combines the alphabet with a story about a bunny's day. Such picturebooks treat the "alphabet as a plot element" (Craig, 2000, p. 65), but they are not analysed here, except for one borderline case (Greenaway, 1886).

In the picturebook *ABC* (Kirin, 1951), an image of two realistically presented but sad zebras (one standing, the other lying down, their heads touching affectionately), is accompanied by a red "Z" and a grey "z" in the top left-hand corner of the page and by the widely spaced word "Zebra" at the bottom. The scene is depicted with special care to engage the reader and kindle curiosity (Are these zebras in the zoo? Do they live in groups? Are they related and, if so, how?). The verbal discourse only offers information on the spelling of the word and what its initial letter looks like.

In *The young child's ABC* (Anderson, 1806), "Z" is also combined with the word "Zebra" (Fig. 3.4), but, this time, it is a much merrier zebra in motion. The verbal utterer adds the initial and the word, and the reader is invited to ask questions (Where does this animal live? Why is it running?) and explore other items of knowledge offered by two utterers in cooperation on the same page.

In *The uncle's present: A new battledoor* (Bewick, [1810?] 1964), the utterers contribute the item for "Z" in a framed cell of a table (Fig. 3.5). The visual utterer offers an image of a man in a hat and coat holding two maps. The capital and small letters are placed left and right of the man's head, and the text: "Zealand, or England & a Map of the World" at the bottom. There is a strong connection between the visual and the verbal utterances. The reader is invited to decipher the image based on the clues given by the words, but the visual utterer makes it more complicated: the map shows a shape that can be interpreted as the Danish



Figure 3.4 *The young child's ABC* (1806), by Alexander Anderson, Samuel Wood.



Figure 3.5 *The uncle's present: A new battledoor* ([1810?] 1964), by Thomas Bewick, Jacob Johnson.

island Zealand (Sjælland), but only very approximately. This item demands engagement from the reader who needs to find maps of territories named by the verbal utterer and resolve the visual puzzle.

In *A apple pie* (Greenaway, 1886), “Z” is the last in a row of letters contributed by the verbal utterer, which at first does not seem to be connected with a group of six young girls eating pieces of an apple pie, minutely presented by the visual utterer (Fig. 3.6). A correct reading of the verbal text rewards the reader by the rhyming of the sound of the letter, “zed”, and the last of the hand-printed words: “all had a large slice and went off to bed”. The sophisticated cooperation of the two voices is activated by the reader who reveals that the names of the letters are the girls’ names, or, conversely, that the visual utterance of the girls metaphorically represents letters eating the pie. This picturebook is a true borderline case, a combination of the nursery rhyme with a basic narrative (sequential)

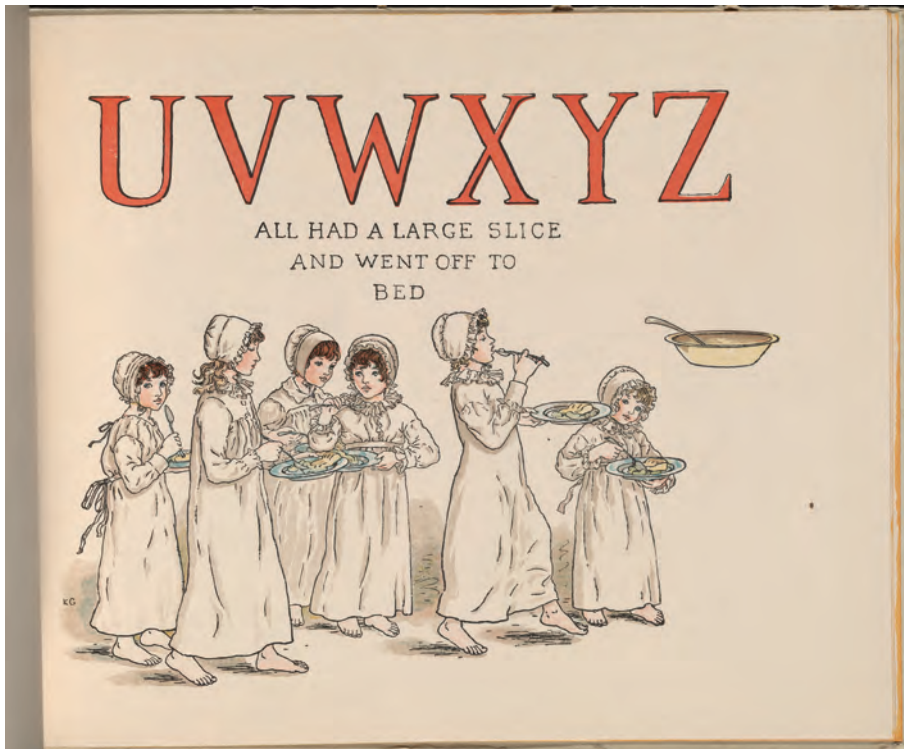


Figure 3.6 *A apple pie* (1886), by Kate Greenaway, George Routledge & Sons.

structure, and a nonnarrative ABC book. This book is also fictional with a real-world task. It lacks a consistent storyworld, and the sequence of events that happen to a pie turns the rhyme (and the picturebook) into a mnemotechnical text rather than into a fictional story.

In *Abecedanje* [A-B-C-Ding] (Vitez, 1989), each page is dedicated to one letter. While the verbal utterer is almost silent, the visual utterer is rather talkative. Letters are surrounded by numerous objects, and the reader is invited to remember as many words as possible that begin with the letter in question and refer to an object in the visual discourse at the same time. The visual discourse is playful and offers multiple meanings. The reader may refer to some objects around the letter “K” by using words which do not all begin with “k”. The image of the statue of the Croatian 10th-century king on a horse recalls not only the synonymous words “kip” or “spomenik” ‘statue’, but also “jahač” ‘rider’. An informed reader could say “kralj Tomislav” ‘King Tomislav’, etc. Due to the dialogue of the two nonnarrative voices and the addressee, this picturebook is both demanding and rewarding for the reader.

Nonnarrative picturebook discourses are capable of conveying complex ideological meanings and messages, as in *An A B C for baby patriots* (Ames, 1899). Figure 3.7 presents the doublespread of “K”. The meaning of “naughty kings” is confusing without the visual discourse, and two utterers send strong imperialistic messages together. The same book provides an example of metafiction. The back-cover single image shows a man seated in an armchair with a book open on the “F” page. He is reading the same book the real reader is holding in her hands.

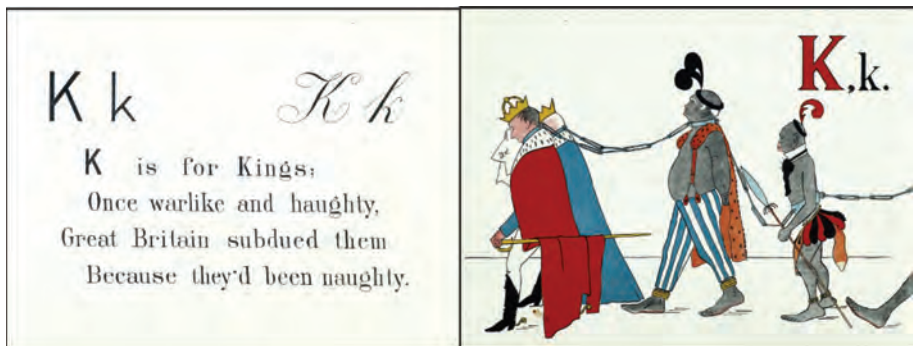


Figure 3.7 *An A B C for baby patriots* (1899), by Mary Francis Ames, Dean & Son.

FINAL REMARKS

The presented semiotic model of the nonnarrative picturebook confirms that its structure is analogous to that of its narrative pair. The analysis of the discourses of nonnarrative picturebooks has shown that they share important characteristics with the discourses of narrative picturebooks: they are multimodal and establish intermodal relations, convey multiple meanings in cooperation, set the scene for interactivity, exploration and interrogation, and engage the reader to actively participate in a dynamic dialogue. In contrast to narrative picturebook discourses, these do not convey stories or construct storyworlds. Their voices or utterers offer readers structured information and different items of knowledge. Finally, both semiotic models (narrative and nonnarrative) can be applied to either fictional or nonfiction picturebooks.

The presented models can be applied to different genres of nonfiction picturebooks to further test their consistency and reveal possible genre-related varieties.

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IDEOLOGY



4. Ideology in nonfiction picturebooks: Verbal and visual strategies in books about sculptures

Petros Panaou and Angela Yannicopoulou

Abstract This critical reading of two nonfiction picturebooks about the Statue of Liberty and Cycladic Figurines shows that these books employ both verbal and visual strategies to establish second-order semiotic symbols as per Barthes' terminology. It observes that the manner in which nonfiction picturebooks communicate information is instrumental in their support of specific ideologies and concludes that the very same strategies that support factual truthfulness also convincingly support ideology.

Keywords nonfiction picturebook, ideology, sculptures, visual strategies, verbal strategies

IDEOLOGY AND NONFICTION PICTUREBOOKS

Even though the precursor of the picturebook was a nonfiction text – *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (1657) – nonfiction picturebooks have received little attention from scholars compared to literary picturebooks. Several important aspects of nonfiction picturebooks, including their relationship with ideology, are yet to be fully explored.

Examining the ideology of children's literature texts is a relatively recent field. The study of ideology began in the 1970s and initially focused on gender, race, and class stereotypes (Dixon, 1977). It was not until 1988 that the first studies on broader theoretical issues of ideology in children's literature began to appear (see Hollindale, 1988; Stephens, 1992). The same path was followed in the case of nonfiction children's books, the study of ideology taking again the form of a

call to avoid stereotypes (Cianciolo, 2000, pp. 10–13; Dowd, 1992, p. 49) and to demand that nonfiction books reflected the multicultural societies in which they were being published (Garcia & Pugh, 1991).

Nonfiction covers a wide range of diverse topics, but ideology is discussed mainly in relation to books that deal with social science subjects, including books that seem to be self-contradicting; such as books of advice for girls about sports that limit rather than liberate girls (Heinecken, 2016), books that explain the process of human reproduction in ways that perpetuate sexist stereotypes (Liang et al, 2016), or picturebooks on different religions that reproduce stereotypes while purporting to advocate for tolerance and diversity (von Glasenapp, 2017).

In some cases, recognizing that a book conveys true or fictional information has ideological dimensions. In the case of *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson & Parnell, 2005), an *informational book* according to McCallum & Stephens (2011), emphasizing the veracity of the story about two real-life male penguins who create a nontraditional family was particularly important in the rhetoric for same-sex couples' parenthood rights. In a book that reports the zookeeper's observations, the positive ideological stance toward nontraditional families is mainly communicated through the illustrations.

In nonfiction picturebooks, ideology is communicated both through verbal text and illustration (Bredenkamp, Dunkel & Schneider, 2015). For example, in several Christopher Columbus biographies, illustrations tend to “shape reader response by conferring importance and approval on the imperial enterprise” (Desai, 2014, p. 186), even by presenting Columbus taller than the Natives. Ideologically, the avoidance of white male bias is considered important, not only in the verbal text but also in the illustrations (Horning, 2010, pp. 28–29); in the process of representing information visually, illustrators take on “an active, interpretive role” (von Merveldt, 2018, p. 23).

Scholars have begun to recognize the role of book creators in mediating scientific knowledge, emphasizing their part in interpreting the information they provide. After all, even the simplest information needs to be selected, organized, and textually and visually interpreted in order to be transmitted (Zins, 2007). These kinds of choices will inevitably be influenced by, and express ideology (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, pp. 128–129). Reality can never be perceived objectively and without preconceptions (Anderson, 1989).

In an article appropriately titled “Non-fiction for children: Does it really exist?” Nodelman purports that a discussion about nonfiction children's books is connected to the philosophical question about whether reality is knowable. He postulates that, even if we assume there is an objective world, separate from our perception and unaffected by prejudices or other distortions, it is impossible for

humans to know it. For Nodelman, as for Maria-Laure Ryan (1997) who has proclaimed the *doctrine of panfictionality*, nonfiction texts are fictitious; they carry the author's subjective notions about reality.

Nevertheless, children as early as preschool (Sharkawy, 2009) believe that nonfiction books communicate facts that are diachronically true and unchangeable. This belief, or the metanarrative (Lyotard, 1984), that objective facts exist independent of the narratives about them (Coats, 2018, p. 394), persists and is valid even among adults. Metanarratives are "implicit and usually invisible ideologies, systems and assumptions which operate globally in a society to order knowledge and experience" (Stephens & McCallum, 1998, p. 3).

This is why, unlike fiction, nonfiction is deemed to convey accurate knowledge. Indeed, the quest for truth still seems to be a focal point for nonfiction books. A dichotomy is thus cultivated between the two categories of books; one concerned with the validity of reality and the other dominated by the imaginary. The term *nonfiction* itself highlights this dichotomy, as it focuses on the contrast between *non-fiction* and *fiction*, which is fictional or untrue.

Various descriptions of nonfiction underscore the ambition to present the truthful, factual state of the world: "The term nonfiction describes books of information and fact about any topic" (Galda, Cullinan & Sipe, 2010, p. 304); "Nonfiction is writing about reality (real people, places, events, ideas, feelings, things) in which nothing is made up" (Colman, 2007, p. 260); "The key distinction between fiction and nonfiction is that in nonfiction, nothing is intentionally made up" (Coats, 2018, p. 278). Nodelman and Reimer (2003, p. 138) acknowledge the author and illustrator's subjectivity in the construction of knowledge, while also recognizing the general assumption that "Nonfiction informational texts [are] about the way things are."

Even though the combining of fictional and informational elements tends to be the norm in contemporary nonfiction picturebooks (von Merveldt, 2018, p. 232), most nonfiction books seem to implicitly assume that knowledge is independent of the way it is presented. And the more credible the knowledge provided in the book seems to be, the more likely it is to be passively accepted by readers, who might not recognize the ideological significance of the mode of presentation and the choices that have been made.

Critical literacy proponents argue that "it is more important to look at a book's relationship with inquiry rather than its relationship with accuracy" (Sanders, 2015, p. 391). When the authoritative voice in a text is not "seamless" (Kincheloe, 2001) it encourages the reader to approach the text critically. Several strategies can infuse doubts in the reader, resulting in texts that are open to inquiry and critical

engagement (Sanders, 2018). *Hedges*, for example, are linguistic elements like *perhaps*, *it seems*, *to a certain extent*, which indicate that the referential information may not be entirely reliable. Another proposed strategy is the presence of a *visible author*, who humanizes the information and functions as someone with whom the reader can argue (Zarnowski, 2003, p. 51). A third strategy, called *necromancer*, infuses a text with what Bakhtin called *polyphony* by allowing the presence of opposing views and voices in the text (Sanders, 2018).

Reading nonfiction books critically can reveal the presence of ideology. Questioning the absolute truth and objectivity of the presented information therein tends to reveal mechanisms through which ideology contributes to the construction and communication of scientific knowledge. The following section explores the verbal and visual strategies through which ideology is embedded in two nonfiction picturebooks, as well as their relation to perceived reliability and truthfulness.

INVESTIGATING IDEOLOGY IN NONFICTION PICTUREBOOKS ABOUT SCULPTURES

Nonfiction picturebooks “tend to relate facts from certain viewpoints, becoming slanted or partial versions of the truth” (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p. 129). Even more so, as nonfiction picturebooks about sculptures refer to issues of national heritage and national symbolism, they inevitably position themselves in relation to issues of identity, the nation, and communal self-perception in relation to “others.” Their analysis is bound to illuminate the strategies through which textual and visual texts concurrently embody ideological positions and establish the validity of the knowledge they provide. Do these books attempt to persuade the reader about the truth of both their informational content *and* their ideology? Or do they foreground the contrast between factual objectivity and their own subjectivity and ideology? Finally, do they in any way challenge all of the above by engaging the reader in critical inquiry?

We employ critical content analysis to examine the visual and textual strategies that carry ideology in two contemporary nonfiction picturebooks, one from the United States and one from Greece (in Greek and in English): *Her right foot* (2017) and *Άνθρωπος ή βιολί – Is it a man or a violin?* (2013).

Her right foot: A picturebook about the Statue of Liberty

Her right foot refers to the Statue of Liberty in New York, providing information about the statue’s construction and its history, while also exploring its symbolism

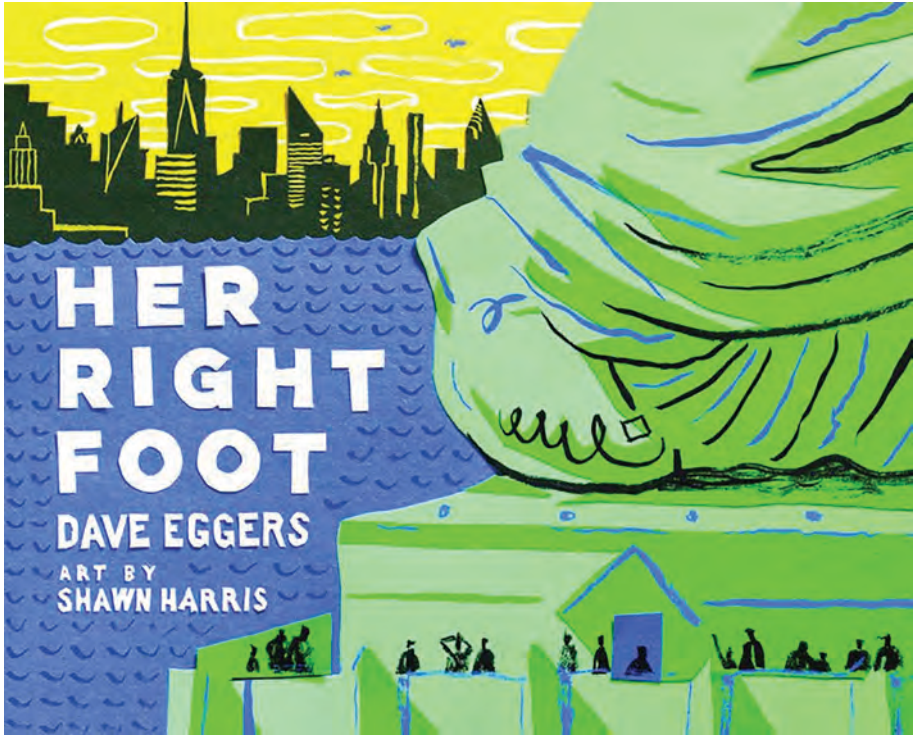


Figure 4.1 *Her right foot* (2017), by Dave Eggers and Shawn Harris, Chronicle Books.

(see Fig. 4.1). As the title communicates, the book focuses on an important detail: Lady Liberty's right foot, which upon close inspection seems to be raised and in motion. The book argues that Lady Liberty is moving forward to meet and welcome newly arriving immigrants. It is evident that *Her right foot* actively espouses an ideological positive stance towards immigrants.

The ideological stance of the book is confirmed by the context within which it came to be published. The idea for the picturebook came about after the author, Dave Eggers, had published an opinion piece in *The Guardian* titled "The Statue of Liberty was built to welcome immigrants – that welcome must not end" (2016, July 4). In fact, a slightly manipulated version of the same photo that was used in *The Guardian* is published in the picturebook as well. The *Guardian* article was published on the fourth of July – the day on which Americans celebrate their nation's independence – in 2016, when Donald Trump was running a xenophobic and hate-inciting presidential campaign. This is how it concluded: "If we ever forget who we are or why we're here, if we ever forget the meaning of America, we need

only look at the woman's feet." The nonfiction picturebook version that followed strives to make this same point, but it uses different textual and visual strategies.

The ideological stance of the picturebook is inherent in the selection of the Statue of Liberty, a diachronic symbol of *America*, as its subject. The message that America has always been a place of acceptance is directly communicated by the depiction of historical arrivals of diverse immigrants at the site of the statue (Norwegians, Glaswegians, Nepalis, Syrians, Liberians, and others), using a wide spectrum of transportation means, from 15th century boats to 21st century airplanes. Also, the illustrations consistently support the idea of a multicultural American society by including people of various races, religions, and ethnicities.

At the symbolic level, even the illustration techniques can be perceived as supportive of acceptance and multiculturalism. The use of collage, a technique that by definition brings diverse images together to form an aesthetically pleasing composition, is reminiscent of the beauty that can be found in diversity.

Her right foot consists of three parts: The first part is a historical overview of the construction, transportation, and placement of the statue, which was a gift from the people of France to the people of the United States. Throughout this first section and beyond, the fact that the statue "migrated" from France to the United States is constantly foregrounded. As an effect, Lady Liberty is presented as an immigrant protector of all other immigrants. Later in the book, the text explicitly states: "After all, the Statue of Liberty is an immigrant, too. And this is why she's moving. This is why she's striding."

In the accompanying illustration, the image shows an airplane window and a contemporary immigrant sitting next to it, looking down at the Statue of Liberty. The woman is wearing a hijab and is holding a baby in her arms. This Muslim, Virgin-Mary-like mother and her child should be welcomed. This is perhaps the instance in which the book most directly opposes xenophobic, antimuslim ideologies in contemporary United States. The mother and child's distance from the statue, which looks quite small from high above and is depicted as a rough sketch, combined with the cold blue colors that dominate and the mother's reserved facial expression, seem to imply that this might not be the case once the plane lands in New York; these new immigrants should, but might not be, welcomed by the current American administration.

In the second part, the reader is directed to observe the statue's right foot and to notice what other viewers depicted in the book are also noticing: the statue is on the move.

The third part poses successive questions and provides answers, explaining that the reason she is on the move is to welcome immigrants and refugees; it should be

noted that this last idea is an inference, but it is nevertheless stated as a fact. The narrator addresses the reader in the second person, cites numerical figures – measurable, indisputable facts – and wonders why “we” Americans do not notice and talk about this important element. He gradually guides the reader to conclude that the statue is on the move in order to meet and welcome new immigrants. While the visible author could be used as a strategy that infuses doubt and opens the text to critical engagement (Sanders, 2018), the author–reader “discussion” here simulates an adult–child conversation, not allowing for different possible interpretations; for instance, the statue might be on the move as it is escaping from the chains she has just broken.

The text ends with a wordless page, featuring two immigrants standing on a ship’s bow and looking at the Statue of Liberty. This is the first thing they see as they approach their new home. Their body language communicates awe, and as we the readers identify with their point of view (we are looking at the statue over their shoulders) we are encouraged to adopt the same stance.

Peritextual elements come to reinforce the idea that this is a factual book, citing sources and proposing further readings. The appendix includes large photos, being observed by cartoonish tourists. The contrast between the photos’ realism and the observers’ fictionality highlights the truth of what is being presented in the photographs. The photos include a close-up of Liberty’s lifted right foot, the plaque with Emma Lazarus poem at the base of the statue (“Give me your tired. Your poor...”), and the statue from an angle that emphasizes its forward stride. As other scholars have asserted, choices made in the peritext – what is included, excluded, or emphasized – can communicate ideology (Desai, 2014, p. 186).

The statue is not personified, but it is at times treated by the narrator as if it were a real person, with her own life story and free will. She is an immigrant, moving to welcome other immigrants. The overt narrator, a technique that normally casts doubt to the objectivity of the information (Sanders, 2018), has a different function here, bringing about the opposite effect: actively involving the reader in the receiving and accepting of the presented knowledge, especially during the question-and-answer parts. This nonfiction picturebook evidently carries an explicit ideology, transforming the Statue of Liberty into, according to Barthes’ terminology, a myth, a second-order semiotic symbol that becomes synonymous to the acceptance of immigrants.

Is it a man or a violin: *A book about the Cycladic Figurines*

The picturebook *Is it a man or a violin* is about the Cycladic Figurines, which are artifacts from an ancient civilization in the Cycladic island complex (3rd

millennium B.C.). Created by a nautical people who had developed commerce and the arts, they are made of marble and in various sizes. They usually represent female figures with crossed arms and long necks. Because of the lack of written accounts, scholars can only speculate about many aspects of the Cycladic art, including the function or symbolism of the figurines (see Fig. 4.2).

Is it a man or a violin is “expository” (Coats, 2018) or “descriptive” (Meibauer, 2015). Its content is organized in different units, from the materials and tools that were used to make them, to the different types of figurines, to modern art’s kinship to them. Similar to the book title, most of the unit titles are posed

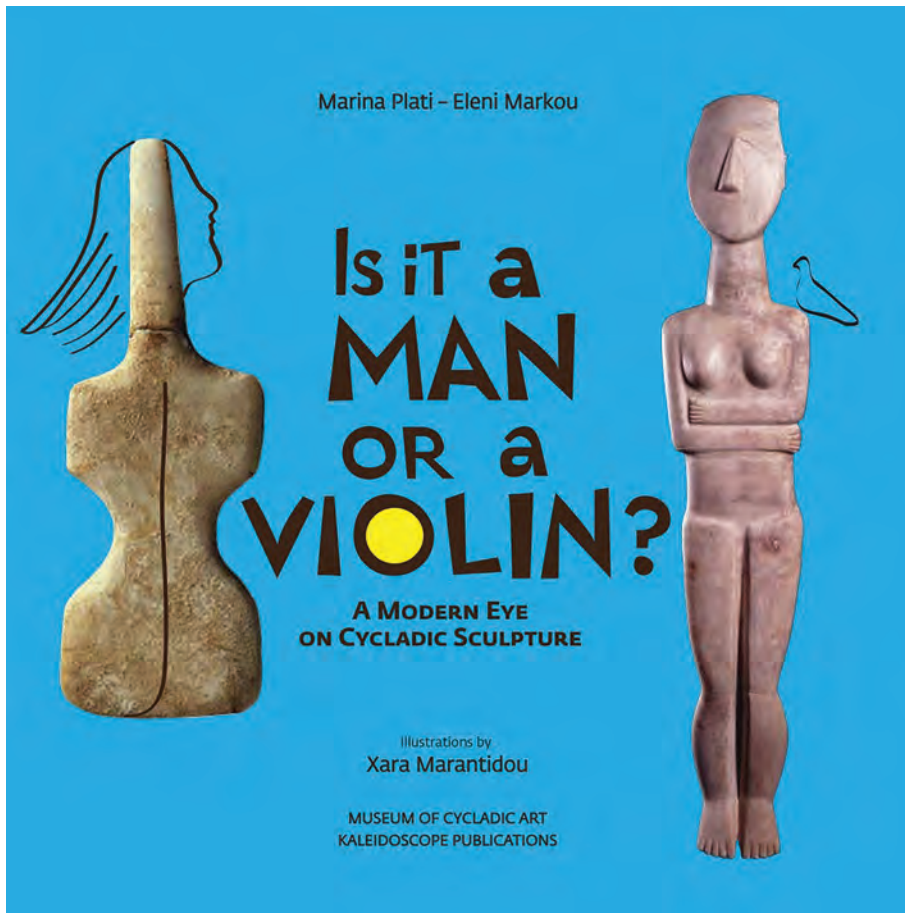


Figure 4.2 *Is it a man or a violin* (2013), by Marina Plati, Eleni Markou and Xara Marantidou, Museum of Cycladic Art & Kaleidoscope Publications.

as questions pointing to the gaps in our knowledge about the statues and the element of uncertainty regarding the correct answers to these questions. The chapter called “What were these figurines after all?” lists different possibilities rather than providing singular, definitive answers. This could be seen as a *hedging* strategy that can infuse doubt and make texts vulnerable to critical engagement (Sanders, 2018).

As is often the case with contemporary nonfiction picturebooks, this publication strives to be visually attractive and aesthetically pleasing (Giblin, 2000; Carter, 2000). It mainly features beautiful photos of the figurines, as well as works by contemporary artists who were inspired by them. This is a common strategy in nonfiction, as photography is a means of reinforcing the factuality of what is mentioned in the text. The photographic claim to accuracy “disguises the photographer’s choice of what to shoot from where, what focus and film type to use, and what sort of cropping to perform” (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p. 129).

It is notable that, even though the Cycladic Idols are considered a part of Greek cultural heritage, the book consistently avoids presenting them as an object of national pride. Nowhere in the text is there a reference to Greece or Greeks. The civilization that created the figurines is simply mentioned as Cycladic, the place as the Cycladic island complex, and the culture as that of islanders. Even the maps that show the historical space are limited to the specific islands and the area around them and make no mention of modern borders or nations. In no case is the Cycladic civilization in the book highlighted as evidence of the superiority of the Greek nation.

The book highlights the Cycladic Figurines’ relationship with abstract art and its European creators, such as Picasso, Modigliani, Giacometti, Coper, and Moore, among others. It also highlights the idols’ kinship to African and Oceanic masks. In this manner, the Cycladic Figurines are interpreted as world heritage and part of the global creative imagination; their culture belongs to everyone. This approach transforms an archeological finding to a bridge that connects all people, across time and space. Through “A modern eye on Cycladic sculpture” as the book subtitle states, this nonfiction picturebook attempts to bring the world together under a common creative culture.

Is it a man or a violin supports the above-mentioned ideological stance through various visual and verbal strategies: the most important of which is the nonfiction format itself. Authored in an informative style, it uses several expressive modes that communicate credibility. The absence of a narrator, for instance, conceals the existence of a person who is communicating this information to us (Hesse & Bradway, 2009, p. 3). Photography is used in a way that

makes the comparisons between Cycladic and modern art seem natural – one such example is the placement of a photo of a violin-shaped idol right next to the photo of a work by Hans Coper on page 23. Other strategies that enhance both the book's factual and ideological credibility are the fore-fronting of the book creators' scientific expertise and the scientific community's approval, as well as the use of academic sources. In this sense, even the text's reluctance to make bold claims about aspects that still remain speculation (the *hedges* strategy mentioned earlier) seems to be merely adding to the book's ambition for "nonfictive truthfulness."

It seems that the same strategies that are used to convey objectivity, also function as a means of convincingly carrying ideology. Nonfiction picturebooks that cultivate a sense of truthfulness regarding (historical) facts, at the same instance manage to communicate truthfulness regarding the ideology they convey. And even when the authors use *hedges* (Sanders, 2018) to signal a tentative assessment of the information about the Cycladic civilization, no doubt is cast on the statues' similarity to modern art, a crucial point in the construction of the book's ideology.

This nonfiction picturebook transfers an implicit ideological message as it transforms the Cycladic sculptures into, according to Barthes' terminology, a myth, a second-order semiotic symbol of common cultural heritage. From now on, when readers see the Cycladic Figurines, they will view them not as a sign of local/national identity or superiority, but as global heritage.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The textual and visual means that are used in nonfiction picturebooks to communicate knowledge can never be void of ideology. Nonfiction picturebooks about statues that are national or global heritage or symbols, like the Cycladic Figurines and the Statue of Liberty, carry ideology. These books are particularly ideological, as they strive to create second-order semiotic symbols, urging the reader to view the statues as carriers of second-order meanings: The Statue of Liberty becomes a symbol of openness toward immigrants; the Cycladic Idols become a symbol of global humanity and cultural heritage.

It would be legitimate to interpret both sculptures in ways opposite to those offered by the books; the Statue of Liberty could be perceived to symbolize America as a nationalistically proud beacon of liberty that shines across the world, and the Cycladic Idols as a symbol of Greek national pride and cultural superiority. That they are presented in these specific books as meaning only one

thing emphasizes the point that these nonfiction picturebooks are making an argument, choosing an ideological position.

Nonfiction picturebooks are created within geographical, cultural, historical, and ideological contexts, and these contexts inform both topic and content choices. Books that deal with objects of national symbolism and heritage, in particular, cannot but deal with ideologies of national identity and multiculturalism, intentionally/consciously or not.

These picturebooks can even function as direct responses to specific historical circumstances. *Her right foot*, for instance, came about as direct resistance to Trump's xenophobic rhetoric by projecting the Statue of Liberty as a symbol of American society's multicultural identity and openness to immigrants. As explained earlier, the very idea for the picturebook came from a Guardian opinion piece (Eggers, 2016, July 4). Additionally, the author confirms in an online open letter that he started working on the picturebook at a time when the 2016 election "was nearing and anti-immigrant sentiment was becoming louder and more pervasive" (Eggers, 2017, September 1).

The manner in which the content of nonfiction picturebooks is communicated to the reader is instrumental in their support of specific ideologies. Most interestingly, the same strategies that support factual truthfulness, also convincingly support ideology. Choosing to use photographs; citing sources, historical evidence, and quantitative data; establishing the authors' credibility; and avoiding a first-person narration are all strategies used to establish both the nonfiction picturebooks' factual accuracy and, by extension, the validity of their ideology. It is almost as if ideology appropriates the structural elements of nonfiction to establish itself as self-evident reality. Even when the two nonfiction picturebooks we examined employ strategies that engage critical literacy by casting doubt on the text's reliability (through wording that denotes ambivalence or by featuring a visible author) the main ideological premises of the texts are never challenged.

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5. The (re)presentation of knowledge about gender in children's picture dictionaries

Sarah Hoem Iversen

Abstract This chapter argues that picture dictionaries offer a more complex relationship between visual and verbal elements that goes beyond a simple representation of linguistic facts. Comparing the interplay between the visual and verbal across dictionaries, the chapter investigates the presentation of knowledge about gender in monolingual British picture dictionaries from the last 30 years, focusing on prototypes and stereotypes in the context of occupational roles.

Keywords picture dictionaries, gender, stereotypes, occupational roles

INTRODUCTION

Picture dictionaries for children have been regarded as texts in which the relationship between the visual and verbal is fairly straightforward, unlike in narrative picturebooks (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). Moreover, dictionaries are typically expected to present objective “facts” about a language (Benson, 2001, p. 4). However, compiling picture dictionaries involves choices regarding the selection of entry-words, choice of illustrations, and wording of definitions. Such choices are influenced by the time and culture in which the text was created. Picture dictionaries go beyond simple representations of facts and offer more complex relationships between visual and verbal elements in that they present, organize, and construct knowledge about language and the world, including people and gender.

There is abundant research on gender in children's literature and in children's picturebooks, but much of it has focused on fiction (Crisp & Hiller, 2011; DeWitt et al., 2013). As Thomas Crisp (2015) argues, the importance for children to be able to see reflections of themselves in fiction has been argued for decades. However,

it is also vital for nonfiction literature to “provide young readers with opportunities to see multiple, nuanced representations that depict accurately the people they love, the people they can become, and the people they are already” (p. 253). The present chapter considers gendered representation of occupations in children’s picture dictionaries in a historical perspective, concentrating on dictionaries published in the last few decades and on depictions of occupational roles, as these show young readers “the people they can become” (Crisp, 2015, p. 253).

Gender roles and gender stereotypes are closely rooted in their cultural and temporal context. Moreover, publishers of children’s word books will typically adapt editions of their books for different markets. For the purposes of this investigation, I have therefore chosen to focus only on British picture dictionaries. From a wider corpus of British picture dictionaries ranging from Wilby’s (1844) *Infant school spelling-book, and Pictorial dictionary*, the following dictionaries from the last 30 years have been examined in more detail: Apsley and Mosley (1989) *Picture dictionary*, Yates’s (2005) *Collins ABC dictionary*, Brooks et al.’s (2006) *The Usborne picture dictionary*, Kirtley and Birkett’s (2012) *Oxford very first dictionary*, and Grearson’s (2018) *My first ABC dictionary*. These texts were selected in order to represent a range of different publishing houses and to show examples of picture dictionaries of different complexity, from those including only a word and a picture (Apsley & Mosley, 1989) to those including pictures, verbal definitions, and illustrative sentences (Brooks et al., 2006). Moreover, these dictionaries are all alphabetically organized picture dictionaries where entry-words are accompanied by isolated illustrations.

I will start by giving a brief historical overview, starting with a discussion of Wilby’s (1844) dictionary before moving on to the 20th and 21st century dictionaries.

GENDER REPRESENTATION IN AN EARLY BRITISH PICTURE DICTIONARY

One of the earliest examples of a British picture dictionary is Francis Wilby’s (1844) *Infant school spelling-book and pictorial dictionary*. This book, in which single-syllable entry-words are organized by rhyme (rather than alphabetically) and accompanied by engravings, was aimed at young children in infant schools for the poor (Iversen, 2014). In this dictionary, men dominate the public world of work, both in the visual and in the verbal text. A few illustrations portray female servants carrying milk pails and performing menial tasks. However, the entry for *men* suggests that building, digging, and carrying heavy loads are examples of work which “men do”, but “wo-men can-not do” (Wilby, 1844, p. 26).

The dictionary has many illustrations of boys and men, but few illustrations of women, and hardly any of girls. The prototypical child in Wilby's dictionary is clearly a boy, as the entry for *man* demonstrates: "I am a *Child* (...) When I am more than twenty years of age, I shall be a Young Man" (Wilby, 1844, p. 20). Indeed, the dictionary has no corresponding entries for *woman* or *girl*: "Man" becomes synonymous with "human". It is hardly remarkable that in a nineteenth-century picture dictionary women and girls were underrepresented and women depicted in domestic contexts while men dominated the public sphere. Similarly, one may be unsurprised to find that in the entry for the word *copy* in *Cassell's picture dictionary* (1952), "Pam copies Mother", who is shown in the kitchen, cooking, whereas "Tony copies Daddy", who is depicted in the workshop with a hammer and nails (Waddington & Buckland, 1952, u.p.). It may be more surprising to learn that in the 1965 *Dr Seuss: Cat in the Hat beginner book dictionary*, "Aunt Ada" is "pushing her car" up a hill (Eastman, 1965, p. 86), "skating on the roof" (p. 93), and petting a lion (p. 61). The subversion of age and gender stereotypes creates humour in these entries.

Since the 1970s, there has been a raft of studies on gender representation and gender stereotypes in children's picturebooks (Sunderland, 2011). Alleen Pace Nilsen's (1971) study uncovered what she referred to as "a cult of the apron" (p. 918) in children's picturebooks: women were overwhelmingly presented in domestic contexts. The topic is still relevant: almost 50 years later, *The Observer* reports on a study that has found "huge gender bias" in the 100 most popular picture books for children (Ferguson, 2018). Large-scale Content Analysis studies is another example. It shows that males are typically represented twice as often in titles and as main characters in children's picturebooks over time (McCabe et al., 2011). McCabe et al. (2011) note that while books published in the 1990s came close to gender parity when it came to representation for human characters, a significant disparity remained for male and female animal characters.

In this context, it can be noted that anthropomorphized animals, found in several picture dictionaries, may also be members of Pace Nilsen's "cult of the apron", as the entry for *love* in *Dr Seuss: Cat in the Hat dictionary* suggests. The illustrative example "She loves her baby" is accompanied by a drawing of a bear in a blue apron, cradling a perturbed cub in her arms (Eastman, 1965, p. 63). This "Mother Bear" is a recurring character in the dictionary, depicted as either interacting with her children or doing housework. Similarly, Richard Scarry's famous *Best word book ever*, published in the US in 1963 and in the UK in 1964, is populated by several anthropomorphized animal mothers in aprons, including rabbits and bears. Scarry's popular book has since been criticized for

perpetuating cultural stereotypes and the 1980 edition was extensively revised, in part to remove gender stereotypes (Segal, 1981).

Despite critical revision of word books for children, some stereotypes are pervasive. The much more recent Yates' (2005) *Collins ABC dictionary* has an equivalent character, referred to as "Mummy bear", who behaves like the animal mothers in Scarry (1963) and Eastman (1965), but without the apron. Unlike the animals in Dr Seuss's *Cat in the Hat dictionary* and in Scarry's *Best word book ever*, the animal characters in Yates' *Collins ABC dictionary* are not always gendered in the verbal text and do not wear clothes. As such, they could be considered gender-neutral. However, as Karen Coats (2018) points out, studies show that when an animal character is ungendered in a picturebook, most parents and children gender it male in their reading.

REPRESENTATION MATTERS

The animals in Scarry (1963), Eastman (1965), and Yates (2005) are in line with studies showing that female characters in children's picturebooks are depicted as more nurturing than male characters and are more often shown as caregivers. Moreover, despite female characters being underrepresented in children's picturebooks overall, mothers are still represented more often than fathers (Adams, 2011). Still, the fathers that did appear were as likely as mothers to be depicted as caregivers in Adam's (2011) corpus. In an investigation of 300 picturebooks published 1902–2000, DeWitt et al. (2013) found that the traditional "male breadwinner" and "female homemaker" model was consistently portrayed over time. Diekman and Murnen (2004) found that "even books praised as non-sexist portrayed at best a narrow vision of gender equality, in which women adopt male-stereotypic attributes and roles" (p. 381).

Research also shows that occupational roles are generally gender stereotyped in children's picturebooks (Hamilton et al., 2006; Hendricks et al., 2010). For instance, in their study of 200 popular picturebooks Hamilton et al. (2006) found that males were more likely than women to be depicted as having a paid occupation. Women were also generally shown in stereotypically "female" occupations, while men were given a wider range of different occupational roles.

Investigating visual and verbal representation of gender in children's picturebooks in general and in children's picture dictionaries specifically is important because studies show that young children's perception of gender and of appropriate roles and activities for males and females are influenced by the text and illustrations

they encounter in picturebooks (Frawley, 2009; Karniol & Gal-Disegni, 2009). Coats (2018) discusses the power of images in picturebooks to evoke cognitive gender schemas, which may aid children's acquisition of gender stereotypes at a very early age.

PROTOTYPES AND STEREOTYPES

The entry-words in picture dictionaries are typically organized alphabetically, thematically, or both. In alphabetically organized picture dictionaries, isolated illustrations normally accompany entry-words. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) argue that the absence of a setting or background in a picture lowers its truth value. Such decontextualized objects then become generic, typical examples. Similarly, Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer (2018) note that authors of children's concept books look for the most prototypical representations of the concepts being illustrated. For a more extensive discussion of the typology of children's picture dictionaries, see Iversen (2020).

Eleanor Rosch's (1975) research on prototype effects found that participants saw certain members of a category as "better" or more "typical" than others. Such typical category members sometimes came to represent the entire category. They become prototypes; mental pictures automatically conjured up when thinking about a category. For instance, robins and sparrows are seen as more typical birds than penguins and peacocks. This prototype effect can be exploited in language learning, including in children's dictionaries. The entry for *bird* in Apsley and Mostyn's (1989) *Picture dictionary*, for example depicts a prototypical bird, the robin.

Prototypes are relevant to the visual and verbal representation of gender in picture dictionaries. Part of the reason why, for instance, doctors and scientists have traditionally been represented as male, whereas nurses have been depicted as female, is that people have a prototypical image of doctors and scientists as men and nurses as women. To an extent, this also reflects the realities of a gender-divided society. However, as Cameron (1995, p. 136) points out, research suggests that even neutral terms such as *adult* and *citizen* conjure male associations, so that "male" becomes the prototype of the human category. The fact that "male" is considered the normative category is also the reason ungendered animal characters are usually interpreted as male.

Although the prototype serves as a representative of the category and makes it easier to represent that category in linguistically or visually, privileging the prototype involves a loss of the complexities within the category. While a degree of

simplification is necessary in order to make sense of the world, especially in a text for young children, social stereotyping is a reductive process, in that a set of pre-made characteristics are applied to an entire group of people.

A central question raised in this chapter is when a prototype becomes a cultural stereotype. In *My first ABC dictionary* (Grearson ed., 2018), the entry for *nurse* is accompanied by an illustration of a girl wearing a nurse's hat (see Fig. 5.2). That is, this is not a garment worn by today's nurses, but rather a fancy-dress accessory based on old-fashioned uniforms. The prototypical nurse's cap, though no longer a reflection of reality, instantly distinguishes someone as a "nurse", in the same way that a pith helmet distinguishes someone as an "explorer". In a picture dictionary, this is an example of exploiting the prototype effect for pedagogical purposes.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Depending on the research aims and the scale of the study, an investigation of the visual and verbal representation of gender in picture dictionaries could 1) consider all images of people in the corpus, 2) look up only specific entry-words in each dictionary, or 3) examine selected semantic fields. Option 2 can pose methodological challenges since children's picture dictionaries vary in scope according to the age of their intended readers, which means that the same entries cannot necessarily be found in each dictionary. Moreover, while some dictionaries, such as Apsley and Mosley's (1989) *Picture dictionary* contain only entry-words and images, other picture dictionaries, such as *My first ABC dictionary* include entry-words, illustrations, and verbal definitions or illustrative sentences. Another disadvantage of only looking up preselected entry-words is that relevant concepts (e.g. "doctors and nurses") may be visually and verbally represented in entries other than those specifically denoting these words. For example, the entry for *ill* in *My first ABC dictionary* shows an illustration of a girl playing dress-up as a nurse.

There are many visual depictions of humans and anthropomorphized animals in picture dictionaries where the verbal text does not specify gender. In these cases, visual gender markers, including clothes and accessories, may be used to gender those depicted. An obvious weakness of this approach is that researchers bring their own gender schema to the material and risk reinforcing gender stereotypes and restrictive gender binaries.

For the purposes of this chapter, which specifically investigates prototypes and the construction of gender stereotypes as part of an ongoing study, I have examined

selected semantic fields, both by looking up specific entries, and by considering each dictionary as a whole. This approach is only possible when the selection of example text is limited. Although several semantic fields have been considered, the focus of the present chapter is limited to the semantic category “jobs and occupations”, with the specific example of doctors and nurses. The example texts discussed in this chapter are all alphabetically organized picture dictionaries where entry-words are accompanied by isolated illustrations. Thematic picture dictionaries, in which concepts are visually presented in the context of scenes or “scripts” (Kümmerling-Meibauer & Meibauer, 2018), such as Scarry (1963), are also rich sources of knowledge about culture and gender. However, picture dictionaries with isolated entries contain illustrations that can be considered prototypical representations of concepts and may therefore be revealing in terms of cultural stereotyping. In order to further investigate the question of prototypes versus stereotypes, the discussion first turns to the treatment of the semantic field “jobs and occupation” and then to the specific example of doctors and nurses.

OCCUPATION WORDS IN PICTURE DICTIONARIES

There are relatively few entry-words specifically denoting occupational roles in the dictionaries examined. The words *king* and *queen* are included in all six dictionaries, though these are arguably not occupational words. The most frequently included occupational entry-words apart from these are *nurse* (included in five of six dictionaries), *doctor* (included in four of six dictionaries) and *dentist* (included in three dictionaries). The dictionaries range in size from 147 entry-words (Apsley & Mosley, 1989) to 1025 entry-words (Brooks et al., 2006), with the remaining dictionaries comprising an average of 253 entries each. *Nurse* is included in the smallest dictionaries with wordlists ranging from 147–282 entry-words, suggesting that this word is considered a part of the core vocabulary for young children.

In Apsley and Mosley's *Picture dictionary* only 2% of the entries are occupation words, in Yates's *Collins ABC dictionary*, 2.1% of entries denote occupational roles, while in Brooks et al.'s *The Usborne picture dictionary* 2.3% of the entry-words are occupation words. In both Kirtley and Birkett's *Oxford very first dictionary* and Grearson's *My first ABC dictionary* 3.5% percent of entry-words denote occupations.

However, occupational roles are also visually and verbally depicted in semantically related entries other than the ones specifically denoting the occupation.

For instance, the entry for *work* in *Usborne picture dictionary* states that “Mick works as a builder” (Brooks et al., 2006, p. 86), accompanied by an image of a man with a cement-mixer. Another example is the occupational role firefighter, which is visually and verbally represented under the entries for *climb* (“the firefighter is climbing the ladder”) and *reach* (“the firefighter is reaching out to rescue the cat”). Occupational roles are also represented in more unexpected contexts. For example, the entry for *never* in the same dictionary is represented by an image of a sullen man in a postal uniform, with the illustrative sentence “The grumpy postman never smiles” (Brooks et al., 2006, p. 50). This entry uses humour and a concrete example to explain an abstract concept. In *My ABC dictionary*, the occupation postman is visually and verbally represented in the entry for *hand*: “The postman has a parcel in his **hand**” (p. 17). In both cases, the occupational role is gendered by the choice of term (*postman*) as well as in the visual and verbal text.

Doctors and nurses

The only picture dictionary in the wider corpus of this ongoing study to feature a male nurse (alongside a female nurse) is Goodacre and Nockles’s (1969) *Picture dictionary*. In all the other dictionaries, published before and since, nurses are visually depicted as female, even if the verbal definitions are gender-neutral, e.g. “someone who looks after people who are ill or hurt” (Fig. 5.1, *nurse*). By contrast, the divide is 50/50 between male and female doctors in the picture dictionaries published after the year 2000. This recalls Diekman & Murnen (2004) who found that while girls and women in children’s books could adopt (stereo)typical male roles, boys and men were typically not depicted in (stereo)typical female roles. As Kokkola & Österlund (2011) point out, “A girl-child adopting stereotypically male behaviours does not challenge the status quo as much as a boy-child engaging in stereotypically female forms of play and wearing female clothing” (p. 81). This is also related to the loss of status involved in adopting traditionally female roles, such as in the case of doctors and nurses. In the *Usborne picture dictionary* (Brooks et al., 2006) the doctor is depicted as a bespectacled man consulting his young patient’s journal, whereas the nurse is a woman pushing a girl in a wheelchair. The verbal definitions are also subtly different: a doctor is defined as “someone who helps sick people get better”, whereas a nurse is “someone who looks after people who are ill or hurt”. In other words, the (male) doctor has the power to make someone better, whereas the (female) nurse is a caregiver.

Rather than the oversized, gender-neutral scrubs that many nurses wear today, nurses’ uniforms in British children’s picture dictionaries are typically presented



Figure 5.1 *The Usborne picture dictionary* (2006), by Felicity Brooks & Jo Litchfield, Usborne Publishing.

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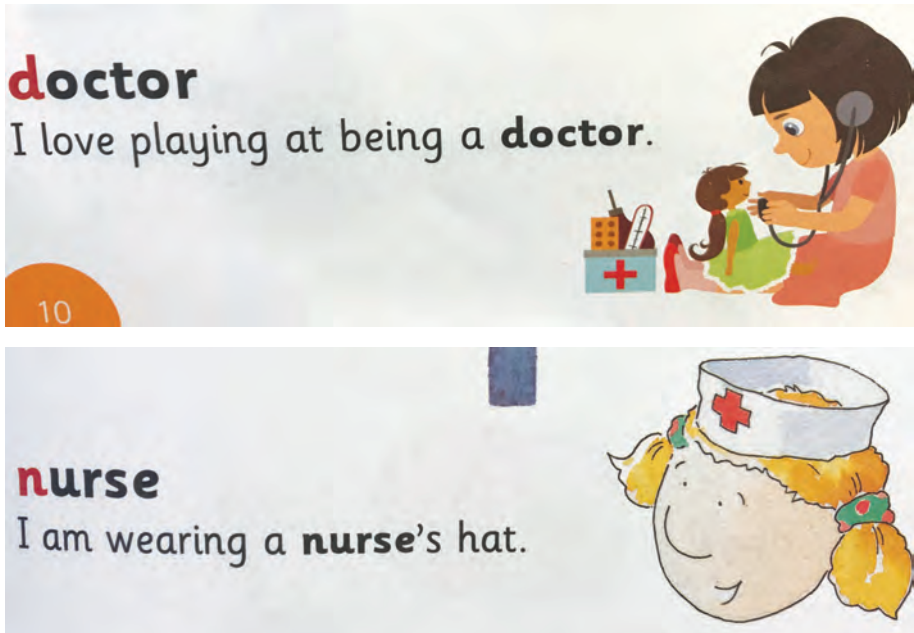


Figure 5.2 *My first ABC dictionary* (2018), by Penny Grearson, Mimi Everett, Sue King and Beverly Spiro, The Gresham Publishing Company Limited. Reproduced with permission.

as the more traditional feminine dresses with belted waists, with or without the historical pinafore aprons and caps. These prototypical uniforms, as we have seen, also recall children's ideas of fancy-dress, especially when the "nurse" depicted is a child playing dress-up (Fig. 5.2). The emphasis on depicting children at play in entries such as *doctor* and *nurse* may be a conscious attempt to make the dictionaries more child-centred by referring to the child's world of play, rather than the (adult) world of professional healthcare.

Still, the element of play in these dictionaries is characterized by gender division. For example, in the *Oxford first dictionary* (2011), the entry for *nurse* is illustrated by an image of a girl playing with her doll, whereas the entry for *doctor* is illustrated by an image of a boy dressed up as a doctor with no dolls in sight. By contrast, in *My first ABC dictionary*, both *nurse* and *doctor* (Fig. 5.2) are illustrated by images of girls playing dress-up (Fig. 5.2). The image of the girl playing doctor shows her sitting on the floor, wearing a pink dress, with a toy stethoscope around her neck and a female doll "patient" on her lap. As such, this image is reminiscent of the girl playing nurse with her doll in the entry for *nurse* in *Oxford*

first dictionary (2011). In addition to making the dictionaries more child-centred, such depictions of children's make-believe play may also be a way of utilizing Rosch's (1975) prototype effect, without depicting "real" nurses and doctors in a stereotypical or inaccurate way.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

British picture dictionaries may have evolved since Wilby's 1844 picture dictionary, but present-day picture dictionaries do not exist in a temporal vacuum. Rather, they are cultural artefacts reflecting both the past and the present. Moreover, the pedagogical desire to exploit prototype effects may in some cases result in gender stereotyping. While children's picturebooks have progressed in certain areas, such as depictions of fathers (Adams, 2011), some gender stereotypes are persistent, for example those related to occupational roles. This has been confirmed by the present investigation, though a large-scale quantitative and qualitative study with a more rigorous methodological approach would be needed to say something more definite about the development in children's picture dictionaries over time.

Kerry Mallan (2002) reminds us that picturebooks "provide children with the frames in which to see the world in certain ways" (p. 35). This does not mean that children uncritically receive images, but underscores "the ways in which images have the capacity to perpetuate stereotypes as well as to promote nonconformity, resistance, and alternatives" (Mallan, 2002, p. 35). Picture dictionaries visually and verbally define the world, selecting, organizing and presenting knowledge for children. These texts too, have the capacity to perpetuate stereotypes, as well as to promote nonconformity.

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6. Transgressing cultural borders. Controversial Swedish nonfiction picturebooks in Polish translations

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Abstract The chapter discusses three Swedish nonfiction picturebooks published in Poland: *Bajsboken* (1997) and *Dödenboken* (1999) by Pernilla Stafelt, and *Lilla snip-paboken* (2004) by Dan Höjer and Gunilla Kvarnström. The predominant aims of the study are to investigate the translations and to determine whether the norms of the target culture led to purifications of the iconotexts, and to answer the question of whether the translation of nonfiction picturebooks differs from the translation of fiction picturebooks.

Keywords Swedish nonfiction picturebooks, Polish translation, cultural norms, taboo, purification

INTRODUCTION

Nonfiction picturebooks¹ seem to have been an overlooked area of research for some years, which is explicitly expressed by Nikola von Merveldt (2018) when discussing this kind of literature in *The Routledge companion to picturebooks*: “Given the importance of informational books in general and informational picturebooks in particular in publishing, libraries, and schools, it is rather striking that scholarship on the topic is scarce and scattered” (p. 241). A similar observation might be made about translating nonfiction picturebooks, although recently several important contributions on translation of picturebooks have been published. In the latest

1 I use the term alternately with *information/al picturebooks*.

monograph, *Translating picturebooks. Revoicing the verbal, the visual, and the aural for a child audience* (Oittinen, Ketola & Garavini, 2018), there is only one mention of nonfiction with reference to the strict rules of punctuation in the Finnish language in this kind of literature (p. 65). Interestingly, even though subchapter 4.5 discusses travel books, predominantly nonfictional, this term is not used, and the books' informational aspect is not emphasized. Also, one cannot find any remarks about specific aspects of translating this category of picturebooks.

Hence one of the goals of this study is to contribute to this slightly neglected area of research with an analysis of Polish translations of three Swedish nonfiction picturebooks. The first one, *Bajsboken (The poo book)* by Pernilla Stalfelt from 1997, was translated by Iwona Jędrzejewska in 2008 and called *Mała książka o kupie (The little book about poo)*. The second one, *Dödenboken (The death book)* from 1999 by the same author-illustrator also had the same translator in Poland, where it was issued in 2008 with the title *Mała książka o śmierci (The little book about death)*. The third, *Lilla snippaboken (The little pussy book)* from 2004, written by Dan Höjer and illustrated by Gunilla Kvarnström, appeared in the Polish translation by Elza Jaszczuk in 2010 as *Wielka księga cipek (The big pussy book)*. All these titles were published in Poland in the first decade of the 21st century, by the publishing house Czarna Owca (Black Sheep), as part of the Polish series "Without taboo". When starting the series in 2007, the publisher wrote on the website explicitly that he wanted to take up issues considered as embarrassing and controversial (Dymel-Trzebiatowska, 2012, p. 307), and generally the project was supposed to be provocative for traditional Polish society. The titles by Stalfelt were bestsellers in Sweden, targeted at 3–9-year-olds, whereas in Poland their marketing description either did not include the age specification or suggested school age. The original *Lilla snippaboken* addresses older children, between 9 and 12 years old, and its translations omit the precise age of implied readers, suggesting that it is a book for teenagers.

As the books deal with controversial issues, they provide suitable data to reflect whether norms of the target culture led to purifications of the iconotexts.² I understand purification, after Göte Klingberg (1986), as a change of an ideological nature, whose aim is to "get the target text in correspondence with the set of values of its readers – or rather in correspondence with the supposed set of values of those who feel themselves responsible for the upbringing of the intended readers:

2 The observation that controversial picturebooks are exposed to a higher risk of manipulation has been confirmed by many scholars. See for example remarks (Evans, 2015, pp. 67–69) included in *Challenging and Controversial Picturebooks. Creative and Critical Responses to Visual Texts* (2015).

parents, teachers, librarians, critics” (p. 58). In turn, the concept of norms I employ in line with Gideon Toury (2012), who considered them to be a kind of “tool-kit”, not exactly strategies for actions themselves but rather convictions shared by a community that give rise to such strategies: “A long as a distinction is retained between what is culturally appropriate and what is inappropriate, there will be a need for ‘instructions’ to guide the persons-in-culture on their performance” (p. 63). He stated that the norms may exist without being ever verbalized.

Furthermore, I want to investigate whether the translation of nonfiction picturebooks differs from the translation of fiction picturebooks. Methodologically, I will conduct a comparative analysis of selected passages of the source and target iconotexts, referring to relevant concepts within picturebook studies, translation studies (TS), children’s literature translation studies (CLTS), and a theory of translating picturebooks. Furthermore, I employ the term *aporia* in the Derridean theorization. Without delving into philosophical intricacies, I understand that the principal goal of *aporia* is to “indicate a point of undecidability, which locates the site at which the text most obviously undermines its own rhetorical structure, dismantles, or deconstructs itself” (Harmon, 2009, p. 39). Readers are delivered two conflicting messages, and the condition of possibility (the existence of a translated text) becomes a condition of impossibility (a comprehension of its sense, since an a priori assumption of a reader is to understand a text in rational terms).

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE EMPLOYED TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

Already at first glance it can be observed that the Polish titles have changed the scale of the discussed problems – whereas poo and death are presented in the source text (ST) culture simply in ‘books’, in Poland they were transformed into ‘little books’, suggesting either their format or little implied readers. By contrast, the original ‘little book about pussies’, regarded presumably as a minor issue in the source text milieu, was changed into a big one in the target text (TT) culture, stressing the importance of the topic.

The verbal narratives in *Dödenboken* and *Bajsboken* were on the whole domesticated – for example all the characters were renamed – and the translator apparently aimed at retaining the comical tone of the originals. Humour is undoubtedly a vital quality of Stalfelt’s series and, as von Merveldt (2018) points out, one of the distinctive qualities of recent informational picturebooks employing a wide range of artistic styles and media (p. 235). Both of them have

the same format and lay-out, with a predominance of brightly coloured images, again fulfilling the principle that modern information picturebooks are “visually conceptualized rather than textually” (von Merveldt, 2018, p. 235). The books were not – as it is nowadays mostly practiced in Western culture – re-illustrated, which caused some translation problems, since the image-word interplay was difficult, or in some cases even impossible, to re-express in its full extent. The books are interesting examples as on the one hand they discuss general human topics but on the other, they refer – in particular, in the visual representation – to some culture- and source language-specific items. Therefore, they seem both to have a typically factual, internationally accessible character, and to embed the narrative in more idiosyncratic examples. Consequently, they evade normative suggestions within CLTS, as for example those of Torben Weinreich (1978), who distinguished between two kinds of books, namely: “1. books which describe a local milieu with specific characteristics and 2. books which above all aim to describe universal human conditions” (p. 155), which should be accordingly treated when translated, foreignized or adapted/naturalized. Stalfelt’s way of narrating combines these two modes and its translators have to work out their own methods to deal with her books.

CULTURE-SPECIFIC REFERENCES IN TRANSLATION OF ICONOTEXTS

Having compared the source and target iconotexts, it can be concluded that the most significant shifts occurred in the places which contain specific culture-bound references, both in word and picture. When, for example in *Dödenboken* there are featured alternatives of afterlife, the verbal narrator ponders a reincarnation-like possibility of becoming a bird (doublespread 5). The illustration, in an expanding relation to the text, depicts a flying blue bird with a speech bubble over its head, filled with the text “Här kommer Pippi Tjolahopp Tjolahej” (Here comes Pippi...) – a slightly altered passage of a famous song by Pippi Longstocking from the film version, easily recognizable within ST culture, independently of the readers’ age. This intertext is neutralized in translation by “Oto ja hopsasa hopsasa” (That is me hopsasa hopsasa), supposedly due to the foreign – in the translator’s opinion – content to the child reader.

The neutralization of a subtle comical effect can also be observed in *Bajsboken* (doublespread 7), when the verbal narrative informs in TT about transporting poo from a privy in *dassbilen* (the privy car), driven by a special person, *dassgubbe* (the privy guy), with symmetrical pictures on each side. Neither term is a

sanctioned word in the Swedish lexicon and there is a fairly clear association with the similar sounding *glassbilen* (the ice cream truck) and possibly *glassgubben* (the ice cream seller).³ The TT renditions changed the first word into *specjalny samochód* (a special car), whereas the other was deleted and substituted with a question “Co się dzieje?” (What is going on?) related to another image. The subtle web of puns and connotations in the TT was totally left out without any traces of the creative transformation.

Another cultural-specific relation, this time involving the pictorial representation, occurs in *Dödenboken* in the description of funeral customs. The text conveys the message that if somebody cannot visit a grave, they can light a candle and think about the dead, but if they do not have a candle it can be a sparkler. This additional option has a distinctly humoristic function, typical of the book – presumably to lessen the grief which a child can feel at this stage of reading. The Swedish word for sparkler, *tomtebloss*, is a compound noun, containing two lexemes *tomte* (Father Christmas) and *bloss* (torch). Semantic wordplay, consisting in literal interpretation of the separate words, was employed in the image which renders Father Christmas holding a sparkler in his hand and thinking about a baked pig – depicted visually in a thought bubble (see Fig. 6.1). The Polish text omitted the word sparkler: “Jeśli nie mamy zwykłej świeczki, możemy zapalić świeczkę świąteczną” (If we do not have an ordinary candle, we can light a Christmas candle). An observant TT reader cannot understand why Father Christmas’ sparkler is called a Christmas candle, and worse yet, why he is thinking about a pig with an apple in its snout and a cross above. This illustration is highly mysterious and unclear for TT readers, even experienced ones, as it refers not only to the wordplay but also to the Swedish custom of eating a baked pig at Christmas. It is additionally bewildering since in Poland Father Christmas comes on Christmas Eve – a day of fasting, which in practice means eating a lot but not meat. It is also noteworthy that the cross over the animal, hinting it is dead, is inappropriate in Catholic cultures, where this holy symbol is reserved exclusively for humans. However, as mentioned above, all the images in the translated books were retained in the original form even if they led to evident misunderstandings.

3 Furthermore, *glassgubben* is a well-known symbol of the popular Swedish ice-cream brand GB. This is a clown figure and this subtle allusion can be detected in the image of the *dassgubben*, who is wearing a pointed dwarf-like cap.



Figure 6.1 *Mała książka o śmierci* (2008), by Pernilla Stalfelt (l. Jędrzejewska, Trans.), Czarna Owca.

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MISTRANSLATIONS

This is unfortunately not the only example where messages in the visual and the verbal create a feeling of confusion, but as far as the above-mentioned problems were caused by the language differences (servitude), the following examples are evidently the translator's choices (options).⁴ In *Dödenboken*, while discussing possible family conflict brought about by a will, the author presents visually – again

4 When employing the terms *servitude* and *option* I refer to Vinay and Darbelnet's model (referred in Munday, 2016, pp. 93–94). Except for the famous seven-shift taxonomy, the French scholars introduce a vital parameter of translation: a difference between servitude and option, where the first one stands for obligatory shifts imposed by differences in two language systems, and the other refers to non-obligatory changes, due to the translator's own style and preference.

in a funny manner – two figures tearing a little spotted horse apart. One of them says in a dialogue bubble: “Hon lovade mig Brunte”, where Brunte is a popular Swedish name designating a brown horse. The TT version, “Przecież ja miałem dostać Burka” (I was supposed to get Burek), employed the Polish name Burek, unequivocally suggesting that the object at issue is a dog. Its choice was automatically determined by the phonetic resemblance between Brunte and Burek, without considering the pictorial message.

The next example from *Bajsboken* is particularly interesting as it involves interference with both the verbal and the visual, which is quite rare and equally baffling. When readers are informed what happens to the poo when it is flushed down a toilet, the ST narrator states: “åker bajset iväg genom ett rör i väggen och ut till reningsverkets bassäng” (the poo goes down along a pipe and out to the purification plant’s pool). The TT information is amazingly altered to: “Kupa znika w rurze i wędruje do morza” (The poo disappears in a pipe and goes to the sea). The message sounds unequivocal: the poo goes to the sea as if a purification system did not exist in Poland. Furthermore, the interpretation that this substitution was forced by some – though difficult to guess – language reasons is excluded, as the picture beneath is also manipulated. In the ST the verbal message is reinforced here, as before in a comical convention, showing an anthropomorphic poo-sausage-character swimming with a colourful cap on the head in the brown water. In the TT picture the figure is not changed but the water is clearly blue, in line with the verbal message about swimming in the sea (Fig. 6.2). In this particular case it is really difficult to guess a reasonable justification for this double verbal and visual shift.



Figure 6.2 *Mała książka o kupie* (2008), by Pernilla Stalfelt (I. Jędrzejewska, Trans.), Czarna Owca.

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IDEOLOGICAL PURIFICATION AND APORIA

While the first two discussed books are abundantly illustrated and targeted at younger children, *Lilla snippaboken* differs from them in at least three ways: an older implied readership, its volume, and a predominance of text. However, the book is composed of iconotext and the images play in it a significant role. The books exemplify a rare practice – it was issued in two versions: one ordinary, and one – which is indicated by a small strap on the front cover – censored. It is noteworthy as such overt manifestation of censorship does not take place frequently nowadays.

After a close reading, a pivotal change in the TT's censored version concerns one image which in the ST portrays a crucified woman, illustrating a verbal narrative about God's gender. It was substituted with an image of anthropomorphic vaginas, which occurs at another place of the book (Figs. 6.3 and 6.4). This purification may be interpreted as an effect of target-culture norms rooted in Catholicism, the dominant religion in Poland.



Figure 6.3 *Wielka księga cipek* (2010), by Dan Höjer and Gunilla Kvarnström (E, Jaszczuk, Trans.), Czarna Owca.

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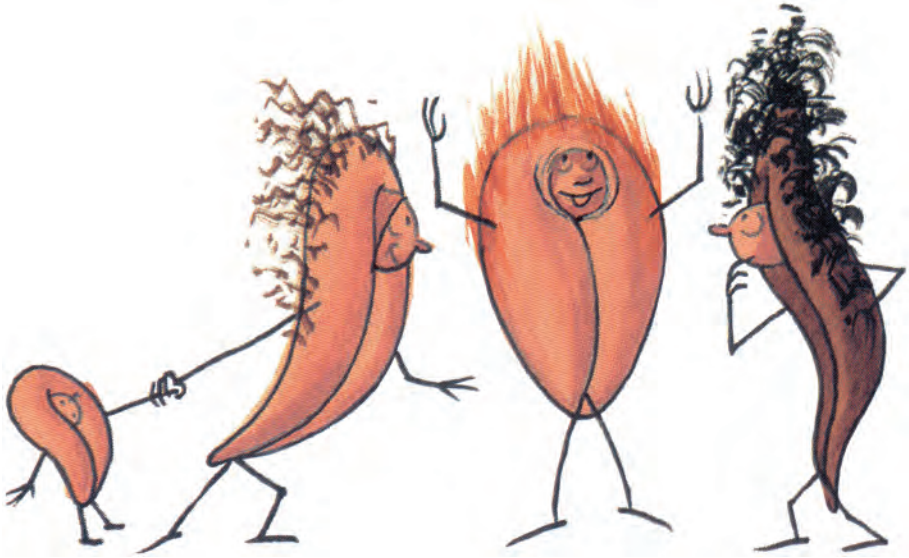


Figure 6.4 *Wielka księga cipek* (2010), by Dan Höjer and Gunilla Kvarnström (E. Jaszczuk, Trans., censored version), Czarna Owca.

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As regards the verbal, it is generally domesticated in the translation of the book, but its fluency in reading is disrupted when the narrator discusses language issues. As a representative example we can take a presentation of a Swedish initiative to introduce a neutral, non-vulgar word designating a vagina. The ST is fully coherent and logical when it states that: the new chosen name was *snäppa* (stint); *fitta* (cunt) means a wetland; because *snäppa* designates a little shore bird, RFSU⁵ decided it would be an appropriate word instead; after a while some ornithologists got upset and demanded a change of the name; RFSU had wanted to “purify” the word *fitta* for long; this is why, now when RFSU employees talk about sex in schools, they use words like *kuk* (cock), *fitta* (cunt), *snopp* (dick) and *snippa* (pussy).

The TT Polish young teenagers can read here a rather complex text:

Tym słowem okazała się nazwa ptaszka zamieszkującego bagna: snäppa. Cipa jest starym słowem, po szwedzku oznacza tereny podmokłe i błonia. Snäppa

5 RFSU – Riksförbundet for sexuell upplysning (the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education). The name of the organization and its goals are explained in a footnote of the TT before.

jest małym ptakiem i dlatego w RFSU uznano, że idealnie wpisze się w kontekst. Radość ze znalezienia godnego zastępstwa dla cipy nie trwała jednak długo, gdyż wkrótce oburzeni ornitolodzy zażądali zmiany terminu. Dlatego pracownicy RFSU postanowili pozbawić słowo cipa wulgarnej konotacji i obraźliwego wydźwięku. Obecnie, gdy opowiadają o seksie w szkołach, używają takich słów jak: cipka, penis czy cipa właśnie. (Höjer & Kvarnström, 2010, p. 38)

(It turned out to be a name of a bird living in the marshland: snäppa. *Cipa* is an old word, which in Swedish means a wetland or a mire. Snäppa is a small bird, and this is why RFSU decided it would function perfectly in the context. The joy over a proper replacement for cipa did not last long as outraged ornithologists demanded a change of the term. Therefore, RFSU employees decided to purify the word of vulgar connotations and an offensive tone. Now, when they talk about sex in schools, they use words like cipka, penis or just cipa.)⁶

The original differs significantly, since all the facts about the etymology of the words and their meanings are true and correctly embedded in the Swedish context. The TT readers get in turn a mix of incomprehensive information: *cipa* is an old word which in Sweden means a wetland; *snäppa* is a small bird and this is why it would be suitable in the context; the Swedish organization RFSU uses Polish words while teaching about sex at schools. The confusion results from an attempt of maintaining a previous make-believe of a native context. Suddenly, the idiosyncratic nature of Swedish language ruins it and contributes to the Derridean aporia. The translation, which had so far successfully kept weaving a net of illusion of being original, suddenly disclosed itself. It led to a state of puzzlement experienced by a perplexed reader who is given two contradictory instructions – one delivered by the TT, and the other by lexicons and language practice. The text in the books argues, for example, that *cipa* means a wetland and is an old Swedish word whereas official dictionaries list it as a Polish vulgarism designating a female sex organ, and having an onomatopoeic origin – *cip*, *cip*, the call of hens.

The above-mentioned examples from *Dödenboken* and *Bajsboken* can also be interpreted as translational aporias. In some cases, this “no-crossing situation” was embodied, as in *Lilla snippaboken* in language, and in the others – what is of particular interest for picturebook research – in word-image interplay. The conflict of

6 My literal translation [H.D.T].

meaning derives from contradictory messages in the verbal and the visual, and this aporia is a result of negligence of a fundamental principle of translation of picturebooks. It has become almost customary to maintain that to understand the picturebook translation means to understand an intricate interplay of words and images (e.g. Oittinen, 2000, p. 100; Oittinen & Gonzales, 2008; Oittinen et al., 2018; O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 102; Rhedin, 2004, p. 138). Translators are particularly important readers since it is just their interpretation that is re-expressed and experienced by a plenitude of TT recipients:

The translators of picturebooks start their task as readers. The multimodal composition of the source text invites them to oscillate between the verbal text and the illustrations. They reinterpret the verbal based on their interpretation of the illustrations, and they reinterpret the illustrations based on their perception of the verbal text. The translators' thorough reading process involves studying the story various times, which, indeed, is a prerequisite for an adequate interpretation of how the modes combine to create the story. (Oittinen et al., 2018, p. 31)

Unfortunately, as the above-discussed examples prove, the focused reading process seems to have been overlooked in some cases. The shifts which occurred in the analysed corpus can be roughly categorized as:

- servitude, caused by differences in the Swedish and Polish language systems and cultures, pertaining predominantly to the verbal: Pippi song (covert), a privy car (covert), snäppa / pussy origin (overt)
- servitude, caused by differences in the Swedish and Polish language systems, and conflicting with the visual: tomtebloss/Father Christmas sparkler (overt)
- option, discrepancies in verbal and visual information: Bunte (overt)
- option, visual manipulations: the image of anthropomorphic vaginas instead of the crucified woman (covert); the blue sea water instead of the brown in a purification plant's pool (covert)

As seen above, the TT changes, classified as servitude, i.e. imposed by the language and culture differences, are not the only ones, as there are many optional manipulations, too. The ones generating aporia do not concern exclusively language, but what is of particular interest for picturebook studies, affect the word-image relation (for example, Father Christmas sparkler or Bunte). Some

of the shifts were labelled above as covert and are disclosed only by comparing the ST with the TT, whereas the others which are described as overt can lead to potential aporias. The aporetic situations, specific for picturebooks, come into being when the message in the illustration conflicts with the verbal, and, which should be emphasized, this is not the case of counterpoint. This dynamic interplay between the verbal and the visual was defined long ago as creative, opposed to the more passive symmetrical and complementary ones. As Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) pointed out, “as soon as words and images provide alternative information or contradict each other in some way, we have a variety of readings and interpretations” (p. 17). The child readers/observers are then made to ponder, wonder, ask questions and, for example, learn irony and ambiguity. The translational aporia lacks this imaginative, positive feature, which is mostly replaced by confusion.⁷

Regarding the translation of nonfiction, there is proportionally little research around this issue within TS – exactly as in the case of informational picturebooks – and translation studies focus either on literary or non-literary translation, exploring nonfiction sporadically. One of the monographs which includes more pragmatic, yet very synthetic, observations on this topic is *Literary translation: A practical guide* by Clifford Landers (2001), who argues that translators of nonfiction enjoy several advantages:

[...] use of footnotes is not a deterrent, allowing the translator to point out any problem words or phrases and explain cultural contexts; the tone of the work usually remains constant, maintaining a single voice throughout; factual content is normally more important than style (although the latter cannot be ignored); often, a translator’s foreword is permissible, providing a wider latitude for explanation of the translational choices made; and especially long, multi-volume works are frequently divided among two or more translators, which reduces the length of time one must devote to a single project [...] (p. 103)

The insights disregard the specific character of nonfiction picturebooks, which are not long and divided among translators; do not include footnotes of any kind; and, as mentioned above, they employ a wide range of artistic styles and media, making

7 Further, Nikolajeva and Scott add that a similar effect can also occur while reading a source iconotext. The contradiction between text and picture can create confusion and ambiguity as a result of “the kind of contradiction that arises from a mismatch of text and image, which might be due to an author and illustrator who do not work as a team, to a series of illustrators for a single text, or a series of authors for a series of illustrations” (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001, p. 30).

their tone diverse and ranking their style as high as the content. Concerning translators' forewords, they are not forbidden, yet as all paratexts atypical, as they can disturb the book's thoughtful artistic composition. Once again, these books elude previous, such as Torben Weinreich's, conclusions, proving to be an exceptionally hybrid and dynamic form.

CONCLUSIONS

As regards the first aim of the study, the TT norms in the first decade of the 21st century turned out to be surprisingly lenient. It could have been expected that the norms of the liberal, broad-minded Scandinavia with its gender equality and egalitarianism might easily clash with those of the more restrictive, conservative Catholic culture in Poland. Nevertheless, the substitution of the image of a crucified woman when discussing Jesus' gender can only be classified as strictly ideological purification – forced by political or religious reasons. But even here the readers are explicitly informed about the censorship and given an opportunity of using the uncensored version. Basically, the comparative close reading of *Bajsboken* and *Dödenboken* has not revealed any essential ideological, i.e. of religious or political origin, manipulations, which can be explained by the fact that they, overall, feature contentious topics and if they followed the restrictive target-culture norms⁸ their translation would probably involve total reductions and would not make sense.

However, another interesting set of the TT norms can be observed – of pedagogical or educational character. As the analyses proved, the TT readers were assessed as less competent and consequently were protected from some information. Moreover, translating for children was not regarded as requiring an appropriate background – numerous aporetic situations in the target texts indicate that a fundamental prerequisite of picturebook translation, a focused iconotextual reading, was neglected by both the translator and the editor.

All in all, it is impossible to comprehensively list the specific qualities of translating nonfiction picturebooks, and the universal theory on translation of picturebooks pertains to them. But as the analysed examples illustrate, wordplays,

8 In contemporary Poland there is a clear-cut polarization of values and convictions: the presumably predominant (based on the election results) ones are conservative and nationalistic, whereas the liberal and cosmopolitan are represented by the political opposition. It started more or less at the time the books were translated, though then the political situation was overall reverse: the government and the overall "political climate" were more liberal whereas the opposition was conservative.

idioms or explanations of words' etymology, which a priori cause translational problems, are frequently found in these picturebooks. Furthermore, it can also be assumed that the probability of occurrence of culture-bound (not only source culture) references will be greater in such books due to their informational character. It must be concluded that these two facts, complicated by the intricate interplay of unchangeable images, make the translation process of nonfiction picturebooks particularly challenging and its final result particularly exposed to aporias.

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7. Indications of implied reader and audience through layout in two New Zealand informational picturebooks

Nicola Daly

Abstract I examine two New Zealand narrative nonfiction picturebooks published to mark the 125th anniversary of women’s suffrage. I analyse the layout to show that this clearly indicates who the implied reader or audience of the books are. The aspects of layout analysed include the ratio of paratextual to narrative text given, the colour, detail and space given to illustrations, the relative text size, and linguistic landscape.

Keywords implied reader, audience, informational picturebooks, layout, linguistic landscape

INTRODUCTION

Nikola von Merveldt (2018) notes the lack of research in general about nonfiction or informational picturebooks, “given the importance of informational books in general and informational picturebooks in particular in publishing, libraries and schools, it is rather striking that scholarship on the topic is scarce and scattered” (p. 241). Given the ubiquity of nonfiction children’s picturebooks, this is indeed puzzling, and we can only wonder that maybe this is because people have assumed that fact is fact, and there is nothing to analyse. However, we can distinguish informational picturebooks from textbooks because they popularise knowledge, and use pictures to achieve this. Von Merveldt also notes the creativity which can be evident in informational books, perhaps even more so in books which combine

story based on fact, with fiction, which is known as narrative nonfiction (also known as creative nonfiction or fact-based storytelling, *Narrative non-fiction*, 2019). And yet, when the complexity of the ways in which picturebooks present knowledge is acknowledged (von Merveldt, 2018), it is clear that these books are indeed worthy of analysis and research.

In this chapter, I will examine two New Zealand narrative nonfiction picturebooks published in 2018 to mark the 125th anniversary of women's suffrage in New Zealand. These were chosen because of their similarity in publishing date and content. Rather than analysing the content of the two stories, I will analyse the layout of these two books to show that the way these picturebooks are laid out gives clear indications of who the implied reader or audience of the books may be. This analysis aims to reveal the complexity of nonfiction picturebooks and their merit for analysis in terms of their textual and illustrative design. I do not argue that these layout and illustration features are separate from the content; I simply aim to explore aspects of nonfiction picturebook design not previously analysed in relation to intended audience. The aspects of layout analysed in this chapter include the ratio of paratextual to narrative text given, the colour, detail and space given to illustrations, the relative text size, and the linguistic landscape of these picturebooks. These areas are examined and discussed in relation to the notion of implied readers (Larkin-Lieffers, 2010) and Audience Design (Bell, 1997; 2010).

The implied reader is the children who the author imagines as they write. Larkin-Lieffers (2010) defines the implied reader as “the author's conscious and unconscious thoughts of children to create an implied reader” (Larkin-Lieffers, 2010, p. 76). A related sociolinguistic theory is known as Audience Design (Bell, 1997; 2010), which states that we shape the way we use language according to who our audience is, and that the way we adjust our speech tells us something about our own identity in relation to the groups we identify with, the groups we don't identify with and the people we are communicating with (our interlocuters).

BOOK ANALYSED

The two books I will examine in this chapter were both published in 2018 to mark the 125-year anniversary of women's suffrage in New Zealand. They each tell a story based on the life of a real person involved in the women's suffrage movement, and embedded in the fictionalised aspects of each story, they

each include many factual elements in the front and back matter and scattered throughout each book to different extents.

The first book, *Kate Sheppard. Leading the way for women* (hereafter referred to as *Kate Sheppard*) written by Maria Gill and illustrated by Marco Ivančić is the story of the leader of the women's suffrage movement. The story is about Kate's family deciding to move from Liverpool to New Zealand after the death of their father. In New Zealand Kate marries, has children, stops wearing a corset and learns to ride a bicycle; and then she hears an American suffragette speaking in a town hall. Kate sets up a temperance society and started to organise petitions to change the electoral legislation so that women can vote. After the failure of the first two petitions, she organises a final monster petition which garners 32,000 signatures, and the first New Zealand women voters participated in the 1893 election on 28 November. She continued writing and advocating for women's votes for the rest of her life.

Eliza and the White Camellia. A story of suffrage in New Zealand is a bilingual picturebook (hereafter referred to as *Eliza*) written in English by Debbie McCauley, illustrated by Helen Casey and translated into Māori by Tamati Waaka. It tells the story of seven-year-old Eliza (a real person) whose family had immigrated from England to New Zealand in 1841 where she was born. The narrative in this picturebook is presented in both Te Reo Māori, the indigenous *de jure* official language of New Zealand, and English the dominant but *de facto* official language of New Zealand. The story begins with Eliza's father leaving the house to vote in New Zealand's first general election in 1853. Eliza asks why her mother isn't also going and is told that women can't vote. As Eliza grows up and has her own children, the women's suffrage movement in New Zealand grows, and white camellias are given out to suffrage supporters during the first 1891 petition for women's suffrage, hence the title for the book. Just two months after a third petition to parliament organised by the leading New Zealand suffragist, Kate Sheppard, in 1893, Eliza and her daughter are able to vote.

While the content of these two informational picturebooks is important, it is given here to provide a context only. In this chapter it is not the facts embedded in these stories, or the literary techniques used to tell the stories which will be analysed; these techniques of course would tell their own story of intended readers or audience. Instead, the focus of this chapter is the exploration of the ways in which information is presented through the layout and typography of text and the features of illustrations, and how these features links to the implied readership or audience of the two books.

METHOD AND ANALYSIS

In the rest of this chapter, I explore the implied readership or audiences for these two informational picturebooks in four ways:

1. analysing and comparing the ratio of paratextual information given;
2. analysing and comparing the range of colour and detail used in the illustrations;
3. examining and comparing the typographical aspects of the main text; and
4. exploring and describing the Linguistic Landscape of the text layout.

Paratextual

Von Merveldt (2018) states that paratextual information has a strong presence in the informational picturebook, being a defining, if not an essential, feature. Indeed the hybridization of forms which Pappas (2006) states is a strong trend in informational texts in recent years, means that sometimes it is the presence of paratextual information such as author's notes, bibliographies, photographs, maps, and timelines which identifies the picturebook as being informational. Both of the picturebooks being analysed in this chapter feature a great deal of paratextual information, including maps, timelines, and photographs. These features act to confirm to the readers the accuracy of information presented in the books.

Kate Sheppard has end papers which show a map of Kate's family's voyage to New Zealand when her family migrated there in 1855. The back endpaper is another world map in which countries have been given different colours according to when women got the vote (see Fig. 7.1). In the back matter of the book, three doublespreads of paratextual information are given including a glossary of terms used including *corset*, *parliament* and *telegram*; a series of facts entitled 'Did you know?'; and a timeline of women's suffrage in New Zealand featuring images of Kate Sheppard and New Zealand's three female prime ministers.

The words which are defined in the glossary indicates an audience who are not familiar with *corsets* or *penny farthings* or *telegrams*, again suggesting younger novice readers who may read this book independently. In addition to these word choices for the glossary, the typeface used throughout the paratext of the book is of a size and font which indicates a younger audience may be reading this text. Even on the timeline in the paratext, the typeface never gets smaller than 12 point and is a typeface with long descenders and ascenders, indicating suitability for novice readers (Vanderschantz, 2008). The maps featured as end papers in *Kate Sheppard*

have very little text (see Fig. 7.1) and use clear keys which suggests an audience with not too much experience could interpret the information presented.

Taking into account the size of the typeface, the vocabulary included in the glossary, and the ways in which the maps and timelines are presented, we get a sense of the implied readers or the audience for *Kate Sheppard* being children with some reading experience who can interpret uncomplicated maps and read glossaries to support understanding of unfamiliar vocabulary. The nature of the maps, the words included in the glossary and the typeface and size used all align with the reader potentially being a confident child of maybe 8–10 years.

The paratextual information in *Eliza* is also extensive. In addition to sepia reproductions of newspaper cartoons about women's suffrage from the time of the story, there is some front matter – a poem about suffrage from the *White Ribbon* (the first newspaper to be owned and operated solely by women published in 1899), and a table of contents – a feature strongly associated with an informational book. It is interesting to note that the items listed in the table of contents are only in the paratextual features of the book with no reference made to the narrative.

The back matter is extensive and covers eight doublespreads, including copies of women's suffrage petitions, photographs of Eliza's home, text boxes of, for example, Eliza's 12 children, excerpts from newspapers, a New Zealand timeline of the life of Eliza and her parents, the women's suffrage movement in New Zealand and the world suffrage timeline from 1755–2015. There are three pages of activities to make camellias, a suffragist hat, a suffragist sash or bunting, and classroom activities about organising a petition, holding an election campaign, voting, writing poetry and more. There is a suffrage quiz, a glossary, and lastly an index.

The existence of the table of contents referencing the factual paratextual elements of the book, indicate that the narrative is secondary in this book. The inclusion of classroom activities in the paratextual material of the picturebook, also appears to indicate that at least some of the intended readership are classroom teachers. Beckett (2018) explains that many picturebooks indicate their implied crossover audience by means of their paratextual material. The types of words in the glossary include words linked to politics that we might expect an adult to know (*election, illegitimate, parliament, petition*), and so, as well as classroom teachers, the intended implied reader can also be interpreted to be children, but older children than those implied in *Kate Sheppard*. This is implied both by the size of the typeface and the lack of words with historical referents such as *telegram* or *corset*, found in *Kate Sheppard's* glossary. For *Eliza*, there is, it seems, a dual audience of both child and adult.

Illustrations – colour, detail, and space

Painter (2008) explores and affirms the role of colour in semiotic system of children's picturebooks. Still thinking about the implied reader or the audience for both of the books being analysed in this chapter, it is worth considering the colour, detail and space given to the illustrations. In *Kate Sheppard* across the 17 double-spreads which constitutes the body of the book, the illustrations by Marco Ivančić usually take two thirds of the space, with a space for the text created with the use of some Victorian styled decorative lines (see Fig. 7.1). The facial expressions of the characters depicted are clearly shown, and often Kate, the main character, is placed centrally to the page layout (Serafini, 2009; Sipe & Ghiso, 2005). Certainly these full colour images contribute to the meaning imparted by the text. We see period costumes for women, with bustles and hats and scenes from early colonial New Zealand with dirt roads and penny farthings. Through facial expressions we also see how each character feels (Sipe & Ghiso, 2005) and we are introduced to characters not mentioned in the text.

Through the body of *Eliza*, the narrative is placed in a white panel which takes a third of the page to the far right of each doublespread. The first two thirds of the page (if we are reading left to right) consists of paratextual information, photos, paintings, articles and adverts from newspapers, cartoons and fact boxes. In order

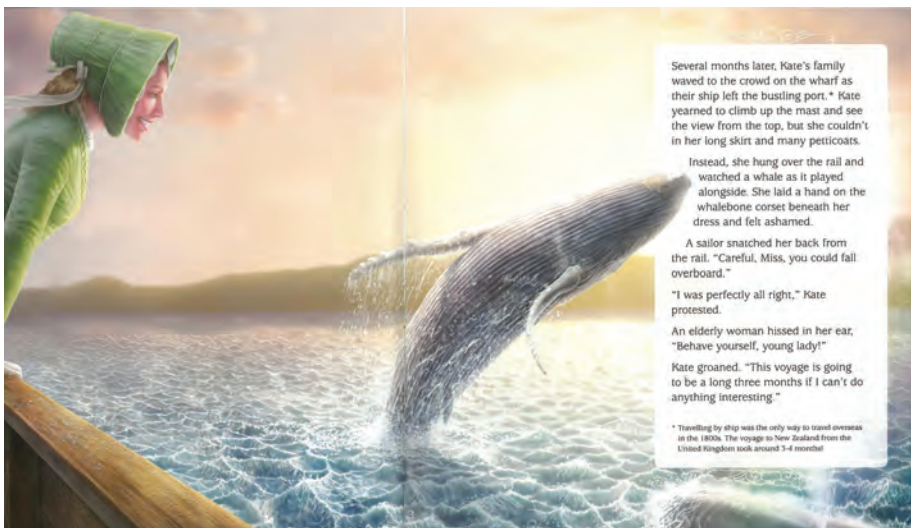


Figure 7.1 *Kate Sheppard. Leading the way for women* (2018), by Maria Gill and Marco Ivančić, Scholastic New Zealand.

Reproduced with permission.

to fit this amount of information in, text boxes and framing around images are used. While there is colour in the images associated with the factual two thirds of each doublespread, the illustrations associated with the narrative about Eliza on the right hand are black and white images with the addition of a green accent only (see Fig. 7.2). These illustrations are small and much less detail is given in them. Thus in every way, the factual aspect of *Eliza* is given more space than the narrative. It is the space which is afforded each element which most emphasises this, but also the range of colour afforded to images.

The difference between the two books in terms of the colour, detail and space given to illustration on each page indicates that *Kate Sheppard* privileges full colour image over text, with detailed illustrations bleeding to the edge of the page, inviting the reader to feel fully involved in the actions depicted (Serafini, 2009; Sipe & Ghiso, 2005). Detailed facial expressions also invite emotional connection with the characters illustrated, and the historical costumes and setting give the reader information not supplied textually. While there is a textual mention on opening 3 of ‘her long skirts and many petticoats’ and on opening 5 of ‘her dreaded corset’, no



Figure 7.2 *Eliza and the White Camellia*. A story of New Zealand suffrage, by Debbie McCauley and Helen Casey, translated by Tamati Waaka, Mauao Publishing.

Reproduced with permission.

other mention is made of the detailed period costumes worn by the men, women and children featured in the illustrations by Ivancic, nor of the historical buildings and street scenes. Thus the implied audience for *Kate Sheppard* would appear to be a younger audience who will read a great deal of information from the full colour, detailed, and borderless illustrations. By contrast, *Eliza's* audience would appear to be older. Much less space, colour and detail is given in the illustrations accompanying the text. Most space is given to paratextual nonfiction information given across two thirds of the doublespread in a smaller font, thus implying an older audience who will read more of the information than take it from illustration.

Comparative text size

Given that, as Horning (1997) says, 'Children are surprisingly sensitive to typeface. If they decide it's too small, they're likely to reject a book as "too hard". If they decide it's too large, they may scoff at a book as babyish' (1997, p. 5), the size of type is important in deciding who the intended reader or audience is. Comparing the narrative text in the two books analysed in this chapter, it would appear that the intended audience for *Eliza* with a typeface of 12 point is older than the intended audience for *Kate* with a 15.5 point font. A study by Abubaker and Lu (2012) indicates that the size of font has an effect on the ability of children to read accurately. While Abubaker and Lu's (2012) study showed that 10–12 year old children read smaller Arabic script (10 point) less accurately than larger Arabic script (16 point), similar studies of Latin script have not been found. The variation in text size between the two picturebooks analysed in this chapter indicate a differentiation of audience or implied reader.

Linguistic landscapes

As mentioned earlier, *Eliza* is a bilingual text, featuring both English and Te Reo Māori, the indigenous language of New Zealand and one of its two official languages. In this section I analyse the bilingual text using a sociolinguistic framework I have used to analyse many multilingual picturebooks, called Linguistic Landscape (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). A Linguistic Landscape looks at the way printed language populates public spaces, and this is seen as a measure of the status and vitality of the community associated with the different languages, known as a language's ethnolinguistic vitality. This approach has previously been used to examine bilingual Spanish-English picturebooks (Daly, 2018), Māori-English picturebooks (Daly, 2016) and multilingual picturebooks with as many as 11 languages on each page (Daly, 2019).

The approach developed for using the Linguistic Landscape approach in picturebooks is as follows (Daly, 2016; 2018; 2019):

1. The order of languages presented are examined, taking into account the normative order of reading, depending on the script being used, for example, the Latin script is read top to bottom, left to right.
2. The relative size of the fonts and any other differentiation made between typefaces (e.g., italics, bold) is analysed.
3. Lastly, information presented in each language is compared to see if it is equal.

If we refer back to Figure 7.2 from *Eliza*, the first thing to note is that if we follow the convention of reading top to bottom, the English text comes first and the Te Reo Māori text comes second, so English has immediate dominance. However, the font and size of typeface are identical, and so the languages are afforded equal status both in terms of space on the page and content delivered for the narrative part of this narrative nonfiction picturebook. Interviews I conducted with the authors of bilingual texts featuring Te Reo Māori and English (Daly, 2020) suggest that the reasons for including both Māori and English on the page in books such as these relates to affording a symbolic acknowledgement of the official status of the Māori language in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The colour of the print for the two languages is also differentiated, the English being in the dominant and normed black typeface, and Māori in purple, a colour associated with the suffragist movement. Dowd Lambert (2017) notes that often different coloured texts can be used to denote the voices of different characters in a book, and here the same principle seems to be applied for different languages. Nonetheless, it is English which is given the normed black coloured type.

In terms of space and information, Māori and English are equal on the page; in terms of order and colour, English is given priority. And if we take into account the full text on each page, both narrative and informational, the informational text is only presented in English, and so in fact there is an imbalance in content communicated in each language, supporting the existing language hierarchy (Daly, 2018b) which exists in New Zealand where, despite English not actually being an official language by law (it is *de facto*), it is the language with the most speakers and dominates most linguistic landscapes in most settings in New Zealand. The inclusion of two languages throughout the narrative of *Eliza* suggests a New Zealand audience specifically. However, because any text given in Māori is also given fully in English, the intended audience need not speak or

read Māori because the text is given fully in English, and all information boxes and paratextual information are given only in English. It would seem that the presence of Te Reo Māori (Māori language) is a symbolic acknowledgement of the indigeneous official language of New Zealand.

DISCUSSION

While the content matter is very similar for these two picturebooks published to celebrate 125 years of women's suffrage in Aotearoa/New Zealand, it is clear that the two implied audiences for the two publications are distinct. Aside from any content analysis of the stories told, by carefully analysing the layout and space afforded to text and illustration, fact and fiction we can see this distinction.

Kate Sheppard has more dominant and more colourful images, which I suggest implies a younger reader. It uses a larger typeface (15.5 point) also indicating a younger audience (Horning, 1997). The paratextual informational content which supports the informational character of the narrative presented includes simple maps, timelines, and glossaries explaining vocabulary from the era in which the story is set which may not be familiar to a younger audience. While the story is about a famous New Zealander who probably has more salience for an audience of New Zealand readers, there is nothing to limit this audience from also being English speaking from anywhere in the world.

Eliza has smaller text (10.5 point) than that used in *Kate Sheppard* which is associated with older audiences or readers (Horning, 1997). It also gives very little space to black and white illustrations with a green tint supporting the narrative on each page (only one sixth of the page) in comparison with the copious number of text boxes containing information and facts relating to the story populating two thirds of each doublespread, including letters to the editor, timelines, maps and more. This ratio of more fact than fiction, I would suggest again, implies an older reader or audience, and indeed there is evidence that this picturebook has a dual audience of older children and teachers (Beckett, 2018). In addition, the inclusion of two languages throughout the narrative of the picturebook suggests a New Zealand audience specifically. That audience need not speak or read Māori because the text is given fully in English, and all information boxes and paratextual information are given only in English. But it symbolically represents New Zealand's indigeneous official language on each page alongside the dominant language of New Zealand, English.

CONCLUSION

So, to conclude, there are many aspects of these two books which point to different intended readers or audiences (Larkin-Lieffers, 2010; Bell, 1984). Firstly, the ratio of informational features to narrative features leans heavily towards the informational in *Eliza*, where between five and nine paratextual boxes are included on two thirds of each page, and there are eight doublespreads of factual information at the end of the narrative, compared with three doublespreads in the endmatter of *Kate*, and five notes of factual information (three footnotes and two letters to the editor) are given in the body of the picturebook. The nature of the paratextual information given in *Eliza* also appears to address a dual audience of older children and teachers.

With respect to illustration, in *Kate Sheppard* the images are dominant on each page, and if we are to assume that there is an inverse relationship between the dominance of the image and the age of the intended audience, this suggests that a younger audience is intended than for *Eliza* where the image is placed between text on one third of the page, taking approximately one sixth of the page in total. In addition the larger illustrations in *Kate Sheppard* have more colour and detail, and again, assuming more colour and detail is indicative of a younger intended audience who may be relying on illustration rather than text due to their developing reading skills, this contrasts with the use of black, white and green only for the *Eliza* illustrations which would appear to be aimed at an older audience with more advanced reading skills.

Horning (1997) has pointed out that children are particularly sensitive to the typeface in the books they read, with larger text being considered too babyish by older readers. The size of text for the narrative text in *Eliza* at only 10.5 point is much smaller than the 15.5 point typeface used in *Kate Sheppard*, also indicating an older audience (Abubaker & Lu, 2012). Lastly, with regard to the Linguistic Landscape of the two picturebooks, one features English language only, thus implying an audience of English language readers; whereas, *Eliza* gives the narrative information in both Te Reo Māori and English, and the information given in the extensive paratextual parts of the book in English only. Thus we have several implied readers or audiences here. The narrative part of this picturebook could be read by monolingual English or Māori readers, or bilingual readers. Whereas the information available in the extensive paratextual features of this picturebook are only available to an English language audience.

Thus the ways in which these books indicate implied readers, or audiences appear to include several techniques quite outside the content of the stories, but

rather linked to layout, typographical, and illustrative features, including Linguistic Landscape. These approaches include the ratio between paratextual information and narrative, as well as the proportion of illustrations, the colours used in illustration, and the space afforded to these illustrations. They also use typeface to indicate the age of implied readers, and in the bilingual book, *Eliza*, order and information given in different languages are used to indicate the linguistic repertoire of the implied readership.

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BIOGRAPHY



8. Frida Kahlo picturebook biographies: Facts and fiction in words and images

Berit Westergaard Bjørlo

Abstract This chapter investigates three picturebook biographies about the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo. The main aim is to discuss how the biographies describe and adapt the artist's life story and art through the interplay of text and illustrations. Based on theories of biography, adaptation, and ekphrasis, the study finds that the books' visual style, motifs and art references influence the factual and aesthetic aspects of the biographies as much as the verbal accounts do.

Keywords nonfiction picturebooks, biographies, Frida Kahlo, adaptations, ekphrasis

INTRODUCTION

Life stories about outstanding persons represent a long-lasting and popular genre within children's literature. However, the selection of biographies for young readers has been continuously extended, and this is the case also considering the genre's modes of expression. Traditionally, biographies have consisted of verbal accounts supplemented by some elements of illustrations. The increase in the visibility of children's nonfiction over the last decades, therefore marks a contrast to the more scarcely illustrated nonfiction of the past (Sanders, 2017, p. 25). As part of this general trend, an increasing number of picturebook biographies for children have been published (von Merveldt, 2018, p. 233). Thereby, a crucial question is: How do the dynamics of words and images affect ways of communicating life stories and documentary information in picturebook biographies?

This chapter investigates three examples of picturebook biographies about the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo. As typical for the biography genre, all three titles include the name of the artist: *Frida Kahlo* (2016) by Isabel Sánchez Vegara and

Gee Fan Eng, *Me, Frida* (2010) by Amy Novesky and David Diaz, and *Frida* (2002) by Jonah Winter and Ana Juan. The main aim of this chapter is to discuss how these books describe and adapt the artist's life story and art through the interplay of text and illustrations.

While not widely recognized in her lifetime, Kahlo (1907–1954) has during the last decades become one of the most renowned painters from the last century. Today, Kahlo appears as a cultural icon, overly exposed not the least as a result of commercial interests. One may therefore ask if this huge exposure undermines her artistic legacy, her role as a progressive leftist activist and her position as a cultural profile, engaged in Mexican cultural heritage as well as in modern contemporary culture. Obviously, this critical perspective is relevant to studies of Kahlo biographies, and this chapter attends to the issue by exploring whether the selected books tend to convey unbalanced and heroic views or succeed to present more nuanced and multifaceted descriptions of Kahlo's life and art.

The high number of children's books about Kahlo published over the last couple of decades reflects the artist's status as a cultural icon. The children's books are spanning biographies, art history books, fictitious stories, poetry books, informational books and activity books (Bjørlo, 2018, p. 230). Thus, the books to be discussed here are selected from a wide range of genres and titles.

Recent life story accounts and art critiques about Kahlo build upon former biographies and art studies, and Hayden Herrera's book, *Frida. A biography of Frida Kahlo* (1983) stands out as ground-breaking. Herrera's interpretations of how Kahlo's art is connected to her experiences of illness, love affairs, and identity issues, as well as to her Mexican background and political convictions, have influenced a wide spectrum of Kahlo-portraits and studies within a wide range of genres and media.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES

While this chapter is informed by discussions and art studies about Kahlo's life and art, the main theoretical frames are based on generic biography studies, adaptation theory, and theories of ekphrases. Michael Benton (2011), a prominent theorist of the biography genre, claims that biography is "a hybrid genre that is grounded in history but shares many of the characteristics of fiction" (p. 68). The hybridity of the genre may also include interactions between the written text and various visual elements. However, the presence of illustrations has attained limited scholarly attention (Vie, 2020, p. 21). One contribution is the study of visual

portraiture in a selection of new Norwegian biographies for children and young adults (Vie, 2020). In another study, Clémentine Beauvais (2020, p. 64) claims that examples of innovative qualities in a selection of recent picturebook biographies, mostly appear within the iconotexts. According to Beauvais (2020), the iconotexts prove to challenge traditional concepts of biographies for children by “playing with both idealization and historical factuality in their representation of human lives” (p. 64). Obviously, there is a need for further investigations on how picturebook biographies combine visual as well as verbal modes of expression in their aesthetics.

One approach is to investigate the picturebook biographies from the perspective of adaptation theory. A biographer will have to reconstruct, but also to recreate, various sources and accounts from a life story. In picturebook biographies, visual forms of adaptations are as important as verbal ones, not least when the biographee is a visual artist. Linda Hutcheon (2006) defines adaptation as “an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works” (p. 7). Similarly, Julie Sanders (2006) explains adaptation as a “sustained engagement with a single text or a source” in contrast to “the more glancing act of illusion” (p. 13). In the selected picturebooks, some of the adapted art works are announced by titles, some are not. Still, since the context of Kahlo’s art is evident, one may therefore argue that the books include extensive ways of adapting either specific art works or certain visual motifs. Readers with some knowledge of Kahlo’s art would quite easily spot the picturebooks’ specific art references. The books do not presuppose such knowledge, rather they guide their readers to experience the visual and verbal content within the general frame of Kahlo’s life and oeuvre.

In addition, this study is informed by theories of ekphrasis. Traditionally, the concept of ekphrasis has been understood as literary works of art describing visual works of art. This understanding has been further developed: “*ekphrasis is the verbal representation of visual representation*” (Heffernan, 1993, p. 3, original italics). However, today, works of intermedial modes of expression, such as picturebooks, can also be viewed as ekphrases (Bjørlo, 2018, p. 56). From the perspective of ekphrasis, one may examine how specific artworks are described both visually and verbally. Furthermore, scenes from art galleries and art museums appear to be a frequent topos within ekphrastic literature (Heffernan, 1993, p. 139; Loizeux, 2008, p. 21), and so does the topos of the artist at work, characterized as “ekphrases of creation” (Loizeux, 2008, p. 13). In the selected picturebook biographies there are several scenes depicting Kahlo with her palette and easel, and two of the books also include art gallery scenes. These recurrent motifs contribute to making the ekphrastic approach relevant.

This chapter specifically investigates and compares how the two paintings, *Frieda and Diego Rivera*¹ (1931) and *The Two Fridas* (1939), are adapted and referred to in the selected books, and more briefly comments on references to other artworks.

FRIDA KAHLO (2016): LITTLE PEOPLE, BIG DREAMS

Frida Kahlo (Vegara & Eng, 2016)² is part of the *Little People, BIG DREAMS* series, spanning more than 60 picturebook biographies published from 2014 onwards, and the series is still expanding. The books are all written by Vegara, who has cooperated with various illustrators. The series has gained wide popularity, and several books have been translated into various languages. At first the series only featured female characters, but lately several male characters have been included.

The series wants to explore “(...) the lives of outstanding people, from designers and artists to scientists and activists. All of them achieved incredible things, yet each began life as a child with a dream” (Vegara & Eng, 2016, back page). The words “outstanding” and “incredible” suggest a heroic perspective, a prevailing mode in biographies for children, partly due to the didactic tradition of exemplum in children’s literature (Goga, 2008, p. 162). However, recent children’s biographies tend to present more nuanced descriptions (Goga, 2014, p. 76). Accordingly, it is pertinent to examine whether the *Little People, BIG DREAMS* series succeeds in creating not only exemplary, but also more multifaceted biographical portraits.

The front-page image of *Frida Kahlo* conveys many well-known features of the artist, such as her striking eyebrows, hair decorations with ribbons and flowers, abundant jewelry and colorful Mexican clothing. The naïve visual style of this cover portrait clearly addresses the young child reader, a common feature of front pages in this biography series. The portraiture of Kahlo has a rather naïve style throughout the book, characterized by simplifications in verbal as well as visual ways of expression. This strategy is presumably due to the intended child audience of age 5+.

The back-cover typically accentuates the traffic accident Kahlo experienced as a teenager, which caused her lifelong injuries and pains, but also inspired her to paint. Thus, the blurb conveys a much-repeated theme of how Kahlo managed to become an artist despite her physical limitations and severe pains.

1 Kahlo occasionally spelt her name «Frieda», according to German spelling.

2 The book was first published in Spain under the title *Pequeño & Grande Frida Kahlo* (2014) by Alba Editorial. The English version, titled *Frida Kahlo*, is translated by Emma Martinez, published in 2016 by Frances Lincoln Children’s Books, UK.

The story has a classic lifespan structure, a typical pattern within the biography genre. As highlighted by Benton (2011), reading biographies makes us aware of the temporal gaps that are left unfilled, and thus, paradoxically, the biographer has to counter these gaps by employing literary devices to enrich the story and “to animate its historical data” (pp. 71–72). In a short biography like *Frida Kahlo*, the temporal gaps are very evident. The verbal text gives rather short and straightforward information about a few selected events in Kahlo’s life. However, the interaction of verbal and visual storytelling contributes to the animation of historical data and to the enlightening accounts of daily life, events, and specific works of art.

Doublespread 9 (see Fig. 8.1) includes an adaptation of the painting *Frieda and Diego Rivera* (1931). Kahlo made this painting, which is characterized as a wedding portrait, while she was staying for some months in San Francisco with her husband Diego Rivera (Herrera, 1983, p. 123). By then Rivera (1886–1957) was a widely acknowledged painter of murals, while Kahlo still was in the beginning of her artistic career.

The verbal text does not mention the particular artwork, rather it highlights the couple’s relationship: “Frida and Diego fell in love. They were so similar, and yet so different. But through their ups and downs, Diego encouraged Frida in her paintings.”



Figure 8.1 *Frida Kahlo* (2016), by Sánchez Vegara and Gee Fan Eng, Frances Lincoln Children’s Books.

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painting” (doublespread 9). The visual portrait, however, refers clearly to the original painting. The couple appears in the same type of clothes and in similar postures as in Kahlo’s own painting. The image of a ribbon is also a common feature, except that the much longer original inscription is shortened into the statement “Just married”. The inclusion of ribbon inscriptions derives from Mexican colonial painting, a device used by both Kahlo and Rivera in several art works (Herrera, 1983, p. 123).

The doublespread invites to enjoy a rather playful depiction of the wedding scene, not least by the inclusion of two skeleton figures in Mexican clothing on top of the cake. The skeleton miniatures refer to Mexican traditions, particularly to the popular celebrations of The Day of Dead. Kahlo often refers to Mexican folk tradition in her artworks, not seldom by including skull and skeleton motifs (Herrera, 1983, p. 17). By combining the wedding portrait with the more humorous wedding cake scene, the doublespread exposes “the tension between the familiar and the new”, to quote Sanders (2006, p. 14) on how adaptations repeat as well as recreate previous works.

The scene with the newly married couple is followed by a scene with a clear reference to Kahlo’s famous double self-portrait, *The Two Fridas* (1939). The painting depicts two look-alike women sitting side by side on a bench while holding hands (doublespread 10, see Fig. 8.2). Kahlo made this painting shortly after her



Figure 8.2 *Frida Kahlo* (2016), by Sánchez Vegara and Gee Fan Eng, Frances Lincoln Children’s Books.

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divorce from Rivera, whom she later remarried. The painting has been subject to various interpretations. Most prominently it has been related to the artist's sufferings and disappointments during her breaking up with Rivera (Herrera, 1983, p. 278). Secondly, it has been related to identity issues. The dress in color is viewed as a symbol of Kahlo's Mexican heritage, and the white dress in Victorian style as a symbol of her European heritage through her German-born father (p. 278). Finally, the painting has been viewed as an example of Kahlo's artistic exploration of bodily as well as emotional experiences (p. 279).

The doublespread's short text refers to emotional traits in Kahlo's artworks: "In her fantastic pictures Frida showed her feelings. In some paintings she was sad, in others she smiled" (doublespread 10). The statement has an ekphrastic function underscored by depicting the artist at work in front of *The Two Fridas*. As mentioned, descriptions of art studio scenes may be characterized as "ekphrases of creation" (Loizeux, 2008, p. 13). Furthermore, the illustration echoes Kahlo's double self-portrait by adding a reversed image of the portrait in a mirror. In the reflected image Frida sheds tears, and thus, the illustration expands on the verbal statement.

The adaptation of the painting includes significant details from the original work, such as the heart organs, blood veins, and the surgical pincers. These are elements likely to make the reader wonder about their meaning and how they possibly may describe Kahlo's emotions and experiences. As Joe Sutliff Sanders (2017) points out, highlighting vulnerability of the characters of nonfiction, "becomes an important opportunity for critical engagement" (p. 83). Thus, the visual and verbal descriptions of this doublespread possibly might engage readers to ask questions and to involve in the character's vulnerability.

The book's endpapers, displaying black and white dots on a red background, are not easily interpreted by the first sight. But arriving at the last doublespread, the reader will discover the resemblance with the watermelon motif. The watermelons refer to Kahlo's very last painting, *Viva la Vida* (1954) completed only ten days before she died. The painting, in which the motto "Viva la Vida" is inscribed in one of the watermelon pieces, has been interpreted as Kahlo's tribute to the joy of life despite her pain and illness. Thus, the book's adaptation of this painting corresponds with the back-cover text and its highlighting of Kahlo's "passion for life and instinct of survival". In the last doublespread this assumed attitude of hers is described as an exemplum: "Frida Kahlo taught the world to wave goodbye to bad things and say, 'Viva la Vida' ... 'Live life'" (Vegara & Eng, doublespread 13). Considering Kahlo's complex life story, this claim seems unbalanced. On the other hand, these citations echo traditional biography endings. Closures allow

the biographer “to allegorize the whole life in a miniature” (Benton, 2011, p. 75). Though the narrational tactics may differ, Benton (2011) states, an ending tends to possess “a moral dimension since it invariably contains questions about the significance and meaning of the life” (p. 76). Most often a closure would include summative considerations of weaknesses as well as strengths of the biographee. However, in biographies for children, the exemplum tradition still seems to be quite strong.

The book includes an epilogue with a short documentary text, illustrated by four historical photos. The imprint page includes a list of other reads about Kahlo and a link to the web page of the Frida Kahlo Museum in Mexico City. To complement a story-based account with a strictly informational text and a list of sources appears to be quite a common feature in nonfiction picturebooks for children, not least in picturebook biographies. The verbal and visual storytelling, combined with sections of historical information, demonstrates the hybrid character of the biography genre.

ME, FRIDA (2010): A TRAVELOGUE AND THE BECOMING OF AN ARTWORK

Me, Frida (Novesky & Diaz, 2010) is an example of what Benton (2011) calls a ‘microlife story’ (p. 70). The book concentrates on one specific period in Kahlo’s life: her stay in San Francisco with her husband from November 1930 until June 1931. Rivera was commissioned to paint murals in the city, thereby Kahlo went with him on her first visit to the US. *Me, Frida* relies on historical facts about the couple’s stay in San Francisco, which is well documented in various sources (Herrera, 1983, pp. 114–127), but anecdotal and artistic devices supplement factual elements.

The front page of *Me, Frida* depicts the main character with a fairyland look, highlighted by the shining golden dots around her hair, almost like a halo (see Fig. 8.3). However, the portrait also alludes to well-known photos of Kahlo – and to some of her own self-portraits – showing the artist in outstanding outfits and appearances. In *Me, Frida*, the artist appears in new costumes on every single doublespread, which highlights her performative role. The illustrator’s use of intense colors and a folk/naïve style also recalls devices in Kahlo’s art.

Early on, the book highlights the theme of traveling by describing Frida and Diego on their way to San Francisco. The second doublespread image unfolds a dreamlike scene by showing the couple flying in the air like two birds on their wings. Thus, the scene metaphorically highlights the dreams and hopes of the 23-year-old Kahlo on her first trip abroad. Further on, the story includes several features from the travelogue genre, which allow the readers and viewers to explore the city along with Frida.

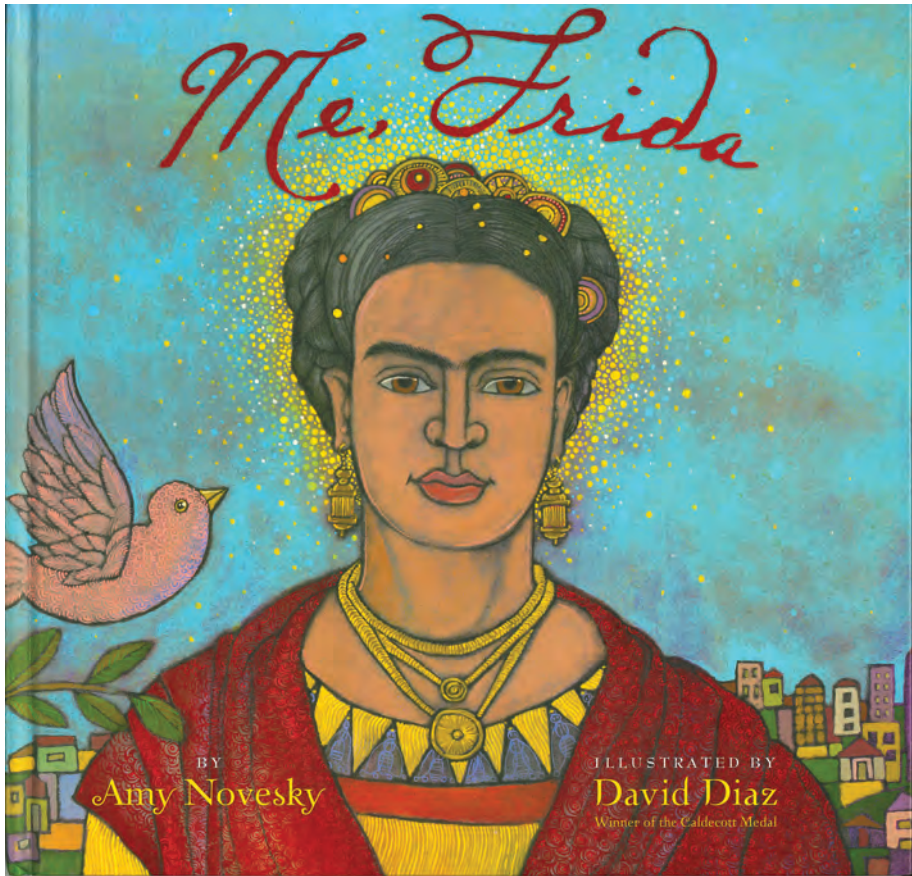


Figure 8.3 *Me, Frida* (2010), by Amy Novesky and David Diaz, Abrams Books for Young Readers.

The story describes how the process of getting to know the city and making new acquaintances inspired Frida to find new ways of painting: “That night, Frida painted something great: a colorful wedding portrait of herself and Diego”. Thus, the book may be read as an artwork ekphrasis, or an “ekphrasis of creation”, to apply Loizeux’s term (2008, p. 21). The book ends with an art gallery scene, which includes Kahlo’s *Frieda and Diego Rivera*. The scene refers to a factual gallery show in San Francisco, which proved to be an important event in Kahlo’s career. Thus, the book also may be read as a *Bildung* story of how Kahlo evolves into the role of an artist.

The book’s title may signal a first-person narrative, but rather the story proves to be a third-person narrative. However, in the penultimate doublespread, Kahlo’s

own voice manifests itself by a citation from the ribbon inscription in the original painting: “Here you see us, me, Frida Kahlo, with my adored husband Diego Rivera. I painted these portraits in the beautiful city of San Francisco, California ... in April 1931” (doublespread 13). The observant reader will see that the book title is derived from this inscription.

The ultimate doublespread describes a gallery scene identified as *The Sixth Annual Exhibition of the San Francisco Society of Women Artists* where the painting *Frieda and Diego Rivera* was exhibited. Thus, the scene is an example of an art gallery ekphrasis, which, as mentioned, is a prominent topos in classic, as well as in modern ekphrases (Heffernan, 1993, p. 139; Loizeux, 2008, p. 21). Frida is standing in front of her painting in an astonishing outfit, which again brings attention to the artist’s performative role. The painting is not displayed in its entirety, we can only spot parts of it in the background, but one element works as a synecdoche for this painting throughout the book. The pink bird, first introduced on the front page and repeated in several doublespreads, works as a visual leitmotif, leading to the enlarged image of the bird and the ribbon in the penultimate page.

The book’s epilogue includes an author’s note and a small reproduction of *Frieda and Diego Rivera*. The text states that the artwork “was the first painting Frida created in the style for which she would become famous” (Novesky and Diaz, 2010), and informs that today the painting is owned by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The epilogue thus provides verbal as well as visual information suited to support the documentary elements in the story.

The vibrant illustrations by Diaz, who earned a Caldecott medal for the book, adds a rather stunning atmosphere to the story. However, the book’s emphasis on Kahlo’s colorful appearances tends to support a rather stereotyped characterization. Moreover, the book describes Kahlo’s first visit in the US as an overall harmonious experience, and thus, leaves out the artist’s ambivalent attitude to the US, which she sarcastically called “Gringolandia” (Herrera, 1983, p. 114). On the other hand, the micro life perspective and the choice to describe the becoming of one specific painting, allow to avoid some of the much-repeated topics to be found in most short life span biographies about Kahlo.

FRIDA (2002): FICTITIOUS COMPANIONS, TWO FRIDAS AND HUMMINGBIRDS

Frida (Winter & Juan, 2002) deals with Kahlo’s childhood as well as her adult life. Short text passages with a simple sentence structure indicate a young audience, not unlike the Kahlo-biography in the *Little People, BIG DREAMS* series. The front

page visualizes the artist as a child character with a palette and a paint brush, thereby addressing the child reader. However, with its rather subtle art references, the book also addresses more experienced readers.

In one of the childhood scenes the text explains how Frida makes up an imaginary friend (doublespread 3). The illustration depicts two look-alike Frida-girls flying in the air while holding each other's hands. This scene is based on diary notes by Kahlo, dated 1940: "Thirty-four years have passed since I experienced this magic friendship and every time that I remember it, it revives and becomes larger and larger inside of my world" (Kahlo cited in Herrera, 1983, p. 15). In the same note Kahlo explains that her memory of this imaginary friend was the origin of *The Two Fridas* (Herrera, 1983, p. 15). Though the picturebook does not include a clear reference to this painting, the scene with the two Frida-girls allows informed readers to fill in with knowledge about the connections to her famous double self-portrait. But of course, readers may enjoy the scene without such knowledge.

The artist's note by the end explains why the illustrator has included a group of quaint characters throughout the book "I have portrayed traditional characters in Mexican folk art – funny skeletons, little devils, sweet jaguars and others – as constant companions throughout her life" (Winter & Juan, 2002). These fictitious companions appear as joyous, sad, or comforting, according to what situations are being described. Since never mentioned in the text, these characters have a complementary and expanding function. One example is a scene with the adult artist at work by her easel, again a reference to the art studio topos (doublespread 10, see Fig. 8.4). The text explains: "Instead of crying she paints pictures of herself crying", (doublespread 10), while the image exposes her fictitious companions all in tears. As already pointed to, the idea that the artist expresses her feelings through her works of art, is a much-repeated theme in the Kahlo-tradition. However, the presence of her bizarre companions gives a humorous and refreshing touch to this conventional theme.

The hummingbird motif on the title page and the ultimate doublespread points to the same motif in two Kahlo-works, the painting *Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird* (1940) and the drawing *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Marte R. Gomez* (1946). The painting from 1940 includes the motif of a dead hummingbird attached to a necklace of thorn twigs encircling the woman's neck. This motif has been interpreted to symbol pain, loss, and sorrow as well as a deep connection to hummingbirds (Herrera, 1983, p. 282). The self-portrait from 1946 expands on this theme. Here, the hummingbird motif is inscribed directly onto the image of the artist's face, and thus, the drawing suggests a strong identification with the bird.



Figure 8.4 *Frida* (2002), by Jonah Winter and Ana Juan, Francis Lincoln Children's Books.

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In the picturebook the hummingbird motif first appears on the title page. The illustration depicts a big sun with a facial expression, a motif which points to the painting *Sun and Life* (1947). However, since the sun's face also includes a hummingbird, the title page image alludes to the hummingbird motif as well as to the sun motif in Kahlo's works.

The ultimate doublespread of *Frida* revisits and extends the hummingbird motif. The illustration includes images of several small hummingbirds flying around the artist with thorn twigs in their beaks, thereby alluding to *Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*. Besides, the illustration depicts the adult artist with a hummingbird figure inscribed onto her face, a reference to Kahlo's self-portrait from 1946. Thus, this doublespread offers readers who know the original works, to explore the intervisual dialogues. For other readers the presence of hummingbirds may invite to wonder and curiosity; not all questions need to be answered within the frames of the book.

The book's last words, "She turns her pain into something beautiful", express a conclusive perspective that occurs in many Kahlo biographies for children. As such, *Frida* does not avoid a sentimental version of the artist's struggles. However, the inclusion of playful elements, advanced intervisual dialogues, and relatively informative accounts of the artist's life and art generates a more nuanced portrait compared to the other life span biography discussed here, *Frida Kahlo in the Little People, BIG DREAMS* series. One reason may be that the concept of biography series for children demands certain common standards of formats

and content, while independent titles have a wider scope of freedom, as pointed to by Linda Walvoord Girard (1989). The recent boom of picturebook biography series for young children calls for further research on this issue.

CONCLUSION

The over-arching aim for this chapter has been to investigate how the dynamics of words and images affect aesthetic and informational aspects of picturebook biographies. Exemplified by Kahlo picturebook biographies, the analyses demonstrate that choices of visual styles, motifs and art references influence factual and aesthetic aspects as much as the verbal accounts do. By reading the biographies in the perspectives of adaptation and ekphrasis, it becomes clear that intertextual and intervisual dialogues with sources *outside* the picturebooks are as important as the dialogue between text and illustrations *within* the books. Dialogues with external verbal and visual sources proves to be a generic quality of nonfiction picturebooks. Thus, the idea of iconotext, in the sense of visual and verbal interactions within a single book (Hallberg, 1982), needs to be supplemented by a broader intermedial, intervisual, and intertextual approach. Consequently, the recent trend of picturebook biographies generates a need for further investigations on how they combine a manifold of documentary and artistic devices in their visual and verbal strategies.

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9. Portrait of the artist as a complex man: Engagement and discovery in picturebook biographies of poets' lives

Maria Casado Villanueva

Abstract In this chapter, I examine two biographical picturebooks: *A river of words: The story of William Carlos Williams* (2008) and *Enormous smallness: A story of E.E. Cummings* (2013). I try to show how these books both convey information and provide an aesthetic experience that helps readers experience and understand modernist poetry, as well as question traditional understandings of biography and identity.

Keywords picturebook, biography, Cummings, Williams, modernism

INTRODUCTION

The boundaries between fact, craft, and fiction have always been blurred in literary biography (Benton, 2009). When the account is of the life of an artist, and the format chosen that of a picturebook, this hybrid quality is even more obvious. In this chapter, I examine two biographical picturebooks: *A river of words: The story of William Carlos Williams* (Bryant and Sweet, 2008) and *Enormous smallness: A story of E.E. Cummings* (Burgess & Di Giacomo, 2013). These works celebrate the artistry and personalities of the eponymous American poets. They deal with biographical facts (dates and historical events) but they also aid readers to access the literary production of these authors, representatives of American Modernism.

A phenomenon both embedded in and reacting to a complex historical moment, modernism was influenced by a number of discourses: psychoanalysis; philosophical theories of time, space, memory, and interiority; technology; other arts and forms of popular culture, such as films and advertising. At times deliberately

complex, at times deceptively simple, modernist texts responded to a desire to show the inadequacy of the aesthetics of romanticism and realism, which failed to represent the experience of the modern human being. This “crisis of representation” became a defining element of the movement (Lewis, 2007, p. 3) and often resulted in texts that were “self-contained rather than representational” (Childs, 2007, p. 19). The modernist period offers instances of what Roland Barthes term “writerly” texts, those texts which must not be passively consumed but crave a specially active participation of the reader to interpret them. Such interpretation does not require to ascribe “a (more or less justified, more or less free) meaning” to the text but “on the contrary to appreciate what plural constitutes it” (Barthes, 1973/2002, p. 5).

A river of words and *Enormous Smallness* present a number of differences in terms of design, pictorial style, and textual rhetoric, but I want to focus on the common strategies they use both to foster the engagement of potential readers and to help them understand and enjoy the complexities of Williams’ and Cummings’ work. I will mostly concentrate on the biographical accounts, and some doublespreads will be the object of closer examination. Occasionally, however, I will also refer to paratextual elements such as titles and covers.

According to Maria Nikolajeva (2014), texts may possess a number of features which “optimise” the readers’ engagement, that is, their cognitive and affective involvement with text, their desire to comprehend and enjoy it (p. 4). Firstly, I will analyse how these picturebooks achieve this goal verbally and visually, by making use of conventional narrative and characterization techniques and evoking elements which are familiar to the readers. Secondly, I argue how through the fragmentary organization of the visual space these books also invite readers to abandon fluid reading. They exploit the possibilities of multimodality to present the authors’ work in innovative ways but without directing interpretation, mirroring the very process of discovery that modernist literature requires from the readers. The estrangement of language and kaleidoscopic visuals promote a form of reading that has been termed by Julie Taylor (2018) as “childish reading”, a process opposed to a reading guided by the desire of finding out a logic a univocal meaning behind the text.¹ Finally, by challenging the readers’ views about issues such as objective reality and identity, I consider how these picturebooks can be regarded

1 In her exploration of Gertrude Stein’s *First Reader* Taylor draws on Eve Kosofki Sedwick’s notion of “reparative reading” as opposed “suspicious” or “paranoid” reading (obsessed with deciphering clues and finding meaning, and averse to surprise) and on J. Halberstam’s idea that the child as the ideal reparative reader. Taylor then makes a difference between the “childlike” vision (pure and refreshing) and the “childish” one, stubborn resistance to normative (adult) ways of reading, and argues that Stein’s reader is a celebration of the later.

as examples of what Michael Benton (2009) calls biomythographies, life accounts which problematize their own status as biographies. In this way, I argue that these books exemplify the inadequacy of the literary-didactic split which has traditionally articulated discussions of children's literature. Factual information is not the only source of knowledge, but the aesthetic experience these books provide can be regarded in itself as a form of knowledge acquisition. The enjoyment derived from the exploration of these books' art can help readers to understand how art and literature work and how we respond to them (Nikolajeva, 2014, p. 226).

ENGAGING THE READER

A river of words and *Enormous smallness* deploy a number of strategies to engage the audience, by evoking familiar forms of literature and fostering empathy towards the stories' protagonists. Firstly, several verbal and pictorial elements conform to the readers' notions of a traditional biographical narrative. Following the title spread, *A river of words* presents, on the left-hand page, a framed portrait (realistic although stylized) of a mature Williams looking at the readers.² This close-up of an amiable face engages them through proximity and eye contact. On the right-hand page, we can read the opening lines of one of Williams' poems: "When I was younger it was plain to me I must make something of myself" (Bryant & Sweet, 2008, doublespread 2). The lines express an ambition which invites the reader to turn the page and witness this process of personal development. The visual and verbal elements of this first doublespread, together with the book's subtitle ("The story of William Carlos Williams"), conform to the traditional view of a biography as a narrative equivalent to a realistic portrait.

Enormous smallness also opens with a frequently quoted sentence by E.E. Cummings: "It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are" (Burgess & Di Giacomo, 2013, doublespread 1), a message very much in line with that conveyed in many books and films addressed to young audiences. The epigraphs chosen to open both these biographies create the expectations of coming-of-age stories, with characters worth emulating, as they seem to want to develop their potential, in the case of Williams, or search for their true selves, in the case of Cummings. These epigraphs also suggest a unified and coherent idea of identity as something to be discovered in an individual process of maturation.

2 Pages are not numbered in neither of the two picturebooks analysed. When necessary, I will refer to the number of the doublespread counting from the next after the endpaper.

In the successive doublespreads, the reader is further engaged with familiar narrative threads which evoke well-known childhood readings. The first pages of *A river of words* introduce Williams as a playful child, refer to the author with a familiar form of his given name and underline the affinities between him and a potential young audience: "Like the other boys in Rutherford, New Jersey, Willie Williams liked to play baseball and to race his friends up and down the street". We are then introduced to those qualities which made him special, such as his liking for solitude and ability to observe nature. Passages of poetic prose and onomatopoeia evoke child-language and classic childhood readings: "When he grew tired he stretched out beside the Passaic River, Gurgle, gurgle, swish swoosh! – Gurgle gurgle. The Water went slipping and sliding over the smooth rocks, then poured in torrent over the falls..." (Bryant & Sweet, 2008, doublespread 3).

In *Enormous smallness*, Cumming's life story opens with a well-known folktale formula in rhymed verse that explicitly addresses the reader. "Inside an enormous city/in a house on a very small street/there once lived a poet/I would like you to meet" (Burgess & Di Giacomo, 2013, doublespread 3). The verses are subsumed in the image of a street that runs in front of the reader. The implication is that readers are ushered along this road by the knowledgeable narrative voice. In the left-hand page of the next doublespread (4), a friendly-looking Cummings leans out of a window while the text invites the reader to peek inside his room ("peek inside and you will see/where ee writes his poetry") of which a fragment can be seen on the right-hand page. The focalization of the next doublespread (5) places the reader in Cummings' position, on a chair in front of his typewriter (of the author, only the hands can be seen) in a harmonious domestic environment, with his wife calling him to tea.

Thus, in both picturebooks, texts and images contribute to underline elements of familiarity and domesticity; and the poets are presented as everymen. Stylistically, the verbal elements recall childhood readings such as nursery rhymes and fairy tales abounding in repetition, alliteration, and rhyme, devices characteristic of traditional forms of poetry with which even unexperienced readers may be familiar.

In successive pages, these picturebooks deal with the poets' early creative experiences, and the role that teachers and schooling had in their artistic blossoming. In *A river of words*, the reader witnesses a young Williams, inspired by school, writing his first poem (see Fig. 9.1). The text reproduces the poem in the same font that is used throughout the book, while the picture draws the reader into the creative process. The reader is positioned in place of the character and can see exactly what the young Williams would see – his hand, his school notebook, and his childish handwriting. In the next page, that shows a picture similar to the initial presentation of Cummings, the text articulates Williams' thoughts: "I want to write about

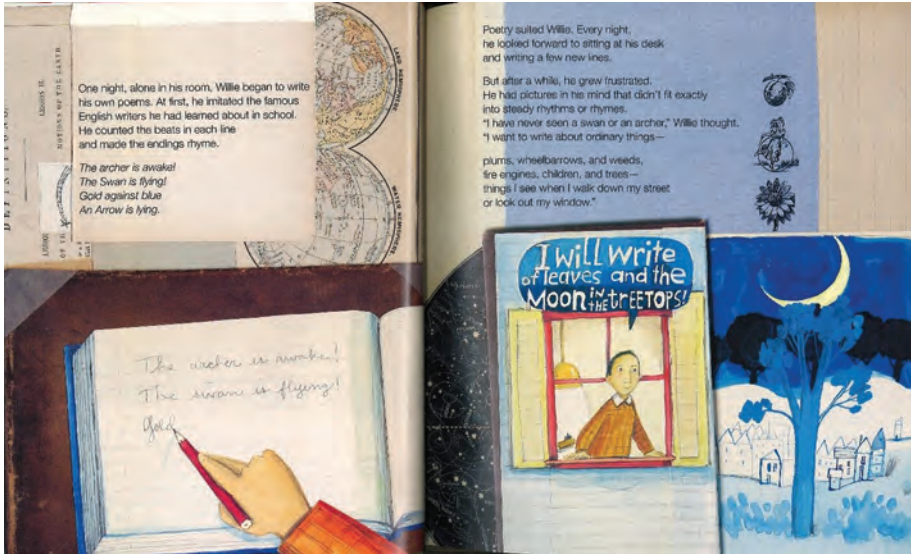


Figure 9.1 *A river of words: The story of William Carlos Williams* (2008), by Jen Bryant and Melissa Sweet. Eerdmans Books for Young Readers.

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ordinary things”. This information is paraphrased within a speech bubble in the illustration. These words are presented to the reader as an explicit manifesto, in simple language, of what his poetry would become; they announce the trend which would later be named Imagism.

Similarly, *Enormous smallness* depicts Cummings at three years composing his first poem (see Fig. 9.2). An endearing, rather stylized portrayal of the poet as a young child and the melody and simplicity of Burgess’ poetic text matches the language of Cummings’ first-ever creation.

In both picturebooks, the poetic quality of the text, as well as the depictions of the characters’ earliest incursions into creativity, can easily be linked to readers’ own experience of poetry, with what they know about conventional stanzas and sound patterns. This can help an audience of people unfamiliar with modernism to more easily fathom the principles guiding Williams’ and Cummings’ artistic development – from familiar patterns to a progressive adherence to modernist aesthetics. Evoking apparently unsophisticated forms of poetry, as *Enormous smallness* does, can also help the reader to link these with the poet’s later production, which in many cases retains an element of seemingly infantile simplicity. Interestingly, both books use profuse pictorial representations of windows as visual metaphors



Figure 9.2 *Enormous smallness: A story of E.E. Cummings* (2013), by Matthew Burgess and Kris Di Giacomo. Enchanted Lion Books.

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of their intention both to draw readers into the poets' intimate space and to show them the ways in which Williams and Cummings projected their original poetic gaze onto the outer world.

CHALLENGING THE READER

Parallel to the technique of introducing readers to the stories through familiar narrative structures which emphasize the coherence of a linear biographical account, the creators of these books employ design and illustration techniques, based on juxtaposition and discontinuity. In *A river of words*, after Williams' explicit declaration of intention commented on above, successive doublespreads alternate sides of illustrated biographical information with pictorial designs that contain

³ Special thanks to Enchanted Lion Books for allowing the use of images free of charge.

Williams' poems or quotes. In *Enormous smallness*, Cummings' own words are an integral part of the illustrations throughout the book. It is no coincidence that both Melissa Sweet and Kris Di Giacomo use collage or collage-like techniques, and their artwork clearly foregrounds the aesthetic concerns of the poetry of Williams and Cummings respectively.

As Elina Druker (2018) observes in her discussion of collage in picturebooks, this technique often invites the reader/viewer to see common objects in unfamiliar contexts, implicitly vindicating the capacity of the ordinary thing to become a subject of aesthetic creation, an intention very much in line with the ideas that Williams expressed in the doublespread commented on above. Sweet, the illustrator of *A river of words*, explains how challenging it was to find the right technique to celebrate Williams' poetry. She finally decided that using endpapers of discarded books in collages seemed to be the most suitable way of conveying Williams' "era and the modern art of his time that was so influential to [him]" (Bryant & Sweet, 2008, illustrator note). The technique is especially well-suited because modernist writers, specifically imagists, usually included in their writing fragments of different discourses, advertisements, newspapers, and magazines. Williams' epic work *Paterson*, for example, alternates poems and a variety of different documents in what has been called a "collage-like" structure (MacGowan, 2004, p. 271). This intertextual quality, Giovanna Epifania (2012) observes, gave the texts "a degree of spatiality on the page, a pictorial dimension similar to the collage technique because verbal fragments emerging from diverse sources and times [were] conflated and juxtaposed in a non-linear progression" (p. 60). Similarly, the picturebooks invite a "childish reading" of the visually loaded doublespreads, a delight in the profusion of detail, which results in a breakage of the logical development of the narrative.

At the same time, if visual collage calls attention to the materiality of the work of art, modernist literary collage brought forward the materiality of literature and the iconicity and phonic material of the word itself, making explicit the modernist concern with the referential limitations of art (Perloff, 1983, p. 10). This was a central element in Cummings' poetry. In *Enormous smallness* we find several examples where letters are scattered around the picture and where their graphic representation as well as the onomatopoeic quality of words is brought to the fore, such as a doublespread where a very young Cummings enjoys orchestrating a circus of words, coining and merging them playfully. The verbal text reads: "Estlin Loved Words, what words say and how they sound and look he loved the way they hum, buzz pop and swish. Estlin also liked to invent new words like this one: washo zephyr. And he squished others together, like this 'beamhamegg'" (Burgess & Di

Giacomo, 2013, doublespread 10). The words' placement and the choice of fonts help to visualize their semantic content; for example, the double vowel "oo" in "look" is used to frame an elephant's eyes. This diverts the attention of the reader from meaning to form resulting in a "playful awareness of words" also typical of childish reading (Watson cited in Taylor, 2018, p. 351).

Thus, *A river of words* and *Enormous smallness*, apart from being life narratives, engage with the work of Williams and Cummings in ways which seem to range from literary interpretation to adaptation and appropriation. They also deploy the possibilities of the pictorial to bring forward the close relationship between modernist poetry and visual art. The ways these books integrate poems on the page and combine them with visual elements is especially relevant, since in early modernism, when aesthetic tendencies changed rapidly, the influence of the visual arts was key in the development of poetry. Both artists and public saw these forms of expression as part of the same project of artistic renovation (Diepeveen, 2014) and Williams himself once wondered:

What were we searching for? No one knew consistently enough to formulate a 'movement'. We were restless and constrained, closely allied with the painters. Impressionism, dadaism, surrealism applied to both painting and the poem. ... The immediate image, which was impressionistic, sure enough, fascinated us all. (Williams, 1967, p. 148)

There is a doublespread in *A river of words* which deals explicitly with the relationship between Williams' poetry and the pictorial (see Fig. 9.3). In the left-hand page, the text offers a brief account of Williams' cultural activities during his university years and his interest in the paintings of the period (doublespread 10).

The clear verbal information is combined with an illustration which provides a number of references to external sources that would escape anyone unfamiliar with the modernist movement, evidencing the fact that the book addresses multiple audiences. They spark the interest of knowledgeable readers and engage them in an intertextual game which, again, frustrates any attempt to find a stable meaning in these allusions.

In front of a framed Matisse-like still life the reader can recognize Williams from previous portraits and will identify the other three figures as the people referred to above as his friends. Ezra Pound would only be identified from his appearance if the reader was familiar with his eccentric hairstyle. Representative quotations from these artists' works have been integrated in the picture, inside speech bubbles. Nevertheless, the sources are only referenced at the end, together with the book



Figure 9.3 *A river of words: The story of William Carlos Williams* (2008), by Jen Bryant and Melissa Sweet. Eerdmans Books for Young Readers.

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publication details and would not help most readers to identify the characters or interpret the image beyond the statement phrased above; “friends ... discussing art, and enjoying together”.

Most interestingly, the interplay between pictorial art and poetry commented on here is further exemplified in the opposite page, which reproduces one of Williams’ more visual poems without including any information related to its composition, publication or interpretation. This poem, which came to be known as “The Great Figure”, sought to convey the effect that the unexpected passing of a fire truck had on Williams on one occasion. He described the composition as the record of a “sudden and forceful” impression (Williams, 1967, p. 172). The poem is a perfect example of the modernist concepts represented by Williams’ quotation on the previous page (“no ideas but in things”), and of the graphic quality of his poetry. It concentrates on a unique, dominant image, an everyday non-poetic object. Onomatopoeic words emphasize a sonorous quality but there is no figurative language at play, and lines are short and sharp. The visual element is preminent: first perceived only as the figure 5 in gold, the fire truck comes into focus as the vehicle speeds down the street. The poem is influenced by futurism and its attempts to reflect pictorially the dynamism and chaotic movement of modern life. In *A river of words* the verses of the reproduced poem are crammed between surrounding

scraps of paper. Some elements of this collage are words in the poem and it is difficult for the reader to establish the boundaries between text and a background of reds, pinks and several representations of the number “five”, in both words and figures. This design can be regarded as a multimodal interpretation of the poem; colours and repeated figures create an effect of chaos which reinforces the impressions conveyed by the words. Moreover, this collage is also an inter pictorial reference to a painting by Williams’ friend Charles Demuth, based on this poem and called “I saw a great figure” (1928). In Demuth’s work, inspired by Futuristic and Cubist aesthetics, the number five appears concentrically and becomes gradually smaller in a discontinuous surface that evokes the trucks’ movement away from the viewer.

Thus, this doublespread consists of one page offering an account of Williams’ activities as a student and his relationship with artists of the period while the other, in juxtaposition, shows an example of the result of this relationship. However, the readers are left to their own devices to create the connection. Moreover, very few of them will be able to establish the intertextual links invoked by the quotes in the speech bubbles. For most of them, these words will remain enigmatic, and the reference to Demuth’s painting unclear. Significantly, however, all of them will experience fragments of textual and visual impressions that are much like the way in which Williams perceived the modern world and reflected it in his poems.

This “visual turn” in poetry was not limited to intertextual relations between individual works (as is the case of Williams and Demuth’s mutual inspiration). It also resulted in deep changes in the physical appearance of the poetry itself (Diepeveen, 2014, p. 45) and the form of the poem on the page also became part of the poetic expression. This ludic use of the written word became a key element in Cummings’ poetry. He (who had also published a collection of visual art) wrote in 1960, “not all of my poems are to be read aloud – some . . . are to be seen & not heard” (Cummings, 1969, p. 267). At one point, he even wanted each of his poems printed on a separate page because, “with a few exceptions, my poems are essentially pictures” (Cummings quoted in Norman, 1972, pp. 288–289).

Enormous smallness addresses this feature explicitly in another doublespread where, not unlike the one in *A river of words* we have just discussed, a poem exemplifies the information contained in the verbal text (see Fig. 9.4). The latter is subsumed in the picture and imitates the pictorial quality of Cummings’ poems.

The words are printed in different fonts and sizes which help visualize their meaning, and the language Burgess uses, like Cummings’, relies on surprising devices (like the expression “eyes being on tiptoes”). In the illustration, a number of people express, in speech bubbles, some of the criticisms of Cummings’ poetry.



Figure 9.4 *Enormous smallness: A story of E.E. Cummings* (2013), by Matthew Burgess and Kris Di Giacomo. Enchanted Lion Books.

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One of these detractors is holding a paper where one of Cummings' visual poems is reproduced in its entirety. The caricatured faces of these scandalized people, noses in the air, will encourage the readers to turn their sympathy towards the poem and its author. Like "The Great Figure", this poem is about the visual impression left on Cummings by the colourful clouds in the sky. As in Williams' work, this poem is eminently sensorial, and the image of the locomotive spouting violets is, like the fire engine, representative of progress and modernity.

The manner in which Cummings displayed the words on the page is one of his ways of defamiliarizing language; it is a visual counterpart to his fracturing of lexical, grammatical, and syntactic rules. These strategies evidence the active participation on the part of the reader to create meaning(s) required by the modernist text. Significantly, in *Enormous smallness* the disposition of the words of the poem as found in most anthologies is altered. There are wider spaces between words, which emphasize the effect of fragmentation and make the interpretive process even harder (this effect may also suggest a human silhouette).

THE PROBLEM OF REPRESENTATION

The biographical account in both *A river of words* and in *Enormous smallness* is thus frequently interrupted by and juxtaposed with the characters' poetic work, as in the examples analysed above. Although the narrative thread is present until the poets reach maturity and there is always an emphasis on their moral integrity, the books' narrative fragmentation emphasizes the artistic dimension of literary biographies and their "uncomfortable position between factual and fictional truth" (Benton, 2009, p. xiv). These picturebooks celebrate these authors' lives while making explicit that these stories are creative endeavours and this could invite competent readers to reconsider their own ideas about biography and historical truth. Michael Benton (2009) uses the term "biomythography" to denote a type of life account that "subvert[s] any concept of life-writing based on a simplistic account of supposed 'facts'" (p. xvii). Biomythographies have paradoxical effects: they contribute to creating and perpetuating myths, but also expose the myth-making process by reminding us that documentation is always incomplete and life is too "elusive" to be narrated without imagination (Denzin and Runyan cited in Benton, 2009, p. 48). In this sense, *A river of words* and *Enormous smallness* could be considered examples of biomythography; in fact, *Enormous smallness* explicitly questions the official status of its own narrative through the use of the indefinite article in its subtitle: "*A story of E.E. Cummings*".

Moreover, the fragmentariness of these life accounts also problematizes the satisfactory sense of the self that the initial epigraphs evoke. Indeed, the patchy effect derived from the books' narrative structures, as well as from their pictorial technique and design, contributes to presenting identity as a discontinuous notion, much in line with what the poets' own work reflects. In his poems, Williams refers to himself in ways that have been described as "cubist portraits" (Sborgi, 2007, p. 274); similarly, Cummings makes reference to his "so many selves, so many fiends and gods", the poetic persona being a "fool who calls him[self] I" (Cummings, 1991, p. 609). In his prose works, he explicitly addresses the inconsistency of this "I" through a number of aliases. The last doublespread of *Enormous smallness* is an attempt to find wholeness by reconciling his present self with the child he once was: "As an old man, Edward Estlin Cummings often remembered his childhood days in the lively house on Irvin Street. He could still see himself as boy gazing out at the sunset..." However, the poem chosen to close the biography contains an interrogative note which questions the "I" which the initial quotation had taken for granted: "who are you, little i [sic]/(five or six years old)..." (Burgess & Di Giacomo, 2013, doublespread 25). These complex appraisals of the

self are visually represented by two similar images: in *A river of words*, the cover illustration, where Williams' silhouette is fragmented in a collage of printed letters and poems; and in *Enormous smallness*, a final picture of Cummings' silhouette filled with ethereal clouds.

CONCLUSION

The artists and writers involved in the creation of these two biographical picturebooks manage to deal with the tensions between coherent and satisfactory presentations of the poets' artistic and personal development and the expression of the fragmentary experience which their poetry reflects. They favour the readers' engagement by using different verbal and visual strategies to draw them into these life narratives and adopt positive responses toward the protagonists and their poetry. They are also explicitly didactical in presenting biographical facts and comments on the form and meaning of Williams' and Cummings' poems. However, by fragmenting the stories and visually reinterpreting the poets' work, these picturebooks provide an aesthetic experience that may make readers more receptive to the impressionistic quality of modernist poetics. Like the authors' poems, their doublespreads invite playful exploration, thwarting any attempt to find unambiguous meaning. Ultimately, they may encourage readers to reflect on the ways they experience the world, and lead them to question their understandings of a life account and of identity.

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ANIMALS AND ENVIRONMENT



10. Paper farms. A content analysis of sixty children's picturebooks on farming and the rural environment

Fabrizio Bertolino and Anna Perazzone

Abstract This chapter presents a study of 60 children's picturebooks on the topic of farming and the rural environment published over the last four decades. The books were analysed in relation to 12 indicators of content realism and assigned one of three realism ratings. We found that consciously faithful representations of real-life agricultural systems are rare. Nevertheless, if carefully mediated and related to real-world scenarios, this kind of picturebook may enhance children's awareness of their ties with rural areas.

Keywords farm-themed picturebooks, ecological identity, environmental education, book content analysis

RURAL ENVIRONMENTS, ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS, AND THE ROLE OF PICTUREBOOKS

In the contemporary era of globalisation, the agricultural sector across Europe has seen a gradual reduction in the dedicated land space it occupies and the number of people it employs. An ongoing pattern of urbanization has inevitably led to a physical and cultural distancing from the rural environment, which for the majority of the population has shifted from a place to live and work to a setting that is difficult to experience fully and directly. This said, the symbol par excellence of rural life – the farm – remains well rooted in the collective imagination of city dwellers. The farm setting is often perceived as somewhat backward and

rough or, on the contrary, as imbued with a bucolic, somewhat idyllic, atmosphere in contrast with the frenetic pace of life in the city (Falteri, 2005; Short, 2006; Fulkerson & Thomas, 2016). Paradoxically, growing ecological awareness and a new appreciation of human impact on the environment have generated an even deeper split in urban dwellers' perceptions of rural areas. The naive imaginary just described is now flanked by a negative image: intensive monocultures, pollution from fertilizers and pesticides, and effluent from livestock farms are understood to be as harmful to the environment as industrial processes (Bertolino & Perazzone, 2015).

All of this has key implications, especially if, as at present, policy choices are needed to guide society towards a model of greater environmental sustainability. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that many scholars have pointed up the current crisis of ecological literacy (Orr, 1992; Coyle, 2005). But clearly it is not only a question of knowledge. As numerous authors in the field of environmental education have observed in recent decades, we should ensure that children from the early years have the opportunity to immerse themselves in natural environments (Kellert & Wilson, 1994; Louv, 2005; Allen, 2013 with a view to fostering empathy and the development of an ecological identity (Thomashow, 1995). Alongside this, we ourselves believe that it is crucial not to overlook the equally rich and educationally meaningful potential of agricultural settings. Rural areas represent a sort of "bridge between forest and city", a "middle ground" (Bertolino & Perazzone, 2016a) that can help us to rediscover our crucial ties with the resources of soil, water, and air, as well as with the other living species that share our planet. More so than woodlands or other natural ecosystems, the rural environment is uniquely equipped to illustrate, not just the ways in which food is produced and the multiple connected processes, but also the timeframe and seasonality of these processes, the resources they draw on, and more generally our ongoing ties with ecologically productive ecosystems which extend far beyond our need for food (Bertolino & Perazzone, 2018). If our behaviours are shaped by how we conceptualize the environment and how we perceive ourselves as relating to it, directly experiencing a rural setting challenges the human being-nature dichotomy, allowing us to broaden the horizons of our world and regain ecological awareness (Orr, 2002).

Many authors encourage the use of children's literature to foster scientific learning in general and ecological learning in particular (Mantzicopoulos & Patrick, 2011; Williams, Podeschi, Palmer, Schwadel & Meyler, 2012; Hageman, Martín, Montgomery & Rule, 2019). Picturebooks are tools for introducing very

young children to ecological concepts and motivating them to learn about them. Although there is broad consensus in the literature concerning the efficacy of picturebooks as an educational resource, their limitations have also been pointed out, and especially the misconceptions that they can convey (Pringle & Lamme, 2005; Sackes, Trundle & Flevaris, 2009). This can become an issue in educational settings when the adult/educator lacks the competence to assess the contents of commercial publications that were not necessarily intended to meet standards of scientific accuracy (Hug, 2010). For this reason, many researchers propose book lists or criteria for developing them (Rule & Atkinson, 1994; Martín, Hageman, Montgomery & Rule, 2019), or suggest how such resources might be used for teaching-learning purposes, and especially how reading may be leveraged to foster discussion and a critical approach among children (Monhardt & Monhardt, 2006; Mantzicopoulos & Patrick, 2011).

Turning specifically now to “farm”-themed picturebooks for children, at least 100 such works are published in Italy every year (a claim that may be verified by conducting a search on Amazon’s Italian website, using the keyword “farm” [“fattoria”], selecting the “children’s books” category, and filtering the results by date of publication). This statistic lends strength to our belief that books like these are often the first medium through which children encounter rural environments, informing their early mental representations, potentially followed later by browser games – many of which are also farm-themed (Bertolino, Piccinelli & Perazzone, 2012; Perazzone & Bertolino, 2016). We thus set out to investigate, via an ad hoc quali-quantitative analysis, whether picturebooks can be an appropriate resource for introducing children to a rural culture that we have unavoidably left behind, thereby jeopardizing our ecological identity.

Similarly to other authors who have explored this theme (Falteri, 2005; Kruse, 2001; Mick, 2019), we did not focus on whether/how specific ecological concepts are conveyed through images and narratives, but rather on the level of realism of the various models of farm that are represented to young readers in these books. Children’s literature can offer a form of “place-based” learning that can lay the ground for and supplement direct experience of settings such as open farms. While books certainly cannot replace first-hand experience, reading them can encourage exploration and consequently the development of a critical approach and awareness of the extent that our lives are bound up with both natural and man-made ecologically productive ecosystems.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Sample characteristics

With the help of the regional library system, Sistema Bibliotecario Valdostano (SBV), we constructed a sample of 60 picturebooks whose aim (at least as stated by the publishers) was to introduce young children to farm life (Table 10.1).¹

From a publishing perspective, the sample consisted of widely circulated, inexpensive books, that were printed in colour, featured more illustrations than text, and were very different in terms of size, shape, and materials. Two-thirds (n=42) of the sample offered the young reader some form of interaction, via touch and sound features, flaps to be lifted, stickers to be positioned, and tabs and wheels to be moved.

Table 10.1 Sample composition (N=60)

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|----|
| Period of first publication | 1980–1989 | 5 |
| | 1990–1999 | 9 |
| | 2000–2009 | 30 |
| | 2010–2019 | 16 |
| Country of first publication | United Kingdom | 28 |
| | Italy | 19 |
| | Germany | 3 |
| | France | 5 |
| | Belgium | 3 |
| | USA | 2 |
| Language | Italian | 54 |
| | French | 6 |
| Iconographic structure | Drawings | 54 |
| | Drawings and photographs | 3 |
| | Photographs | 3 |
| Age group | 0–6 years | 60 |
| SBV: Dewey Decimal Classification | RN – children's fiction | 43 |
| | R – children's nonfiction | 17 |

1 The details of the 60 children's picturebooks in the sample and a full breakdown of the scores assigned to them may be obtained from the authors on request.

Indicators and rating criteria

What is a farming business? A farm? Drawing on scientific-technical definitions (ISTAT, 2013) as well as more generalist descriptions, we might say that the farm is a system of interacting components that are coordinated by the farmer with a view to organizing them efficiently and producing goods of which only a small proportion will be consumed by the farming family itself, with the greater part intended for sale to third parties. In our view, this “minimum knowledge” about farms is an indispensable prerequisite for ecological awareness. Thus, in our analysis of the selected picturebooks’ written and pictorial content, we chose to focus on those variables that are key to maintaining the farm system. Quali-quantitative analysis was conducted on the 60 texts via a set of 12 indicators designed to assess how effectively this kind of material can potentially convey real-life aspects of agricultural settings.

Each text was assigned a score ranging from 0 to 2 for each indicator. In general, the scoring system was structured according to the following evaluation criteria:

- indicator is problematic, absent, or impossible to evaluate – score: 0
- indicator is present, but ill-defined and/or stereotyped – score: 1
- indicator is obviously present and clearly represented – score: 2

Table 10.2 makes it clear that we assigned higher ratings to books that represented mixed and diversified farming settings, despite the fact that intensive livestock

Table 10.2 Indicators, evaluation criteria and scores

| Indicator of content realism | Evaluation criteria | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Score 0 | Score 1 | Score 2 |
| <p>1. Weather Agricultural work and production are strongly influenced by weather conditions that are generally both variable and shaped by seasonal patterns.</p> | The elements represented (animals, people, buildings, products, ...) mainly appear out of context and hence there are no references at all to weather. | Weather conditions are clearly featured, but it always appears to be sunny. | The pages of the text alternate diverse weather conditions, including cloud cover and sometimes rain/snow. |
| <p>2. Seasonality Farm work varies according to the time of year, in keeping with the seasonal cycle on which tillage and livestock farming practices are closely based.</p> | The elements represented appear out of context and hence there are no references to seasonality; or, although the broader setting is represented, there are no cues suggesting what season it might be. | Images and/or written text make it clear that the entire book is set in the same season, usually summer or spring. | Seasonality is a prominent feature, as illustrated by changes in the farm in the course of the year. More than one season is represented and sometimes the differences between seasons receive explicit mention. |

| Indicator of content realism | Evaluation criteria | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Score 0 | Score 1 | Score 2 |
| <p>3. Circadian rhythm The alternation of the day and night dictate the rhythm of life on the farm, for the people as well as for the animals and plants.</p> | There is no evidence of the alternation of day and night nor of the passing of time during the day. | Only daytime is represented, with few references to the passage of time in the course of the day. | Both daytime and night-time settings are featured or, at the very least, the passing of time is explicitly represented, for example via images of sunrise/sunset. |
| <p>4. Overall perspective A panoramic view of the farm, typically from an aerial, wide-angle perspective, can provide insight into the systemic links among the different aspects of tillage and livestock farming, as well as into the broader setting within which the farm is situated.</p> | No panoramic images provided. | One or more images offer broader perspectives but none that are comprehensive or taken up again elsewhere in the book. | Typically in the first pages, a panoramic illustration is provided that shows the entire farm and the neighbourhood surrounding it. The following pages explicitly home in on selected individual areas of the farm, providing close-up images of them. |
| <p>5. Areas that are dedicated to and suitable for livestock farming The availability of appropriate spaces for containing and sheltering animals (fencing, sheds, pens, poultry coops, ...) is a prerequisite for practicing livestock rearing.</p> | The animals in the book are represented out of context, or the context illustrated is not functional for livestock farming purposes. | Sheds, pens, poultry coops, ...are represented but are not functional or realistic. | The livestock settings shown are both realistic and functional. |
| <p>6. Areas that are dedicated to and suitable for the growing of crops The production of crops demands appropriate dedicated spaces (fields, vegetable gardens, orchards, vineyards).</p> | No tillage settings illustrated. | Only one type of dedicated space for crops is represented but often appears more decorative than functional. | Two or more different kinds of crop growing setting (field, vegetable garden, orchard, vineyard) are featured and represented as functional. |
| <p>7. Farmer Another key component of the farm system is the farmer him/herself, or – at the very least – a farm worker, who carries out all the work needed to grow crops, raise livestock, and manage the business aspects of farming.</p> | The farmer is neither graphically represented nor mentioned in the text or only features as a small figure in the background. | The farmer is represented as an anthropomorphized animal or a child rather than as an adult. | The farmer is present and is sometimes assisted in his work by others (family members, or actual farm workers). |

| Indicator of content realism | Evaluation criteria | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Score 0 | Score 1 | Score 2 |
| <p>8. Farmer's dwelling Other spaces on the farm are for the dedicated use of the farmer and his/her family (where present) and fulfil both personal and work-related functions.</p> | No farmhouse depicted even when some kind of setting is represented. | A house is shown but appears to serve a decorative function rather than to illustrate what it is like to live on a farm. | A house is featured and its role in the farm system is explicitly treated. |
| <p>9. Livestock farming tasks Raising livestock involves a set of tasks that spans caring for the animals and processing their produce.</p> | No reference to livestock farming practices. | The only livestock rearing practices represented involve caring for the animals (feeding and to a lesser extent cleaning out sheds etc.) | Looking after the animals is associated with obtaining and processing produce. |
| <p>10. Crop growing farming tasks Crops are grown in stages from preparing the soil, to sowing, planting and harvesting.</p> | No reference to crop growing practices. | Only one crop growing task is represented, typically picking fruit or making hay. Often the fact that work is involved is only implicitly suggested by the presence of a tractor. | The text represents and explicitly mentions different types of crop growing tasks (ploughing, sowing, irrigation, harvesting, ...) and the relative machinery. |
| <p>11. Produce The farm is a site of production whose outputs are animal and/or plant-based produce. It therefore seems crucial that farm produce should be explicitly presented to readers.</p> | There are no references to animal or plant-based produce. | Animal and plant-based produce is featured but excludes products that require the animal to be killed. | The produce represented includes products that imply that an animal was slaughtered. |
| <p>12. Sale and marketing of produce A key fact about farms is their relationship with the broader socio-economic system, implying that the sale and promotion of farm produce should also somehow be represented to readers.</p> | No reference to the sale of animal or plant-based produce. | While there are no clear references to the sale of produce, some products are presented in the packaged form (bottles of milk, cartons of eggs, ...) in which they are normally sold. | The sale of farm produce is clearly and explicitly evoked via the representation of dedicated spaces (market, shop) and/or hauliers who collect produce to transport it to processing plants (milk lorries, ...). |

or tillage farming are far more usual in the primary sector. This choice was not exclusively informed by the recent growth in multifunctional agriculture and the call for less intensive exploitation of the soil and livestock. Although these aspects are key to encouraging innovation in the agricultural sector and to developing more sustainable land management practices than in the past, we also believe that it is legitimate for authors, illustrators, and publishers to consciously present a cross-section of the rural sphere rather than to focus on a single type of agricultural production.

We calculated a global score (ranging from 0 to 24) for each of the books by summing the scores it had obtained on the individual indicators. Based on this composite value, we assigned the books with one of three realism ratings: low (score 0–8), medium (score 9–16), or high (score 17–24).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We next discuss the outcomes obtained for the different indicators, which we have divided into similarly themed groups.

Weather, seasonality, and circadian rhythm (indicators 1, 2, and 3)

Twelve of the picturebooks in the sample featured animals or objects out of context in a sort of timeless spatial dimension. With regard to weather, in 42 books the sun was always shining and only six represented rainfall ($n=3$) or at least cloudy conditions ($n=3$).

In addition to the books that provided no context of any kind, a further 25 provided no cues to suggest what season it might be, while six others represented a season that was quite obviously spring or summer. The remaining 17 books made specific reference to the cycle of the seasons, signalling the changes from one season to the another by means of both images and written text.

Finally, only 10 books represented the passing of time within a given 24-hour period, featuring – after a number of pages set in the daytime – either sundown ($n=5$), dawn ($n=1$), or night time. In 38 books, only daytime was represented.

Both weather and seasonality are particularly salient to farm work, given the extent to which they condition it. Out of 27 picturebooks that presented one or more types of agricultural crop (indicator 6), 20 provided clear and explicit indications of changes of season; however, in all but five, the weather was represented as perennially sunny!

Overall perspective

Only a third ($n=20$) of the books in the sample provided panoramic views of the farm that, at least partially, illustrated large portions of the farm, thus providing readers with a sense of the interrelationships among the different components of the farm system and a feel for the overall setting. In 10 picturebooks, the introductory pages offered an aerial view of the entire farm and its immediate surroundings that encompassed specific structures (animal housing, farm dwelling, hayshed,...) and settings (field, orchard, vegetable garden, ...) that were presented close up and explored in greater depth in the remainder of the book (Fig. 10.1). This appears to be a particularly effective means of fostering a systemic perspective on the farm, because it illustrates how the various parts of the farm stand in relation to one another, but also how the farm as a whole is in turn connected (e.g., via paths and roads) to natural ecosystems and sometimes even to anthropized ecosystems that may be glimpsed in the background.



Figure 10.1 *La fattoria* (2009), by Simon Abel and Katie Daynes, Usborne. Reproduced with permission.

Areas dedicated to and suitable for livestock farming and crop growing (indicators 5 and 6)

Clearly, especially in our contemporary era, most farms specialize in either tillage or livestock, yet – as clarified above – we deem it to be legitimate (albeit unaligned with reality) to use picturebooks to represent mixed farms along with elements of more recent multifunctional farming models, including the sale of produce directly on the farm, offering hospitality to tourists, etc.

In any case, the titles of the books in the sample would alone suffice to prove that the farm is predominantly associated with animals, given their great affective appeal, especially when it comes to their young. On a paper farm, animals are the one element that can never be omitted. Cattle (present in all cases), pigs (n=53), sheep (n=53), horses (n=48), goats (n=30), and donkeys (n=21) featured in our sample alongside farmyard animals such as hens (n=57), ducks (n=37), geese (n=36), rabbits (n=33), turkeys (n=20) as well as dogs (n=45), cats (n=38), and a host of other more or less salient species: pigeons, hares, foxes, frogs, squirrels, hedgehogs, and lizards, to mention only the vertebrates.

An animal that played an unexpectedly frequent role was the mouse (n=37). Despite its reputation as a voracious pest and carrier of disease to be repelled using ultrasound devices or killed by means of traps, poison, glue (and cats of course), in 15 books, the mouse appeared not only to be accepted but to be actually welcomed!

Therefore, in our analysis we set out to assess, more so than the credibility of this high degree of biodiversity which was clearly the outcome of publishing decisions, whether the main categories of animal were represented in functional settings, that is to say, whether sheds, pens, coops, etc. were appropriately represented. In 12 books, such elements were entirely lacking (Fig. 10.2), while in a further 13 the dedicated spaces for livestock depicted were not realistically appropriate forms of animal housing. The emblematic example of this was a proliferation of fences that were more ornamental than suited to keeping animals in or dividing them from other livestock species. Indeed, in 17 books the spaces and structures illustrated were only partially appropriate (Fig. 10.3), while in the remaining 18 books were truly functional livestock rearing settings graphically represented (and sometimes described) (Fig. 10.4).

And what about areas of the farm dedicated to growing crops? Only 27 picturebooks, or under half the sample, represented such areas, which predominantly fell into the four categories: fields (n=22), vegetable gardens (n=14), orchards (n=16) and vineyards (n=8). More specifically, eleven books presented only one type of crop while nine presented all four types.



Figure 10.2 *In fattoria* (2009), by Yoyo Books.

Reproduced with permission.

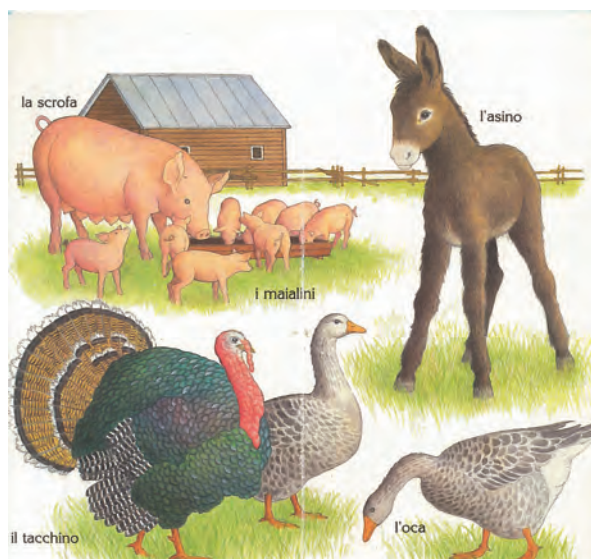


Figure 10.3 *Parole in fattoria* (1988), by Elisabeth Parmentelot, Piccoli.

Reproduced with permission.



Figure 10.4 *Un anno in fattoria* (1998), by Constanza Droop, La Coccinella. Reproduced with permission.

Farmer and farmer's dwelling (indicators 7 and 8)

As we moved progressively closer to the very purpose of a farm, it was crucial to verify whether the picturebooks also represented people at work. Surprisingly, in 22 of the texts, the farmer was completely absent (or only featured as a small background figure). In a further 12 books, children ($n=4$) or animals with anthropomorphic features ($=8$) took the place of the farmer. In sum, less than half the sample ($n=26$) represented a credible adult human farmer. And even when the farmers shown were credible, they were not particularly realistic. As Kruse (2001) observed

in relation to picturebooks published in the USA, in our sample too, the farmer was often represented in a highly stereotypical manner: stocky build, moustache, straw hat, handkerchief tied at neck, sleeveless jacket, overalls, and check shirt (Bertolino & Perazzone, 2016b). With few exceptions, the female figures (Mick, 2019) that featured in 20 picturebooks out of 60 were equally stereotyped, often depicted as wearing aprons and a handkerchief tied around their heads ($n=12$). Interestingly, in the books that represented both figures (male and female), gender stereotyping was the norm (Chick, 2002; Filipović, 2018). In 12 texts out of 20, the woman was portrayed as looking after the children, feeding farmyard animals, collecting eggs, going to market, doing the laundry, or drawing water from the well; while the man drove the tractor and other farm machinery, sheared sheep, and shod horses. Even the vet, who featured in six picturebooks, was invariably represented as a man.

The personal worlds of the farmer and of the – under-represented – farming family was invoked in 13 texts by representing the farmstead, one of the few indications that farmers' lives cannot consist exclusively of farm work. Houses were also featured in six other books, but more as decorative elements than as dwellings actually lived in by farmers/farming families.

Farming tasks (indicators 9 and 10)

At this point, we introduced an even sharper focus by homing in on the farmer's working life. Although, as we have seen, animals were featured in all of the books, the farmer was portrayed in the role of livestock breeder in only 21 texts, and in five of these, he was only shown as feeding animals without any hint that he was raising stock for economic gain.

In contrast, almost all of the 27 books that featured crops, explicitly represented one ($n=6$) or more ($n=18$) types of agricultural task: ploughing, sowing, threshing, grape harvesting. Just as caring for the animals was the livestock farming task most frequently depicted, so for crop growers, harvesting was the phase of work most often represented in the picturebooks.

Produce and sale (indicators 11 and 12)

Products were explicitly mentioned in about half the sample ($n=31$), but only 10 books represented produce that necessitated the killing of an animal: an evident taboo. It is difficult to explain why then the books so frequently featured cattle and sheep, and especially pigs and rabbits, an expedient that avoids challenging the fictitious image of an idyllic coexistence between farmers and farm animals. Carrying on this pretence also means wasting opportunities to discuss animal welfare. The

main kinds of animal produce featured were eggs, milk, and wool, while the most popular plant-based products were fruit and hay.

Finally, we set out to establish whether the picturebooks explicitly represented or emphasized the paper farm's commercial ties with the outside world, whether in terms of food processing facilities or, even more explicitly, in terms of sales venues. The latter formula was only invoked in six books: market stalls ($n=4$) and on-farm sale of produce ($n=2$). Nine other books represented produce in conventional sales packaging, implying – albeit not making it sufficiently explicit – that it was destined for sale.

Content realism ratings

Based on the total scores each of the books in the sample was assigned one of three realism ratings (Table 10.3).

Two-thirds of the books in the sample obtained a total score of 8 or lower, reflecting the marked overall lack of realism in this category of children's literature.

It should be noted that there was no correlation (Pearson coefficient) between the scores obtained by a book and the number of pages in it ($r=0.09$), that is to say the picturebooks that obtained lower scores were not necessarily those with fewer pages. Similarly, scores were only weakly correlated ($r=0.43$) with the target age group, although this outcome may have been influenced by a lack of uniformity in the criteria used to defined target age.

Again, there was no significant correlation ($r=-0.14$) between date of first publication and score, suggesting that the average quality of this kind of picture book had not changed over time. The least assigned quality rating was the medium category ($n=8$); this suggests a clear divide between the majority of picturebooks ($n=39$) in which the model of “life on the farm” conveyed appears to reinforce stereotypes rather than representing authentic reality, and a small minority ($n=13$) whose authors and publishers seem to have invested in the content realism of their offerings. This last-mentioned group demonstrates that

Table 10.3 Realism ratings / scores (min 0 – max 24)

| Realism ratings | Score | Picturebooks |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| Low | From 0 to 8 | 39 |
| Medium | From 9 to 16 | 8 |
| High | From 17 to 24 | 13 |

it is possible – even in the space of a few pages – to represent realistic rural settings to even the youngest of readers. Books of this quality clearly draw out the productive function of the farm and allow readers to infer the links between the farm and surrounding area. In these books, like Katja Reider’s *La fattoria* (2004, *Der Bauernhof*), the farm is a place to live and work, at a pace dictated by the circadian rhythm and the cycle of the seasons, where alongside children – whom young readers can readily identify with – there are men and women engaged in tasks that make sense of an environment that is crucial to all of our existences, even when we do not encounter it in the course of our everyday experiences.

CONCLUSION: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In defining the set of indicators we used for our analysis, we focused on the real-life aspects of farming we hold to be particularly vital from an educational perspective and that together form a model of the farm as:

- a unitary whole
- a site of production, and therefore characterized by adults engaged in a range of work activities
- a place of non-gendered stereotyped “life” with clear dedicated living spaces and a family dimension
- restored to its circadian and seasonal rhythm
- connected with the surrounding area including the urban
- without taboos, where a cow supplies milk but also steaks and a hen supplies eggs but also chicken wings.

The present analysis of a representative set of picturebooks shows that they often showcase symbols and models of farming that are reductive and sometimes even in contradiction with reality; the care and financial investment that is put into producing attractive publications does not seem to be matched by efforts on the part of authors and publishers to ensure that the contents are realistic enough to meaningfully contribute to children’s ecological awareness.

Specifically, our analysis shows that in most cases picturebooks such as those in our sample are not exclusively informed by real-life input and information, but also by the collective imaginarity of a community that is increasingly far removed from the world of agriculture. Thus, stereotypes are reinforced, becoming even more rigid, and paradoxically even acquiring the power to influence the image

that farmers themselves decide to display when they host children on their farms. Farms that receive outside visitors, especially those that offer agritourism accommodation or are open farms, sometimes seek to meet their guests' expectations by denaturing themselves, becoming farm zoos (by putting on show a small number of specimens of many different animal species), mixed farms with a vegetable patch, a small orchard, and a little herb garden. The invoking of the stereotype succeeds, the visitors are satisfied, but from an educational perspective, what additional insight have they gained into the true significance of an environment that is distant from their everyday lives?

Clearly, from an educational perspective, rigorous realism is not always a gold standard; nevertheless, in the specific case of picturebooks, attempting to foster a more realistic image of farming should contribute to drawing children closer to a rural world that is highly dynamic and bears considerable social and environmental importance.

If we are to motivate children to learn about and directly experience the world of farming, it is crucial – today more than ever – that we as adults should encourage and help children to critically read picturebooks, designing educational settings with constant opportunities for engaging in dialogue and comparing representations with reality. If we do so, even the stereotyped and simplified image of farms presented by many picturebooks (which may initially serve a useful function by attracting children's attention) will be unmasked, such that – paradoxically – they will end up fulfilling an educational function. Sometimes imaginary and caricatural representations conceal aspects of real life that may be approached with a degree of humour and exploited with the educational aim of challenging a trivialized and simplified perspective.

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11. Wolves – Central European wildlife depicted in nonfiction picturebooks

Beate Laudenberg

Abstract This chapter will analyse how the wolf is represented in nonfiction picturebooks, especially in series. The study of the verbal and visual artwork will focus on the following issue: How does the reappearance of the real wolf influence its representation in picturebooks? As several Central European countries are affected by the changing of wildlife a comparison of translated wolf biographies will indicate the linguistic and cultural particularities of the construction and validation of knowledge.

Keywords reappearance of the wolf, presentation of predators, Little Red Riding Hood syndrome, translation of wolf biographies

THE WOLF IN CHILDREN'S PICTUREBOOKS

Since the end of the last century, the wolf has been on the rise in Europe and is populating countries where people were previously not familiar with wild animals formerly coexisting in their habitat. While the wolf is actively being reestablished in many parts of the world, it has spread by itself in Central Europe due to the fall of the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall. Since the 1990s wolves have expanded from the Baltic into Central European countries (Chapron et al., 2014, p. 1517). As a result of the wolf's extermination in Central Europe in the 19th century, our experiences are based on books, especially folktales which have formed our image of the wolf. The end of the last century is also a turning point of 'picturing the wolf in children's literature' (Mitts-Smith, 2010). Influenced by the return of the real wolf, many authors, primarily those of picturebooks, create a new fictional wolf, often as the main character in picturebook series. Their post-modern verbal and visual strategies have been pointed out (Laudenberg, 2010) and children's reactions

to them have also been examined (Ghosh, 2015). In contrast to the research on fictional stories, scholarship on nonfiction picturebooks is regarded as being “scarce and scattered” (von Merveldt, 2018, p. 241). Indeed, informational picturebooks about an animal should provide facts about its biology and behaviour, its appearance and communication, and its reproduction and habitat, but in doing so they “select, organize, and interpret facts and figures using verbal and visual codes” (von Merveldt, 2018, p. 232). Up to the end of the 20th century, Central European readers looking for facts about wolves got information about an animal they wouldn’t come across in their extra-textual world. The reappearance of the wolf – while many animal species are endangered – is a challenge for the visualisation of non-fiction picturebooks.

THE WOLF AS A PREDATOR

The wolf remained alive only in a few Iberian and Italian regions and the subject on wolves was included in the Bern Convention on the preservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats established by the Council of Europe in 1979. Since the wolf’s reemergence in Central European countries, the member states have to take measures for its protection. Nevertheless, the return of the wolf provokes emotional discussions. Several conversation groups and scientists have been trying to educate the public to avoid clashes between humans and wolves, because the “wolf probably has the worst public image of any large animal on the planet” according to the Scottish ecologist and natural history photographer, Alan Watson Featherstone (Carrell, 2007). Indeed, many people are afraid of this wild animal. Their fear isn’t based on experiences but on media, first and foremost on books and films about myths. Debra Mitts-Smith (2010) who examines the depiction of the wolf in children’s literature, concludes:

From hunting to attacking and devouring, these images reflect not only the most dangerous aspect of the imaginary and the real wolf but one of the most basic ways in which we categorize the wolf: he is a predator. (Mitts-Smith, 2010, p. 25)

So, I’ll start by taking a look at nonfiction picturebooks about predators. Whilst the wolf was completely wiped out of Great Britain, France, the Benelux, Germany and Denmark it still remained in the Balkans and in Eastern and far Northern areas of Europe. When predators are depicted in nonfiction books in these regions, we’ll

tend to only see animals living there. For example, on the covers of the Swedish *Rovdjursboken* (Book of predators; Falk & Eng, 2008) and *Rovdjur* (Predator; Roos, 2009) the grey wolf is indeed one of the four animals portrayed. Apart from the bear, the lynx, the wolverine and the wolf, the book *Norges tøffeste rovdyr* (the greatest predators of Norway; Rovstad, 2014) also depicts two birds (the golden eagle and the eagle owl). The book's cover shows predators – with their mouths closed – looking nearly straight at the reader and only the Norwegian example presents the wolf howling.

If children in Central Europe choose a nonfiction book about predators, they will see animals pictured on the covers who don't even exist in their own countries: for example a tiger (Beaumont, 1998), a crocodile (Santoro, 2008¹) or a leopard (Steghaus-Kovac, 2012), all with their mouths wide open. They are presented in a similar manner: carnivores depicted as meat-eaters characterised by impressive jaws. Even though the second edition of the French example (Beaumont, 2003) changed the animal on the cover and depicted a lion family with their mouths closed, the posture of the male is impressive and the idea of strength, speed, and keen senses for hunting is also reflected by the animals (sabre-tooth, cheetah, lynx, tiger) depicted along the top of the cover.

Before I go on to focus on picturebooks about the wolf, I want to show one further example, by taking a glance inside the book at how it describes the wolf: The book is part of the series “frag mich was” (ask me something; Hauenschild, 2005), edited by Loewe, a German publisher of children's books. It's not given the title “predators” but “wild animals”. This series only seems to invite children to ask one question at a time about each animal because Lydia Hauenschild, the author, only poses one key question in each of the 17 chapters. In the first chapter, a scientist is pictured in the headline answering the question “where do wild animals live?” by giving a definition of wildlife: animals that grow independently of people, even in our own fruit orchard, and we can see hedgehogs, a frog, and other animals on the picture. But as we associate wild with danger and speed – as defined by the author – the book only pays attention to these types of animal, among them the wolf.

The cover depicts animals which don't live in Europe, but are well known as zoo animals: two elephants with a baby elephant in the center of the cover and along its top one giraffe, one rhinoceros, one hippopotamus, and two wolves. The last one is the same picture that we find on the doublespread about wolves

1 There's no doubt that predators are dangerous but it's only the title of the Danish translation (2009) which emphasises this with the adjective dangerous: *Farlige rovdyr* (cf. German translation: *Raubtiere*, English translation: *Predators*).

(Hauenschild, 2005, pp. 38–39): two wolves shown at the end of a struggle, one in a dominating position above the other, one lying on its back on the floor. Although the headline “How do wolves communicate?” focuses solely on communication, the reader also gets basic information about the wolf: pack life and hierarchy, reproduction, hunting and camouflage on this doublespread. While the camouflage is only shown in the picture, but not actually mentioned in the text, the wolf’s habitat is not mentioned at all. The safari outfit of the scientist depicted twice on the top of the left page suggests that all the animals presented in this book don’t exist in Europe. On this page (Fig. 11.1), the man is communicating with his



Figure 11.1 *Wild Tiere* (2005), by Lydia Hauenschild, Loewe.

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dog in a similar way to the two wolves, suggesting a similarity between wolf and dog. The domestication of the wolf may be associated with this as the text in the middle of the left page tells us that the wolf was the progenitor of all current dog breeds and that therefore its body language can be observed in the behaviour of every domestic dog.² Howling, as the characteristic trait of the wolf, is pointed out in an information box lying amid the text and picture sections (Hauenschild, 2005, p. 39). This helps children trying to answer the question “Why do wolves howl?” in the “test your knowledge” page at the end of the book.

It’s probably their focus on imparting knowledge that prevents the anthologies on predators or wild animals from making reference to myths and fiction about the wolf. As we will see, wolf biographies don’t omit them. Information picturebooks about the wolf deal with its bad reputation, and the so-called Little Red Riding Hood syndrome is to be found in nearly every book. In the following I will use a representative selection of nonfictional picturebooks about the wolf to show how its image has changed with its reappearance. Books that have been translated into several European languages are preferred because a comparison of the translations may indicate the linguistic and cultural particularities of the construction and validation of knowledge.

THE WOLF PORTRAYED BY FACTS AND FOLKLORE

My first example also pursues the same strategy as the text mentioned above (Hauenschild, 2005) by putting questions into the mouths of its young readers: *Loup, qui es-tu?* (Wolf, who are you?) is the title of this nonfiction picturebook, written and illustrated by Laura Bour and published in France in 1986, before the wolf regained its Central European territories. The question and its communicative strategy are even visualised by a speech bubble on the title page. Before beginning to read the text, we can already see several typical characteristics depicting the wolf: a howling wolf in a winter night sky with half-moon (a second wolf behind it staring at the reader and in the distance a small town with a church) – inside the cover, on the doublespread we see a variation of this cover scene again; now it’s a pack in a winter night with full moon approaching a remote house. In the 1980s/1990s this couldn’t be regarded as a real scene: there were no wolf or wolf packs, not in France or any of its neighbouring countries (perhaps with the

2 The German text reads as follows: “Der Wolf ist der Vorfahr aller heutigen Hunderassen. Man kann seine Körpersprache deshalb bei jedem Haushund beobachten” (Hauenschild, 2005, p. 38).

exception of Spain and Italy). It must therefore depict a fictional or a historical scene. Both fiction and history are embedded in the visual and the verbal code. While the picture on the cover evokes the fairytale of Little Red Riding Hood (Fig. 11.2), the book starts off with the fear of a wolf's invasion by picturing a wolf smashing a window and the text starts off by asking the reader: "As-tu déjà eu peur de rencontrer un loup?" (Have you ever been afraid of meeting a wolf?). The second question on this page works like the title question: the reader shall ask him/herself "Pourquoi cette peur?" (Why are we afraid?; Bour, 1986, p. 2). The text explains why people have been afraid from the Middle Ages onwards: the narrator emphasises that people knew very little about this predator. At the same time this is the justification to write this nonfiction picturebook: to give a lot of information in twelve doublespreads. In comparison to other wolf biographies, it gives a detailed description of the history of man's handling of the wolf over several centuries up to present day (protection from, hunting of the wolf and the ecological consequences of its extinction).

The end of the book is exceptional as well because there are three doublespreads corresponding with the beginning, framing the information and reiterating the fear by depicting the myths (in France especially "la fameuse Bête du Gévaudan" – the infamous beast of Gévaudan), legends and tales which are then reinforced by the illustrations. Addressing the child, the narrator concludes: "Now you know that all these myths just aren't true [...] Wouldn't you like to hear a wolf howling in the countryside?" (Bour, 1986, pp. 29–30³). The last illustration following this rhetorical question is the one of Little Red Riding Hood on the book cover. There is also a rapport between the last sentence and the final scene, because the last doublespread quotes some proverbs related to the wolf, the last one evoking the twilight: "Aimes-tu te promener entre chien et loup? C'est l'heure où la nuit tombe" (Bour, 1986, p. 32⁴).

If we consider the translations of Bours' book, the German version doesn't follow the original text as closely as the others do. Instead of giving German proverbs promoting linguistic and historical sensitivity,⁵ it provides a short extract from a German anthology of sayings involving animals from all over the world (*Die schönsten*

3 The French text reads as follows: "Maintenant tu sais bien que tout cela est faux! [...] N'aimerais-tu pas, à la campagne, entendre au loin le chant des loups?"

4 As there is no linguistic equivalent, this proverb literally reads: Would you like to go for a walk between dog and wolf? This is the hour of twilight.

5 The seven French proverbs can't be translated but easily replaced by German proverbs applying wolf, e.g. *hungrig wie ein Wolf, ein Wolf im Schafspelz* or *mit den Wölfen heulen* (i.e. ravenous as a wolf, a wolf in sheep's clothing, howling with the wolves).



Figure 11.2 *Loup, qui es-tu*, by Laura Bour, edition 1996 and 2004, Gallimard.⁶

6 The 2004 cover is available at <https://pictures.abebooks.com/isbn/9782070558483-us.jpg>.

Tiersagen der Welt, 1978). Instead of setting the story straight about the history and fiction of the wolf as the “bad guy”, the grandmother in this story promises to kill the wolf after she threatens to give her disobedient grandson to the wolf. The wolf, who is listening outside the house, returns to the forest concluding that one cannot count on man. Children must conclude that the wolf would have eaten the child if his grandmother had given him to the wolf. This confirms the statement given on the preceding doublespread: instead of saying that all the myths are untrue, the German version points out that an animal is neither good nor bad but acts by following its natural instinct. If the wolf were to return, people would have a better understanding of the life of this legendary animal and they wouldn’t fear it anymore.⁷ The German title *Keine Angst vorm bösen Wolf* (Don’t be afraid of the [big] bad wolf) is not honoured here at all. It is very unfortunate that the book fails to achieve its educational objective although it has already seen four editions by Ravensburger (Bour, 1987, 1990, 1991, 1995).

Apart from the title, the Dutch translation (1988) closely follows the French text. Its question *Bang voor de boze wolf?* (Afraid of the [big] bad wolf?) refers – as does the German version – to the picture of Little Red Riding Hood and characterises the wolf as bad. What’s more it evokes a popular children’s game which is linked to the well-known song that became widespread in 1933 as a result of the Disney cartoon *Three Little Pigs*. In contrast to the German title, the question is answered at the end of the book with *no*: if people have information about wolves, they won’t fear them any longer.⁸ But is this really convincing if the real wolf is compared with the epic wolf character? The change of the cover of the later French edition (Bour, 2004) may indicate that it is not the case; less so than ever, since the wolf is on the rise in Central Europe. In Spain where the wolf never was completely extinct, a translation was only published in 2007 adapting the third French edition with a new cover without the picture of Little Red Riding Hood (Bour, 2004). Instead of the reference to the fictional character, the child’s inquisitiveness is intensified by a big red question mark at the left side and three questions at the bottom of the cover page (Fig. 11.2). The first of them is a new one: “Pourrais-tu encore rencontrer un loup dans un coin d’un bois?” (Could you still encounter a wolf in the forest?) – because, indeed, it is now possible to encounter a wolf in the

7 The German text reads as follows: “Ein Tier handelt nicht ‘gut’ oder ‘böse’, sondern immer nur nach seiner Natur [...] dann werden die Menschen die Lebensweise dieser sagemworbene Tiere besser verstehen und sich nicht mehr vor ihnen fürchten” (Bour, 1987, pp. 29–30).

8 The Dutch text reads as follows: “Maar eerst moeten alle mensen de wolf leren kennen. Niemand mag meer bang voor wolven zijn” (Bour, 1988, p. 33). .

woods. That may be the reason why the same French editor, Gallimard Jeunesse, published another picturebook about the wolf, written and illustrated by the same author (Bour, 1994). This edition is typical for nonfiction books about wolves since the end of the last century: a simple title (*Le loup*) and a hand-drawn portrait of the animal on the cover page. The reference to legends and fairytales can still be found inside the book, but has been reduced to one doublespread. This book, translated into the other Romance languages and into English, is still available. In spite of its success, it has not yet been translated into Dutch or German.

The trend towards face-to-face portrayal is accompanied by the use of photographs which are then updated when a new edition or a translation is released. Whilst the first edition of Christian Havard's picturebook *Le loup: brigand des bois* (1994) shows a photograph of a wolf running in the forest on the cover which fits the subtitle, the second (1999) and further editions present a photo of its head. The third edition (2003) does away the subtitle, as does the German translation (*Der Wolf*, 2000/2009/2020). The English edition translates it into *The Wolf, night howler* (2006) and the Spanish one into *El Lobo ¡vaya fauna!* (2001, What wildlife!).

These paratextual variations show the different attitudes of the authors or the editors and their influence on the reader (Genette, 1987). Translated editions vary the photographs and the subtitle but not the kind of portrait or the reference to legends. In this picturebook it's Little Red Riding Hood once again. In 2019 the German Kosmos editor published a book whose title addresses the child: *Komm, ich zeige dir die Wölfe* (Come on, I'll show you the wolves; Ernten, 2019). Although the only reference to the fairytale is a shape of Little Red Riding Hood with the wolf on the page of contents, its advertising presents the alternative "Böser Wolf oder Kuschtier?" ([big] bad Wolf or cuddly toy?) and promises: "Dieses besondere Sachbuch zeigt, wie Wölfe wirklich sind" (This extraordinary nonfiction book depicts wolves as they really are; www.kosmos.de/).

Indeed, the question about the cuddly toy is interesting: compared to the bear, who was also annihilated in Central Europe, children usually don't play with a stuffed wolf. They weren't even able to do so because the German manufacturer Margarete-Steiff for example, which was founded in 1880, only started producing cuddly wolves since 2012. The two types of wolf Steiff sells are designed very realistically. Other stuffed wolves have either childlike or doglike looks or they represent a fictional character as in the case of a French cuddly wolf with a very long nose and mouth, a new kind of a wolf character established by the British illustrator and author Tony Ross in the 1980s and developed as a series character by the French illustrator and author Geoffroy de Pennart in the 1990s (Laudenberg,

2013, pp. 23–24). At the end of his cultural history of the wolf, Michel Pastoureau remarks on the appearance of a stuffed wolf in 2009 based on the fictional character of a popular French picturebook from the author Orienne Lallemand: “It’s a clear sign of an undeniable reevaluation of the wolf, formerly absent because of its negative image, which has finally found its place [in the animal world of toys]” (Pastoureau, 2018, p. 151⁹).

APPROPRIATE WAYS OF DEPICTING THE WOLF?

The wolf has finally found its place in the traditional category of nonfiction picturebooks about animals. Its reappearance has afforded more and better research which has been supported by the increased value attributed to biodiversity. The covers of the three editions of the German “Was ist Was”-series about wolves may summarise the changes in how the wolf has been portrayed. While the cover of its first edition, written by the wolf expert Eric Zimen (1997), shows different drawings of eight wolves (three bodies and five heads), the second edition, published in 2010, seven years after Zimen’s death, halves the number of wolves shown (three bodies and one head). A new edition, managed by Till Meyer, was published in 2013 under the extended title *Wölfe. Im Revier der grauen Jäger* (2013; Wolves. In the territory of the grey hunters). Despite the title, the number of wolves has been reduced to just one with its photo-portrait as the frontispiece: we see the wolf picking up a track in the snow (Fig. 11.3). The wolf’s previous image as that of predator is replaced by a focus on its hunting. Even informational books visually and verbally deal with the wolf’s reputation in folklore e.g., the “Was ist Was”-series has chosen an unusual way by placing a photograph of the famous bronze figure of the Capitoline Wolf suckling Romulus and Remus in the lower left corner of the first edition. However, this reference to myth on the cover has been removed from the second edition onwards. It remains as the only illustration alluding to myths and fairytales inside Zimen’s book (Zimen, 1997/2010, p. 44)¹⁰. Meyer (2013) extends the references by devoting two doublespreads, one to the “Mythos vom guten Wolf”

9 The French text reads as follows: “le loup, autrefois absent parce que trop négatif, y [au bestiaire des jouets] a enfin rouverte sa place, ce qui est le signe d’une indéniable revalorisation”.

10 There is one additional picture depicting Hitler as a wolf (Zimen, 1997/2010, p. 44). The absolutely exceptional illustration with a short explanation was removed from the new edition.



Figure 11.3 *Wölfe* (1997, 2010),¹¹ by Eric Zimen and *Wölfe: im Revier der grauen Jäger* (2013), by Till Meyer, Tessloff.

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11 The 2010 cover is available at https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/51ua9JcKkHL._SX313_BO1,204,203,200_.jpg.



Figure 11.3 (Continued).

(pp. 10–11; legend of the good wolf), one to the “Geschichte vom bösen Wolf” (pp. 12–13; tale of the [big] bad wolf). Juxtaposing the two diverging properties seems to be typical of German wolf biographies. More than one is entitled *Guter Wolf* (Good wolf; Fischer-Nagel, 2013) cutting across the boundary of scientific information.

Whilst the pictures in Zimen’s edition only serve as illustrations, the last edition relies on a balance between visual and verbal information. But it is still far away from the pictorial turn regarded as “the reason why informational picturebooks are presently among the most innovative and groundbreaking books for children being published” (von Merveldt, 2018, p. 233).

Perhaps it’s the huge discrepancy between the wolf’s worst public image and an ecological and scientific point of view which has prevented the arrival of innovative wolf biographies on the European book market. *The Ways of the Wolf* published in 2017 in London, written by Smriti Prasad-Halls and illustrated by Jonathan Woodward, is an outstanding example of giving information within visual aesthetics. No wonder that it has won the English Best Non-fiction Picture Book Award and was shortlisted for the SLA Awards in 2018. Up to now it has been translated into French (*Le loup*, 2017; *The Wolf*) and German (*Auf den Spuren der Wölfe*, 2018; *Following the wolf’s track*) without noteworthy changes. In contrast to drawings or photographs, Woodward’s cut-out paper and collage illustrations reflect multiple perspectives. Even the cover plays with what was previously highlighted i.e. a face-to-face portrayal of the wolf by presenting only the silhouette of a wolf’s head and within it a wolf pack in a snowy landscape (Fig. 11.4).

Prasad-Halls alludes to most of the well-known wolf fictions in the text, but only Kipling’s Mowgli with his wolf is depicted. This chapter, with the two faces of the wolf, concludes: “When it comes to storytelling, we are drawn to wolves – whether portrayed as good or bad – above all other creatures” (Prasad-Halls, 2017, p. 39). The last two pages of the book go much further than any of the previous volumes do by incorporating “Misleading Myths” (Prasad-Halls, 2017, p. 46) with conversation advice. It asks the readers if they want to help wolves and provides tips on how to do just that. In terms of the amount of information provided, the smallest (Bour, 1986: 11x0,8x18 cm) and the largest (Prasad-Halls, 2017: 25x1,3x32 cm) of my examples are actually very similar, but the latter is by far the most innovative. Perhaps “the beauty of Jean Craighead George’s writing”, pointed out by Ted Kesler (2012, p. 338) will encourage yet another innovative step towards more poetic, nonfiction picturebooks about the wolf.



Figure 11.4 *The Ways of the Wolf* (2017), by Prasadam-Halls, Éditions du Seuil. Reproduced with permission.

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12. A is for ... awareness. Fostering interspecies awareness through nonfiction ABC picturebooks

Nina Goga

Abstract The overall objective of this chapter is to explore *whether a selected corpus of ABC picturebooks may foster interspecies awareness between humans and other animals*. I will discuss how knowledge is organized and communicated both verbally and visually in a corpus of three ABCs about animals typical of Australia. Based on the analysis, I will examine how the reader is offered routes of communication in the selected ABCs and whether these routes are in tune with ideas of interspecies ethics.

Keywords ABC picturebooks, Australian animals, interspecies ethics, routes of communication

INTRODUCTION

As the title indicates, an overall objective of this chapter is to explore *whether a selected corpus of ABC picturebooks may foster interspecies awareness between humans and other animals*. While many ABC picturebooks (henceforth ABC/ABCs) contain word-letter-illustration spreads with no coherent correspondence between the spreads and an overarching idea guiding the choice of words, some ABCs target specific topics, like flowers (Barker, 2002), railways (Townend, 2014), birthdays (Stein, 2011), rooms (Roskifte, 2004), and animals (like the ones selected for this chapter).

In this chapter, my aim is threefold. First, I will present a few ideas about what makes an ABC nonfictional. Second, and based on previous research on

children's nonfiction, I will discuss how knowledge is organized and communicated both verbally and visually in a specific corpus of three ABCs in which each letter is an acroponic word for an animal typical of Australia. The corpus consists of Jennifer Cossins's *A–Z of Australian animals* (2018), Frané Lessac's *A is for Australian animals* (2017), and Warren Brim and Anna Eglitis's *Creatures of the rainforest* (2005). Finally, against the background of theoretical perspectives on interspecies ethics, I will examine how the reader is offered routes of communication in the selected ABCs and whether these routes are in tune with interspecies awareness.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK – ABCS, NONFICTION, AND INTERSPECIES ETHICS

The immediate answer to the question *What makes ABCs nonfictional?* would perhaps be that they impart alphabetic knowledge about the visual appearance of the letter, the alphabetical order, and the sound/letter connection. However, referring to Perry Nodelman (2001), who explores the many strategies for meaning-making the readers of alphabet books must face or possess, one may question if ABCs really do have the potential to impart alphabetic knowledge. The aim of this chapter is not to follow up on this discussion, but, instead, to carry out an approach based on the idea that some abecedaries teach about the world through images and the interplay between words and images (Litaudon, 2018, p. 170; Skyggebjerg, 2018, p. 63).

According to Anna Karlskov Skyggebjerg (2018), who has studied ABCs as an intersectional field between aesthetic (poetry and visuality) and teaching material, ABCs, in addition to teaching letters, mediate appropriate world views by introducing specific knowledge about nature, culture, and religion (p. 63). Leaning on Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's concept of the aesthetic, Skyggebjerg underscores the importance of the ABCs' aesthetic expression, both verbal and visual, in the learning process. She claims that through sensory appeal ABCs prepare readers for wondering and reflection, which in turn may lead to new knowledge and understanding (Skyggebjerg, 2018, p. 66).

Hence, to determine the nonfictionality of artistic ABCs, one should take a closer look at the nouns, objects, images, and concepts evoked by the letters. When ABCs present illustrations of real-world objects, places, plants, art works, and animals and connect them with their associated names, one may assume that they impart some sort of knowledge about the world. ABCs connecting letters and animals clearly single out a specific field of knowledge, and some such books will link to other genres,

for instance encyclopaedias and dictionaries. Animal ABCs are not only about animal facts, but also offer a way to become aware of the puzzling connection between a verbal and a visual language (or sign system), which introduces readers to a way of communicating or sharing the world with others. A timely question to address may be how and what these animal ABCs teach about the animals' nature and the possible interspecies relations between humans and other animals.

While several scholars have studied general characteristics of children's ABCs (Nodelman, 2001; Thomas, 2005; Litaudon, 2018; Skyggebjerg, 2018), only a few have directed their research towards animal representations. Skyggebjerg (2018), whose study covers a variety of ABCs, notes that many books combine reflections on the relationship between humans and animals with an emphasis on the companionship between children and animals (p. 60). In contrast to the linguistically guided letter and form focus in much previous research, Jennifer Ford (2019) considers the ways animals are represented in ABCs. Her study is enriched and motivated by Giorgio Agamben's idea of the anthropological machine and Jacques Derrida's intriguing observations that by giving names to animals, humans tend to unsee their animality. Ford (2019) claims that "[c]oncepts of early literacy are prioritized in such a way that early concepts and images of animals can be paradoxically hidden, obscured, lost or displaced, depoliticized" (p. 222). Her study reveals that most animals represented in ABCs are typically the so-called exotic and charismatic or cute ones, which are often also at high risk of extinction without that being called to attention (p. 226). She consequently calls for studies challenging the culturally coded cuteness ideology in ABCs.

My study is motivated by this appeal, but while the ABCs studied by Ford only seem to have in common that they are ABCs in which animals are named and depicted in relation to some or most letters, the ABCs I have selected are all focused on Australian animals, which in many cases represent a particular fauna that has proved to be especially sensitive to the ways humans behave and treat the environment. Recently this has become evident in connection with the Australian bushfire crisis in 2019–2020. A telling example could be the Australian Environment Minister Sussan Ley's announcement in January 2020 that Australia's koala population had taken an extraordinary hit during the bushfires and could be listed as endangered.

In contrast to Ford's analytical focus, I will not limit my analysis to the study of whether ABCs support or maintain a hierarchical order of humans and animals or an ethical binary between the two. I am interested in whether the sensory verbal and visual animal representations in my material may prepare readers for wondering and reflection and foster interspecies ethics and awareness. In line with posthumanist thinking in general, interspecies awareness deals with how to

provide a basis for a life in common or an awareness of belonging across humans and other animal species. My understanding of what it takes to obtain interspecies awareness or how to promote it is based on Cynthia Willett's *Interspecies ethics* (2014), which draws insight from intellectual and social movements in the context of transspecies ideals of communitarianism and cosmopolitan peace. Within interspecies theory the main question is how to restore ethical practices that sustain cohabitation and biosocial interconnectedness. According to Willett (2014), these practices have been nearly lost with modernization, and modern humans have forgotten how to live with other animals (p. 5). To restore them we need to challenge human exceptionalism, that is, behaviours that separate rather than attune, and immerse with other species in a biosocial web (p. 6).

Attunement is a keyword for Willett (2014), and she highlights the affect attunement imbedded in the rhythmic, tonal, or gestural patterns or dynamic of genuine 'call and response' communication (p. 13). It is important to stress that this attunement through call and response should also be manifest when engaging with species far removed from ourselves in their sensibilities and biocultures and which may initially strike us as not only strange or insignificant, but also as without any charisma or cuteness (p. 13).

Building on Willett's ideas of interspecies ethics, I will narrow down my focus and study how nonfiction ABCs focusing on Australian animals may prepare readers for affect attunement. Willett (2014) may give us some clues when she notes that a poetic discourse, which is nonmirroring, highlights the "resonance of meanings communicated across distinct sensory modes, such as between a vocal sound and a physical gesture or a color and a sound" (p. 14). According to Willett (2014), "affects flow back and forth" and affect attunement establishes "routes of communication" (p. 89) and "opens pathways across coevolved or parallel creatures (...)" (p. 99). In the following, I will turn to the selected ABCs and look for routes of communication through poetic sounds, colours, and gestures.

A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE ANALYTICAL FOCUS

The analytical framework (Fig. 12.1) is based on an analysis tool presented and motivated in previous studies (Goga, 2019; Goga, 2020) that builds on theoretical considerations of ways of analysing children's nonfiction put forth by researchers in the field of children's nonfiction (Mallett, 2004; Goga, 2008; Larkin-Lieffers, 2010; Skyggebjerg, 2011; 2012; Mallan & Cross, 2014; Sanders, 2018; von Merveldt, 2018). An overall concern in the research literature is to acknowledge that knowledge



Figure 12.1 A possible analytical tool for examining nonfiction children’s and YA books (Goga, 2019).

dissemination may be both verbal and visual. The scholarly works point out three general approaches to children’s nonfiction, that is, to study how knowledge is organized, by which ‘speech genres’ knowledge is presented, and how the books address and position the reader.

Most children’s nonfiction will probably combine many of the ways listed. Nevertheless, closer examination of a single work will almost certainly reveal that some ways will dominate over others. The choices made by authors, illustrators, designers, and publishers are usually related to the topic of the books and to the primary readers addressed by the book. The analysis tool should primarily be used to map out dominating tendencies in each object of analysis and, possibly, to compare the findings with tendencies in other comparable objects of analysis.

The analysis of the selected material will be structured as follows: I will first motivate the choice of material and map out the specific characteristics of each of the books. Second, I will present an overview of which animals the various books have in common and then concentrate my analyses on a few doublespreads of each book, which will enable me to compare the ways two specific animals (the echidna and the platypus) are represented to the readers.

THREE AUSTRALIAN ABCS ABOUT AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS

While animal representations in many ABCs tend to be occasional and/or stereotyped (like lion for L or elephant for E), the animals selected in the material of this study all represent Australian animals and seem to serve purposes other than or in addition to that of learning about letters and the alphabet. Hence, the alphabet works more like a cataloguing principle for an encyclopaedic introduction to the fauna of a determinate geographical area. Following up on this, and in line with Patricia Crain (2000), who claims that the words and images attributed to ABC's letters in any particular time and place suggest how a culture "make[s] sense of itself" (p. 18), one could question whether such books are potentially nation forming conveying a specifically Australian nature identity.

In total the three books, *A-Z of Australian animals*, *A is for Australian animals*, and *Creatures of the rainforest*, present 66 different Australian animals. While the *A-Z of Australian animals* and *Creatures of the rainforest* have limited their animals to only one for each letter, the *A is for Australian animals* has decided for some letters to include two (the letters B, E, F, M, P, R, S, T, and W) or three (the letter K) animals. Some animals are included in two of the books,¹ and a few animals are presented in all three books, namely the dingo, the echidna, and the platypus. I have selected the echidna and the platypus as samples for the closing inquiry of my analysis. This is not only because they are depicted in all three books, but also, referring to Cossins's introduction to the reader, because the echidna and the platypus "[p]robably [are] the most unusual of our native animals" (2018).

About the books

A-Z of Australian animals, by Tasmanian artist Jennifer Cossins, was published in 2018. In 2017 Cossins's *A-Z of endangered animals* was a CBCA Honour Book-winner. The design and layout of *A-Z of Australian animals* are the same as those of the *A-Z of endangered animals*, and each doublespread has the same layout. The letter in focus is at the top of the left-hand page followed by the "is for" leading the reader towards the top text of the right-hand page, where the name of the animal in focus is revealed. Although conventional in ABCs, the formula 'A is for ...' attracts some sort of attention or tends to tune in the reader's attention to sounds.

1 *A-Z of Australian animals* and *A is for Australian animals* share bilby, frillnecked-lizard, koala, numbat, quokka, sugar glider, Tasmanian devil, wombat, and zebra fi ch. *A is for Australian animals* and *Creatures of the rainforest* share flying fox, goanna, kookaburra, Ulysses butterfly, wallaby, and yabby. *A-Z of Australian animals* and *Creatures of the rainforest* share cassowary and jabiru.

The way the formula is positioned on the doublespread supports this tuning in with the dots prolonging the suspense and sharpening the ears.

The name of the animal is supported by a realistic but still conventionalized portrait of the example of the species. The animal is usually depicted sideways or slightly turned towards the reader as a way of establishing a sort of contact or line of communication. Another typical feature regarding the illustration is that the habitat or environmental conditions of the animal in question are only barely depicted.

Except for the animal's name on the right-hand page, all verbal text is to be found on the left-hand page. The text for each animal is always presented in the same way, containing information about the size and scientific name at the top and a carefully selected 'interesting fact' at the bottom. The overall layout gives the impression that the imparting of knowledge will be easy to follow. The verbal text is organized in a rather standard spatial or scientific way, by first presenting or listing facts and *information* about distribution (where it can be found), food habits, and physical skills. The final paragraph often focuses on the living conditions, including the conservation status, and *explains* the actual situation and the reasons for it. In this part the text is more organic and open to the readers' engagement. The 'interesting fact' part is a sort of curiosity, or remarkable or marvellous information which, according to Joe Sutliff Sanders (2018, pp. 199–222), may invite the reader to a critical engagement with the book.

A is for Australian animals, by American Frané Lessac, was published in 2017. The book was shortlisted to the Wilderness Society Environment Book Award in 2018 and to the West Australian Young Readers' Book Award in 2019. It received the Outstanding Science Trade Books award in 2019. The layout of the doublespreads is very different from that in *A–Z of Australian animals*. Most striking is perhaps the differences in how the verbal text is distributed on the pages, in the use of full bleed illustrations, and in the depiction of animals' environmental conditions (see Fig. 12.2). In addition, the reader is presented with several specimens of the species. While Jennifer Cossins's illustrations were realistic but conventionalized, Lessac's illustrations are vaguer paintings, with a great deal of attention paid to the surroundings, the sea, water, and the sky, leaving the reader with an idyllic or often harmonious impression of the animal's life. The placing of verbal information, of animals engaging with their environment, and details of plant life repeatedly leads the reader's gaze back and around. Hence, the illustration organizes the knowledge about the animals' life in both an organic way and a linear way (be it a coastline, a riverbank, or the horizon as a parallel to the line of reading). One may say that the illustration invites readers to *explore* the land of the animals.



Figure 12.2 A is for Australian animals (2017), by Frané Lessac, Walker Books Australia.

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The verbal text, presented seemingly randomly on the page, brings bits and pieces of classic scientific knowledge or facts to the reader: special behaviours, physical skills, and nutrition. The texts mostly state, document, or summarize the information. While the *A-Z of Australian animals* presented some information as ‘interesting facts’, the *A is for Australian animals* seems to present all facts at the same level or as equally important. The verbal text of *A is for Australian animals* seems to have little potential to evoke affect attunement. The information is presented in the same syntactical way: “The platypus is ... A platypus can find food ... Platypuses use webbed feet to swim” (Lessac, 2017). Few characteristic words (like adjectives or adverbs) are used to affect the reader or to provide space for an interspecies encounter. The possible encounter or an imparting of knowledge based on affect attunement may take place in the reader’s exploration of the illustration of the life-supporting environmental conditions of the animal. For example, for the platypus, the blue water and the warm yellow sky, and the green belt of trees and bushes may encourage the readers, or ‘travellers’ through the book, to get in touch with ‘the residents’.

The final example, the *Creatures of the rainforest*, by the Djabugay artist Warren Brim and the Australian artist Anna Eglitis, was published in 2005. The book was shortlisted by the Children’s Book Council of Australia for the 2006 Children’s Book of the Year Award and, also in 2006, shortlisted for the Eve Pownall Award. The animals selected to be listed in alphabetical order are all found in Djabugay country, but many of them are also found in other parts of Australia.

The artists are explicit about the aim of the book, that is, “to help people to see how everyone can share their culture, their dreams and their spirituality” (Brim & Eglitis, 2005), and every doublespread exemplifies this sharing, working together, and dialogic attitude to culture – and nature. This is demonstrated most strikingly through the two stylistically different visual representations of the animal, or creature, presented on the doublespread and through the naming of the animal in both the English (which decides the letter) and the Djabugay languages (see Fig. 12.3). I would describe this way of imparting knowledge about the animals as organic. I will argue that the various visual representations signal that even though the animals exist and have some specific characteristic features like size, colour, and form, they may also be explored, perceived, or experienced in other culturally influenced ways comprising dreams, personal sensations, or some sort of social identity. Although the illustrations on the left-hand page are always the ones that are most realistic, they are also artistically done and hence open to aesthetic interpretations.

The verbal texts present facts about distribution, reproduction, and physical appearance. A closer look at the words chosen to present these facts reveals that

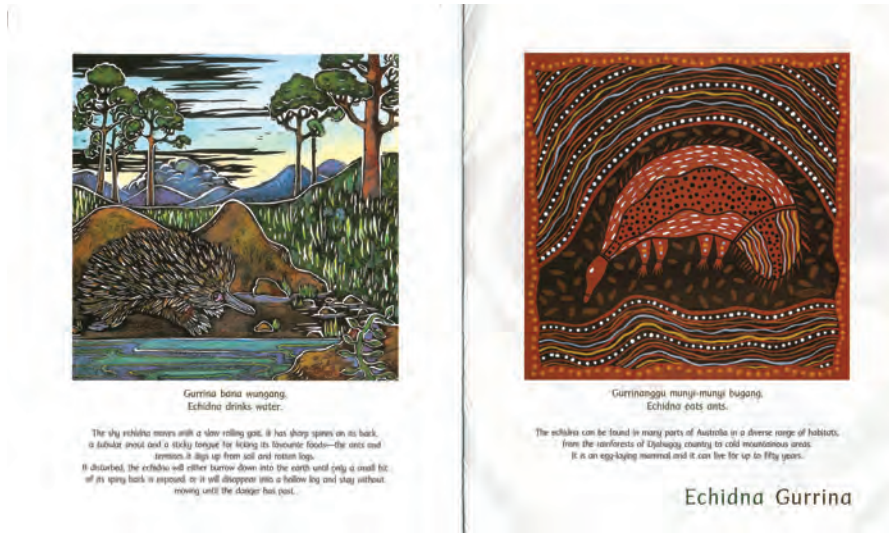


Figure 12.3 *Creatures of the rainforest* (2005), by Warren Brim and Anna Eglitis, Magabala Books.

Reproduced with permission.

several poetic strategies have been integrated into the text. One such strategy is the use of alliteration, often in relation to adjectives that emphasize the animals' visual appearance: "The shy echidna moves with a slow rolling gait. It has sharp spines on its back. A tubular snout and a sticky tongue for licking its favourite foods" (Brim & Eglitis, 2005). Consequently, the verbal text not only presents straight and loosely or spatially connected scientific facts, it also describes and explores the object of study through sensuous language, which also gives the impression of a more organic way of organizing the knowledge about the animals.

Routes of communication

To decide about how the readers are addressed and positioned to engage with the books, I will look more closely at the wrapping. I will first turn to the back of the books, a paratextual place where the primary reader is often addressed and encouraged to read critically (Sanders, 2018, pp. 107–132). In the light of Willett's notion of 'affect attunement', I will examine the reader application (two of three books address a 'you'), the verbal emphasis on positive, enthralling, and enthusiastic words, and, finally, the choice and position of the illustrative elements.

Both *Creatures of the rainforest* and *A-Z of Australian animals* explicitly address a ‘you’. *Creatures of the rainforest* addresses the reader through questions: “Have you heard about the red-eyed green tree frog (...)” and urges the reader to “[u]ncover the secrets of a Queensland rainforest...”. In the third book, *A is for Australian animals*, there is no explicit you, but we find the same sort of indirect addressing through an encouraging or urging call to “[d]iscover the answers to these questions and more in this **factastic** tour of Australian animals”. The same encouraging imperative is found in the first sentence on the back of *A-Z of Australian animals*, reading: “Come on an illustrated expedition through Australia’s unique animal kingdom”. In addition, these reader appeals share the idea of reading as a sort of journey, a tour, or an expedition where something “factastic”, amazing, or secret will be revealed or encountered. Hence, one may claim that the reader is positioned as a collector – or an explorer. While the reader as collector has a touch of a ‘human first’ attitude, where animals or nature are trophies of a conqueror, the reader as explorer may be open to respectful and playful encounters with other species and consequently support or open a pathway to interspecies awareness.

The animals chosen to illustrate on the back cover what the reader may encounter on their journey through the book seem to support or call for a ‘respectful explorer attitude’ more than a ‘trophy hunter attitude’. The gazes of both the numbat (Cossins, 2018) and the red-eyed green tree frog (Brim & Eglitis, 2005) on the back are partly directed towards the reader, as are those of the little pygmy possum and the frog on the front. All welcome the reader into the book and into their world. The animals and landscapes depicted on the back and front covers of *A is for Australian animals* seem more untouched by, unaware of, or unaffected by the reader – and hence perhaps busy living their own lives. In contrast, this busyness may call for the reader’s attention and make them aware of the many and various environments that the tour they embark on will offer.

The echidna and the platypus

Two of the ABCs mention that the echidna is a monotreme (Cossins, 2018; Lessac, 2017), and one mentions that it is “an egg-laying mammal” (Brim & Eglitis, 2005). Only Cossins explains to the reader what monotreme means. All three books seem especially interested in drawing the readers’ attention to how the animal acquires its food. While Cossins focuses on the length of the tongue, how it works, and which food (ants and termites) it catches, the other texts seem

more occupied with catching the readers' attention by emphasizing that ants and termites are the echidna's "food of choice" (Lessac, 2017) or "its favourite foods" (Brim & Eglitis, 2005). The focus on food, and on a favourite food, may be a way of establishing contact or attuning with the reader since they are also dependent on food and perhaps also have their own food of choice. Even though termites and ants may surprise the reader, the text does not judge the echidna for its food habits. Another way of relating to the readers' own conditions of life found in two of the books (Cossins, 2018; Lessac, 2017) is to tell them that a baby echidna is called a 'puggle', which seems to be understood as something cute and in need of being taken care of.

A striking feature in common for the three ABCs is the emphasis on the echidna as a shy creature, either by directly using the word 'shy', or indirectly by describing the animal's reaction to danger, or in both ways. These descriptions, and particularly the one found in *Creatures of the rainforest*, may be interpreted as a way of connecting with the animal. The text reads, "If disturbed, the echidna will either burrow down into the earth until only a small bit of its spiny back is exposed, or it will disappear into a hollow log and stay without moving until the danger has past" (Brim & Eglitis, 2005). The impression of a vulnerable animal that will retreat rather than fight if disturbed is supported by the left-hand page illustration of an anxious looking echidna almost slipping towards the water (see Fig. 12.3). Although the surrounding environment is depicted in a sort of dusk of dark green, blue, and brown colours, the overall impression is of a peaceful sanctuary. The reddish coloured dreaming story-based depiction of the echidna on the right-hand page focuses on the animal while eating. Together with the shy gaze in the left-hand page illustration, the bending and humble posing in the right-hand page illustration calls for the reader's attention and may be perceived as a call to meet the echidna with a willing attitude, that is, a willingness to learn and care about an unusual species.

I have suggested that the various visual representations in *Creatures in the rainforest* signal that the depicted animals may be explored, perceived, or experienced in various culturally influenced ways, comprising dreams, personal sensations, or some sort of social identity. In addition, I have mentioned that the choice of words used to present facts about the animal reveals several poetic strategies. Consequently, the verbal text not only presents scientific facts, it also describes and explores the object of study through a sensuous language which also invites readers to engage and interconnect with the animal in focus. Referring to Skyggebjerg's (2018) emphasis on the importance of the aesthetic expression of ABCs,

both verbal and visual, in the learning process (p. 66), the illustrations may have a strong sensory appeal to the reader. The strong and pleasant colour combinations may affect and fascinate the reader and support a more animal friendly attitude and awareness.

Like the echidna, the platypus is presented as an unusual, shy monotreme, or egg-laying mammal. In contrast to the echidna, its shyness is less stressed in the doublespreads. Instead the focus is on the way the platypus acquires food: it is a carnivore and uses “its sensitive bill to pick up electric pulses of movement in the water” (Lessac, 2017) and its spurs (the male platypus), which release poison “and can inflict a nasty wound on enemies” (Brim & Eglitis, 2005). Although all three texts depict the platypus while diving for food, none of the illustrations give information about the animal’s hunting habits. Hence, one may suggest that they visually protect the readers from these less charming facts to prevent them from disapproving of the animals. In line with Willett’s ideas about an interconnected communication, one may claim that the use of colours and soft and harmonious shapes and landscapes is a specific example of one of the various communicative technologies used to establish affect attunement with the potential of developing interspecies awareness. This is also the case when engaging with species who may initially strike us as not only strange or insignificant, but also as cruel, which is something the carnivore platypus’s use of poison may give the impression of.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this final paragraph I will sum up and try to answer whether these nonfiction ABC picturebooks guide readers towards attunement with other species and foster interspecies awareness. None of the ABCs teach interspecies awareness explicitly, but to varying degrees they impart species knowledge in ways that invite readers to connect and engage in affective ways. The verbal texts are organized in rather standard scientific ways, by listing facts and information about size, species, distribution, and physical skills. The visual texts are realistic and aesthetically expressive to varying degrees, and the reader is positioned as an explorer and co-creator or co-thinker. This position, when supported by a poetic and aesthetically sensitive knowledge transmission, opens pathways to interspecies awareness and may prepare the reader for respectful encounters through which ethical practices that sustain cohabitation and biosocial interconnectedness may be restored.

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13. How descriptive picturebooks engaged children in knowledge about coal, oil, and gas

Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Jörg Meibauer

Abstract This chapter compares five historical picturebooks that deal with energy sources, such as coal, oil, and gas. It is shown that these descriptive picturebooks contain descriptive, explanatory, and even narrative elements. Thus, they aim at engaging children not only with respect to knowledge transmission but also emotionally. A main challenge for authors and readers is the creation of optimal coherence between visual and textual information which is at the heart of the genre.

Keywords description, energy, explanation, narration, descriptive picturebook

INTRODUCTION

Descriptive picturebooks have the task of conveying knowledge about the world in a truthful and comprehensible manner.¹ Ideally, pictures and graphic representations of different kinds, e.g., diagrams, figures, and maps, support or elaborate the textual information. These types of instructive or even logical pictures enlarge the set of merely illustrative pictures children may already be acquainted with by looking at narrative picturebooks. Depending on the cognitive abilities of children, the

1 A note on terminology: The notion “non-fiction” (see Sanders, 2018) is far too broad and, as a negative term, not very appealing (von Merveldt, 2018, p. 231f.). However, the notion “informational picturebook”, suggested by Nikola von Merveldt, seems to falsely suggest that narrative picturebooks do not contain information. Therefore, we prefer the notion “descriptive picturebook”, because description (as opposed to narration) is at the core of the picturebooks under investigation (see Meibauer, 2015).

information provided in descriptive picturebooks could be demanding due to the topic's inherent complexity or a special vocabulary that is needed to understand the content.

This chapter focuses on the topic of energy with an emphasis on the exploitation of fossil fuels, such as coal, oil, and gas. To comprehend how these energy sources can be used to generate electrical energy is quite complex, since it demands an understanding of biological, chemical, and technological processes. Therefore, studying the strategies used by authors and illustrators in the transmission of knowledge about energy sources and their benefits for human society is a worthwhile enterprise which provides insight into how descriptive picturebooks deal with this topic over the course of time.

Our corpus consists of five historical picturebooks that were published between 1935 and 1968, i.e. in a time, when the exploitation of fossil fuels played an eminent role. *The story book of oil* (1935) by the US couple Maud and Miska Petersham is a prominent example of those descriptive picturebooks of the interwar period that intended to turn children into “active engineers of the future” (op de Beeck, 2010, p. 129). Almost in the same vein, *The magic of coal* (1945) by British author-illustrator Peggy M. Hart “gives a futuristic spin to the realities of working in the mines” (Reynolds, 2014, p. 203), while also providing factual information on how coal is produced. Finally, the Ladybird books *The story of oil* (1968) by W. D. Siddle and Robert Ayton, and *The Public Services. Electricity* (1966) and *The Public Services. Gas* (1967), both with texts by I. Havenhand and illustrations by John Berry, attest to the series-publishing of descriptive picturebooks in the United Kingdom that became a “predominant feature of the children’s book industry during the 1950s and 1960s” (Johnson & Alderson, 2014, p. 73).

Typically, these picturebooks not only explain the origins of these energy sources, the labor associated with them, and the gains for the society and everyday life, but also try to evoke the children’s emotions and empathy directed to the workers and managers in these fields. This is becoming apparent in the styles of illustrations that range from the realistic to the expressive as well as in the integration of narrative elements, as already suggested by typical titles like “The Story of X”.

In general, the picturebooks under investigation do not critically discuss ecological issues, such as the pollution of the environment or the exploitation of nature. Quite on the contrary, they provide a rather positive account of the advantages of these energy sources with respect to human progress. Although it might be interesting to analyse the potentially underlying ideological messages in these descriptive picturebooks, this chapter pursues a different goal by contributing to the current discussion of how a theory of children’s nonfiction might look like.

Most recently, Joe Sutliff Sanders (2018) advocates “critical engagement” as a core issue of such a theory (p. 177). He focuses on the educational aspects of this literary genre by emphasizing its role in stimulating the critical attitude of the readers. Sanders thus hopes to change the appreciation of children’s nonfiction from a “literature of authority” to a “literature of questions” (p. 34). However, this approach does not seem to explain the specific aesthetic features of nonfiction for children and how it exactly differs from fictional texts.

In contrast to Sanders, who by and large concentrates on contemporary children’s nonfiction, we consult historical examples, since we contend that a proper theory of the genre needs to consider historical as well as present sources to get a grip of the development of the genre. Although Sanders vehemently argues against reading levels, we take the view that the accessibility of the books’ content for children, pending on their world knowledge and literacy capacities, cannot be ignored. Moreover, we maintain that the difficulties of conveying information in children’s nonfiction depend on the specific topics and their aesthetic mastery. In our view, a fully-fledged theory of children’s nonfiction has to consider these three aspects that are the prerequisites of any ideological criticism.

Considering this, we focus on the question of how information is conveyed to children by explaining how the construction of coherence between the text and the visuals in descriptive picturebooks is achieved, and to reflect on the relation between description, narration, and explanation as essential characteristics of this type of picturebook. In a way, descriptive picturebooks construct frames for the integration of knowledge which is supposed to be of interest for young readers.

PICTORIAL INFORMATION

This section focuses on the covers and the types of pictures. When comparing the cover design of the picturebooks in our corpus, two different strategies come to the fore. The covers either focalize the energy source, showing a dam, an oil refinery, a gas turbine, or a power plant, or they depict people, who profit from these energy sources, such as workers, researchers, or users. As for the latter case, we can distinguish two approaches: a single character or a group of characters, whether children or adults, is center stage, doing something in relation to energy sources, such as carrying a shovel or a bucket with coals. Other covers push the characters into the background, emphasizing the grandeur of energy devices.

As for the type of pictures, we rely on the distinction between informing, artistic, and entertaining pictures, as proposed by Bernd Weidenmann (1994). Informing

pictures are prominent in instructional situations that serve the acquisition of knowledge and skills. It is important that any ambiguity of the pictorial representation is avoided so that readers can grasp the coded information in a precise and comprehensive manner. Artistic pictures, in contrast, emphasize aesthetic aspects and allow some vagueness triggering subjective interpretation. Finally, entertaining pictures aim at captivating attention and evoking emotions. It may happen that a delimitation of these types cannot be easily drawn, since individual pictures may mix elements of these types in a hybrid manner. Although these three types can be found in descriptive picturebooks, it is obvious that informing pictures are particularly typical for this picturebook genre.

In the parlance of Weidenmann (1994, p. 12, see Fig. 13.1), informing pictures are visual arguments, i.e. they constitute answers to questions. For instance, a picture showing a gas turbine gives an answer to the question how a gas turbine looks like. Visual arguments are connected to the criterion of adequacy, since they should encompass all relevant aspects and have to be finetuned to the needs of the recipients and the particular instructional setting. Within the realm of informing pictures, we further differentiate between representative (realistic) pictures and logical pictures. Since different types of maps exist, we would like to add maps as a subtype of informing pictures (see Goga & Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2017).

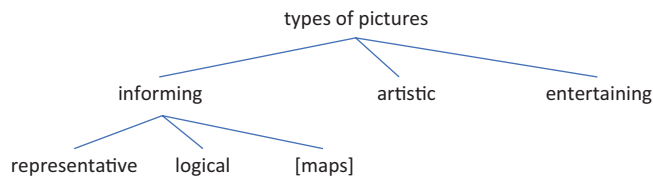


Figure 13.1 Types of pictures according to Weidenmann (1994). The bracketed category is our addition.

The label of representative picture refers to all pictures that depict something, such as a person, a thing, or an event (Peeck, 1994). For instance, a picture of a person shows a relation of similarity to the real person who is depicted. Logical pictures comprise all types of diagrams (e.g., Venn diagrams or isotype diagrams, see Walker, 2013) that stand in an iconic relation to aspects of reality (Schnotz, 1994). Often, they visualize connections between qualitative and quantitative aspects of a state or a city, for example demonstrating how religions are distributed over the inhabitants of Berlin. Finally, maps represent a part of the world while having also logical properties.

The descriptive picturebooks under investigation have drawings in full color or in black-and-white. The full-color drawing is the preferred mode of representation

in our historical corpus. These drawings mainly belong to the category of representative picture. Many pictures depict diverse machines being used for the extraction and transportation of coal, oil, and gas, or things such as household items that are produced from coal or oil. Other pictures show people who handle energy sources in different ways. Sparing out complicated details, these pictures demonstrate the importance of energy for everyday life. This type of presentation dominates those descriptive picturebooks whose storyline follows a historical approach. Typically, they tell a story about the origin of energy sources and how mankind used them over the course of time. Basically, this approach represents coal, oil, and gas as age-old treasures that people can unearth and use for the purpose of modern life. Famous discoverers but also workers and researchers are portrayed as being engaged in lifting these treasures. A typical representative of this approach is *The story book of oil* by the Petershams. The first picture depicts a pre-historic setting which is populated by dinosaurs, while the accompanying text explains the origin of oil. The subsequent pictures cover a long time period from ancient times to the present and visualize the increasing facilities of mankind to produce oil and use it as an energy source.

In contrast, the illustrators use logical pictures in a cautious manner due to their abstract design. In order to avoid overloading the picture with too much information, they omit unnecessary details and use colors to distinguish different levels of representation, as in an illustration in *The Public Services. Gas* that visualizes the processing of gas. The red domain on the right part depicts the different by-products of coal, such as tar, Sulphur, and ammonia, as well as gas made from coal. The yellow domain shows how coal is delivered to the retorts, and how the gas is transported to the gasholder, factories, and homes. The arrows point to the causal and temporal order of these processes.

Some illustrations combine representative (realistic) and logical pictures. A telling example is “a modern ‘cat-cracker’ and how it works” in *The story of oil* (p. 17). The upper part shows a realistic depiction of the cat-cracker, while the lower part points to the functions of the cat-cracker by a cross-sectional diagram. The arrows in the diagram indicate the different directions of the chemical processes that happen inside the cat-cracker, while small black lines with bulges instead of arrows at one end connect the technical terms and the corresponding machine components.

Black-and-white drawings complement the full-color drawings. They are either printed on the flyleaves, as in the Ladybird books, or they alternate with full-color drawings, as in *The magic of coal*. These drawings are either representative pictures or logical pictures. An example for the latter is a cross-section black-and white drawing of a drilling tower which is printed on the flyleaf of *The story of oil*. Parts of

this tower are designated so that children can learn the correct technical language. This strategy points to the idea that pictures may support the learning and understanding of new words.

Moreover, some picturebooks include maps which are printed on the front- and endpapers or amidst the main body of text. There are rather abstract maps which show, for instance, the different gas boards in England (Havenhand, 1967, front- and endpapers) or world maps of “Oil-bearing areas and main areas of production” (Siddle, 1968, p. 51). *The Public Services. Electricity*, by contrast, shows a pictorial map that visualizes the deliverance of electricity from France to the UK via undersea cables. The power plants and the electricity lines are depicted as three-dimensional buildings and objects (p. 29).

As for the artistic style, there are artworks like the lithographs in *The story book of oil* and *The magic of coal*, alongside more realistic drawings that mimic photographs and abstract drawings, as in the Ladybird books.

TEXTUAL INFORMATION

While most literary scholars focus on the distinction between narration and description as focal issues in the analysis of nonfiction, narratologists and text linguists point to another distinctive feature: explanation (Herman, 2008). This trifurcation of text types seems to be particularly fruitful in relation to descriptive picturebooks. On closer consideration, these picturebooks contain text segments that describe the appearances of creatures, nature, objects, and machines, the living conditions of people in old times in comparison to our modern times, and the activities performed by humans when using tools and machines. Besides, there are also text passages that deviate from mere descriptions as they tell a story about the characters and objects involved. These stories are either short anecdotes implemented into the descriptive passages or longer narratives that embed the descriptive texts into a storyline.

Explanations aim at providing answers to why- and how-questions, for instance: How does electricity function? Or: Why are coal and oil so widely used sources of energy? It is evident that description is a precondition for any explanatory texts, as descriptions of a “sequentially ordered representation of things that happen in a sequence” (Herman, 2008, p. 454) as well as the “ascription of the properties to entities” (p. 452) are pertinent in order to understand the actions that happen in relation to these entities or sequential arrangements. To get a full picture of these underlying processes, explanations are helpful since they get to the bottom of things, thus providing (scientific) knowledge.

Perusing different descriptive picturebooks demonstrates how information is storied and how the interplay of description, narration and explanation make the information intelligible to children at large. *The Public Services. Gas* starts with the following text (p. 4) (see Table 13.1): The text begins with a descriptive sentence that describes what happens if one observes a coal fire. The author directly addresses the reader in order to draw her into the story. The second sentence provides an explanation for the “little spurts of flame”: They are gas flames which come out of the hot coal and burn. The next sentence, however, turns to the past and is the beginning of a story about William Murdoch who is regarded as the discoverer of gas as an energy source. The following sentences point to an observation Murdoch made and how this gave him the idea to perform an experiment.

Table 13.1 The combination of description, explanation, and narration (underlining added by the authors of the chapter)

| Text | Commentary |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| When <u>you</u> look at a coal fire you sometimes see little spurts of flame. | Description of an observational situation; the reader is addressed |
| These are really small jets of gas which come out of the hot coal and burn. | Explanation of the observation |
| About two hundred years ago, <u>a man called William Murdoch</u> saw these gas flames. | Narration: Introduction of a (historical) character |
| They gave <u>him</u> the ideas of making gas. | Narration: The character's thoughts |
| <u>He</u> put some coal in a copper kettle and heated it on a fire. | Narration: Description of an experiment by the character |
| When gas came out of the spout, <u>he</u> lit it. | Narration: Description of an experiment by the character |
| This made <u>him</u> think that <u>he</u> could use gas to light his house. | Narration: What the character concludes from his experiments |

The ensuing text describes the progress of gas lighting and the development of further machines, such as the gas-cooker and gas-fires. These descriptive passages refer to contemporary times, when large gasworks had been erected in towns. Arriving at this point, the text provides a quite complex explanation of how coal is manufactured in order to create gas, coke and so-called by-products, such as plastics and medicines. Later on, another story is told about the discovery of a huge gas field in the Sahara Desert (p. 16). The text goes on like that, blending descriptive, narrative, and explanatory sections.

Like the Ladybird book on gas, the other picturebooks in our corpus combine the text types of description, narration, and explanation. The boundaries between the three text types, however, are porous and variable. As *The Public Services. Gas* demonstrates, there is an area of overlap, in which description blends into explanation or narration, while narration seems to flow into description or explanation. These mixed modes emphasize that even the texts in descriptive picturebooks tend to swift between description, narration, and explanation. This blending of text types serves multiple functions: It introduces a sense of variety in order to entertain the reader and to avoid the impression of boredom, which may happen when a text merely consists of descriptive and/or explanatory passages. In addition, this variation may entice the reader's curiosity, since she is invited to empathize with the characters introduced in the anecdotes and historical sections that belong to the text type of narration.

In relation to our corpus, we observe that description always precedes explanation, as description seems to be regarded as a precondition to understand the elaboration on the causes and reasons for the events and entities described. Sometimes authors appeal to the reader's active participation by inviting her to do some experiments or tests. In *'The Public Services' electricity*, the reader is asked to blow up a balloon, rub it on her pullover and then place the balloon on the wallpaper. The astonishing result is that the electric charge will make the balloon stay there (p. 8). Hence, the reader is learning by doing and potentially better prepared at understanding the ensuing explanation of how electricity works.

In this regard, narration can either function as a complement or extension to description, as these narrative inserts are usually followed by explanations. With respect to the amount of text that can be ascribed to the three text types, description and explanation have an equal share, while narration is less dominant, often having a subservient function.

Nevertheless, the anecdotes about famous people who have discovered new energy sources or explored new territories for the exploitation of coal, oil, and gas introduce another concept which is relevant for descriptive picturebooks, namely the close connection between providing information and individual characters. Thus, the reader is encouraged to realize that such a complex issue as energy cannot be fully grasped without considering the people behind it, whether scientists, workers in a coal mine or on the oil fields, machine drivers, and workers at factories and power plants, let alone electricians and people working in the public energy services. Representing these people and their specific capabilities and tasks introduce the child reader into the world of labor. Moreover, the reader can ascertain that many people need to cooperate in order to produce electricity and other

means of energy. Another aspect in relation to the representation of individual characters consists in evoking emotional stances on behalf of the reader.

On closer consideration, one can recognize typical frames related to the presentation of energy sources. An overarching frame refers to the contrast between nature, civilization, and science – coal, oil, and gas can be found in nature, but people need to transform them in order to profit from these energy sources. A second relevant frame is the world of labor in connection to the manufacturing of the energy sources. Another one focuses on the household and the child's everyday surrounding, thus emphasizing the impact of these energy sources on the amelioration of people's everyday life conditions. Tightly connected with this frame is the idea to enlist and depict household items and machines that are produced of oil or only function by the usage of electricity, gas, and oil.

Apart from that, the picturebooks' narratives follow two predominant scripts. First, the majority of them provides an historical overview, from pre-modern times to the present. Second, the script is based on everyday routines and observations, such as highlighting the significance of water for human life or referring to the experience of having a well-lit and warm home due to the availability of electricity. These two scripts are interlaced in the picturebooks, thus embedding the topic of energy into a broader context that encompasses historical, cultural, social, and economic aspects.

As for the level and the amount of factual explanation, this depends on the average age group targeted in the picturebooks. Although the grammatical structure of the texts seems to be quite simple with a preference for main clauses, the texts are distinguished by ample use of technical language. The terminology refers to the processes related to the manufacturing and processing of the energy sources as well as the description of the different types of machines which are necessary in the transfer and further processing of oil, coal, and gas. To make this vocabulary more accessible to young readers, the text is often complemented by schematic drawings and lists which pinpoint the respective items and entities. This strategy supports the acquisition of conceptual knowledge, since the technical terms can be related to conceptual classes, such as household items, machines, or vehicles of transportations. Notwithstanding, the demands on the readers are high, as they are asked to learn new words as well as to understand that these newly acquired technical terms are necessary in order to describe and explain the processes behind the production and usage of energy sources.

The authors occasionally use metaphors in order to facilitate the understanding of complicated processes. These metaphors point to essential properties and functions of energy sources, since electricity itself is invisible and coal represents

a mighty treasure for mankind, because it provides heating and electricity and can be used for multiple purposes. In relation to the often-quoted term of “magic”, the discoverers, scientists, and workers in the factories are occasionally compared to “magicians”. This metaphor has two meanings: it implies that these people have replaced magicians and that they have “magical” power, since they are able to turn water, coal, gas, and oil into useful energy sources as well as to use these elements to create new materials such as plastic.

(IN-)COHERENCE OF TEXT AND PICTURES

As the analysis of the descriptive picturebooks has demonstrated, text and pictures often complement each other in the sense that the illustration visualizes the meaning of textual information, whereas texts describe and explain what can be seen in the illustrations. This observation aligns with the category “complementary picturebook”, suggested by Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott (2001, p. 12). Though, applied to the analysis of fictional picturebooks, this category points to the fact that text and pictures fill each other’s gap. With respect to descriptive picturebooks, this category reveals another aspect: Pictures and text support each other as they make the meaning of specific information more explicit to the reader. Correspondingly, authors sometimes use expressions such as “like that in the picture” (Havenhand, 1967, p. 24) or “the illustration shows” (Havenhand, 1966, p. 6). These cross-references directly invite the reader to contemplate the illustration in order to understand the textual information.

Many picturebooks rely on a balance between both modes, providing equal space to text and illustrations. The Ladybird series, for instance, always places the text on the left page and the illustration on the right page. Other picturebooks, however, combine text and pictures in different ways, deviating from a uniform page design. Illustrations stretch on both pages of a doublespread with text sections at the margins, at the top or bottom of the pages. Other strategies consist in combining several illustrations on a doublespread, often with different artistic techniques such as photography and drawing. On these pages, the text is quite reduced in comparison to other doublespreads where the text has a dominant position.

What makes the reading procedure sometimes confusing is the mixture of a continuous text with interspersed short sentences that refer to the images. A case in point is a doublespread in *The magic of coal*. The main text points to a diagram which centers on what happens underground (available at <https://www.bl.uk/childrens-books/articles/non-fiction-books-for-children>). The diagram runs from

the top of the left page in a zig-zag line to the bottom of the right page. Bold red lines point to specific sections of the diagram, complemented by technical terms, such as “The Haulage Engine” or “The Rippers”, whose meaning is explained with a short sentence, if needed. Additionally, twelve characters are depicted in the upper part of both pages. They represent different job positions in a coal mine, such as onsetter, loader, and beltman. This doublespread demands the ability to switch between the diagram, the characters, the main text, and the descriptions of the single parts in the diagram in order to understand the structure of the underground as well as the tasks of the twelve different jobs.

Although text and pictures generally match each other, the information provided by both modes is not always easily accessible. The Ladybird series, for instance, include illustrations that assemble objects, comparable to pictures in concept books. When just looking at these illustrations, it is not quite clear how the objects and machines are connected to the overarching topic of the picturebook. An image in *The Public Services. Electricity* depicts nine household items, such as a vacuum cleaner, a toaster, and a refrigerator. Only by reading the text, the reader may ascertain that these objects need electricity in order to function. A similar illustration in the book *The story of oil* is even more enigmatic, as it shows a water bowl, a radio, glasses, a screwdriver, and a ball pen. Only the text solves the mystery, as these are objects made of petrochemicals which are by-products of oil.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provided an overview on the strategies used by the authors and illustrators of five descriptive picturebooks in order to create a balance or even coherence between text and pictures. This conceptualization is far from self-evident and asks for different solutions which are dependent on the subject, the age of the addressed readers and the artistic techniques. Typically, this book genre combines three text types, description, narration, and explanation. A large number of descriptive picturebooks have fictional or narrative sections, thus building a connection to fictional picturebooks. Moreover, descriptive picturebooks use technical terms which are essential for the understanding of the presented subjects, thus introducing the child reader to technical language. Depending on the topic, descriptive picturebooks also include rather abstract illustrations and designs, such as diagrams, schemata, and lists as well as different text segments, such as headings, subtitles, short references, and single words printed in italics or bold letters. These strategies might facilitate the process of knowledge acquisition. Moreover, they

demand a high cognitive competence, namely the facility to distinguish between these specific linguistic and visual patterns as well as to grasp their meaning.

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ARCHITECTURE AND CITY MAPS



14. Stepping into the world of houses. Children's picturebooks on architecture

Marnie Campagnaro

Abstract Today's editorial output of nonfiction picturebooks about the features of houses has become rather diversified. The works range from creative proposals for infants right up to ingenious picturebooks illustrating house-building techniques or historical developments of architecture. These picturebooks often use hybridized narrative forms. This chapter aims to outline the characteristics of contemporary non-fiction picturebooks about architecture, with a view to proposing a taxonomy for classifying the main narrative solutions.

Keywords houses, architecture, taxonomy, hybridization

INTRODUCTION

The house is an inescapable *topos* of children's literature. In its multiple variations (shelter, nest, hut, house, castle, urban cluster and so on), it gives shape to various forms of human habitation and embodies one of the most beloved and sacred places in human existence, a space in which to mull over one's condition, build relationships with others and outline the perimeters of our existence in the world (Downey, 2013).

However, the representation of the house in children's literature was significantly redefined by urban, social and cultural transformations after the Second World War. There are many reasons for that. Firstly, after the Second World War, many European countries carried out monumental urban reconstruction plans to provide their citizens or war-time refugees with a new home considering the thousands of homes destroyed during the air raids. In other cases, the urban reconstruction plan was put into action in response to mass exodus phenomena that drove the rural

population to seek a better life in the city or in other European countries. Thirdly, familial, social, and cultural transformations played a fairly important role, from the mid-Sixties onwards establishing new forms of housing that could intercept and respond to changes in lifestyles. Finally, children experienced a completely different use of open-air and closed spaces in their life. The public, socialising space of the streets, courtyards, riverbanks, fields, and forests would be encountered in a decreasingly way compared to the past and the private, individualising space of domestic environments would acquire more and more importance and would become a new challenging educational space. This transformation of the use of the home led to a modification in the representation of the traditional housing models in children's literature.

20th century architecture obviously contributed to embracing this newly centralized role of the home. The futuristic experimentation of some of the most famous 20th century architects managed to predict the needs, trends, and desires of a rapidly transforming society (for example, planning less clearly-divided, larger and lighter, brighter environments, designed to be spaces for socialisation; a move towards greater contact between man and nature; use of innovative materials and a focus on environmental impact). Their works helped forge the image of modern urban society. Noteworthy residential projects included the Prairie-style houses by Frank Lloyd Wright (1901–1910), Casa Batllò by Antoni Gaudí i Cornet (1904–1906), Villa Savoye by Le Corbusier (1931), the Glass House by Philip Johnson (1949), or the Gehry Residence by Frank Gehry (1978).

It is not that strange, then, if children's literature – in the particular narrative form of the picturebook – was deeply affected by these changes, changes that have been the subject of numerous studies by various European researchers (Campagnaro, 2019; Goga, 2019; Hayward & Schmiedeknecht, 2019; Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2019; Meunier, 2019; Narančić Kovač, 2019; Ramos, 2019; Zago, Callegari & Campagnaro, 2019). These were, however, studies that only and exclusively considered fiction picturebooks. Studies of nonfiction picturebooks dedicated to the house and, more generally, to architecture are rather rare¹ and in several cases are penalized by a methodology that is not always strict, more linked to the description of the content of the picturebooks than to their interpretation.

1 An example of this can be found in an Italian study which examined a selection of more than 150 picturebooks as “a support for the educational process concerning heritage and whose specific system of representation is architectural design” (Luigini, 2019, p. 162). The picturebooks studied were classified according to the following categories: stories set within invented architecture; stories containing authorial architecture; travel books; non-fiction books; books published by architects; architecture monographs.

The aim of this chapter is to fill this scientific void, outlining the characteristics and innovations – in terms of content and iconographic representations – of non-fiction picturebooks dealing with houses and architecture since the second half of the 20th century, with a view to proposing a taxonomy for the classification of some narrative solutions.

The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I will briefly introduce the role of the house and architecture in nonfiction picturebooks, describing three historical case studies that may help to explain why nonfiction picturebooks about houses and architecture are worthwhile study objects. In the second part, I will introduce a selection of nonfiction and hybrid nonfiction picturebooks on this topic that have developed, organized, or interpreted this subject through some architectural features. The goal is to organize this material according to a taxonomic system, which may possibly lead to further research questions and open new research paths.

HOUSE, ARCHITECTURE AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: THREE CASE HISTORIES

Fictional homes are considered by various children's literature scholars (Dewan, 2004; Reimer, 2008; Krogstad, 2016) as spaces of personal characterization and psychological, cultural, and socio-historical evolution. The house is intended primarily as a physical place where the family comes together, and where the protagonists' primary needs are generally met. Houses and architecture in children's stories are also relevant because they reveal the quality of human relations within their walls and outside the family circle.

There are two aspects that must nonetheless be considered in the relationship between children's literature and architecture. The first aspect concerns the relationship that some architects and interior designers established with books they read as children. In certain interviews, they stated that those books had a real impact on their imagination as children and even conditioned the way they view architectural spaces as adults. One might refer, for example, to statements made by American designers like Ellie Cullman² about *Eloise* (1955) by Kay Thompson and Hilary Knight or Sheila Bridges³ about the picturebook *The Snowy Day*

2 "I grew up in a modest home in Brooklyn and Hilary Knight's *Eloise* illustrations opened a new world for me. I was totally transfixed by the interior of the Plaza Hotel" (Cullman, as cited in Hong, 2018, no page).

3 "I can't help but notice Keats' stunning use of color, pattern, and collage. For instance, in *The Snowy Day*, there's that peony pink bathtub on the shimmering tiled floor. Gorgeous!" (Bridges, as cited in Hong, 2018, no page).

(1962) by Ezra Jack Keats. The second aspect concerns the ability of the visual metaphors of literature to contribute to the construction of an aesthetic approach and the creation of architectural visions in children and adults. Some studies (Ebrahimi, Akbari & Haghjoue, 2016) demonstrated how children's literature can, for example, provide architects with ideas and inspiration to learn "through the observation of rules governing the structure of a literary work, through the study of the writer's style to express the essence of the overall plan" (p. 1159). Children's literature can turn out to be a strategic ally for architects because it is able to coax out "design ideas to create an appropriate architectural space for a children's audience" (p. 1155) and can even inspire their architectural work because "in the structure and atmosphere of poetry and fiction for children, there are qualities that can be reproduced in architecture" (p. 1161).

If, as we have highlighted in the introduction, there are plenty of studies of representation of the home in fiction picturebooks, very little research, however, has been conducted on homes and architecture in nonfiction.

This is in sharp contrast not only to the interest these books may potentially arouse in their growing young readership, but it is also in contrast to the rich offer of the publishing market. Whether kids have an interest in architecture or simply marvel at engineering, nonfiction picturebooks feature something for them. This typology of books supports children's understanding of architecture and the places where they live, play, sleep, eat, and interact with other people. Children often ask how houses are built and how buildings and cities are planned, and these picturebooks help answer their questions both verbally and visually, entertaining and educating them in the process.

Innovative picturebooks about the shapes and structural features of houses or the diffusion of our architectural heritage were already around in the 1970s and 1980s. Many examples of nonfiction picturebooks were published in those two decades, but only some of them really shaped the genre. This is because their authors introduced new approaches in the picturebook-making process. I would like to discuss three examples because they introduced some innovative elements which enrich the analyse of my taxonomic categories such as the role of skilful pictures to explain and promote urban and architectural differences (*Book of Cities*), the importance of technical and paratextual components such as sketches, graphic layouts, and table of contents (*Castle*), and the use of architectural hybrid narratives (*Anno's Journey*).

The *Book of Cities* is a nonfiction picturebook written in 1975 by the Italian author and illustrator Piero Ventura. Ventura's picturebook is divided into four chapters (living in the city, travelling around the city, working in the city, and

having fun in the city), and depicts everyday life and social scenes across eighteen different cities. Ventura takes us on an entertaining cultural trip around the world: different kind of houses and buildings (small houses, block of flats, a house boat, cathedrals, Buddhist monasteries), different ways of getting round the city (like cars, buses, underground and overground trains), various places of work (shopping malls, Middle Eastern bazaars). The incredibly detailed illustrations of the *Book of Cities* show how differently people live, work, travel, and have fun in the major cities around the world.

Castle (1977) by David Macaulay, was awarded the Caldecott Honor in 1978. This picturebook provides a detailed illustrated description of the fictional Aberwyvern castle, built between 1283 and 1288. Like many of Macaulay's other works about buildings and architecture, the book gives a written description of how the castle was constructed, accompanied by pen and ink drawings. The book describes in great detail the workers involved in building a medieval castle and the traditional tools they would have used. Although the castle is fictional, it is based on a real historical context. Macaulay sets the construction of Aberwyvern castle in North West Wales between 1283 and 1288, during the reign of King Edward I of England. It was a period in which a number of castles were built to support Edward's conquest of Wales. The layout and architecture of Aberwyvern castle bears close resemblance with the Welsh castles that Macaulay visited as a young boy.

The third picturebook is *Anno's Journey* (1977) by Mitsumasa Anno. Anno's works are famous for their carefully drawn, meticulous details and bird's-eye view composition. *Anno's Journey* follows the protagonist, Anno, as he travels through the streets and countryside of Northern Europe (Denmark, England, Germany, and France). But rather than merely telling Anno's story, this wordless picturebook contains the stories of each hamlet, farmyard, circus, church, and town square visited by Anno in visually rich and often surprising details (Fig. 14.1). The basic purpose of these picturebooks is to inform, instruct and hopefully enlighten the readers. But, as we know, sometimes that is not enough with children. An effective nonfiction picturebook should animate and bring its subject to life. It should "create a vivid and believable world that the reader will enter willingly and leave only with reluctance" (Freedman, 1992, p. 3). This is the case of these three picturebooks. Their authors were particularly successful in reinventing traditional informational picturebook-making and launching new artistic styles and media combinations in architectural picturebooks. Piero Ventura placed great emphasis on visual accuracy in order to stimulate the reader "to use multiple modes (words and images) simultaneously to gain meaning, rather than prioritizing one mode over the other" (Shimek, 2018, p. 519). Macaulay's illustrations combine superb



Figure 14.1 *Anno's Journey* (1977), by Mitsumasa Anno, Collins.

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design with extremely precise information about building technology. Anno's illustrations contain hidden jokes and puzzles that are intended to amuse readers and lead them into imaginative conclusions about more complex concepts connected with time and space. These three picturebooks underline the importance of using synergistic modes in nonfiction picturebooks, and of emphasizing the blending of visual and textual information and peritextual features.

NONFICTION PICTUREBOOKS ON ARCHITECTURE: A TAXONOMIC PROPOSAL

A special section of the Bologna Children's Book Fair Award 2018 dedicated to picturebooks on art, architecture & design confirmed that some nonfiction picturebooks on this topic have special key traits. They display an original interweaving of visual and verbal codes and an engaging visual information system. Words usually describe the goals and functions of architecture; pictures reproduce the building elements (sections, inner parts, etc.) or recreate the different phases of the building process thanks to an outstanding design. The dynamics of architectural technology are explained through drawings, layouts, building schemes, and cross-sections using a very appealing typographic format. They often include infographics, non-linear reading, designed fonts, biographical notes about architects'

lives or they outline the connections between the creation of a building and different social constraints or needs connected with political facts or cultural trends.

Some picturebooks offer readers a far more complex learning experience. They are full of graphically designed features that not only make the book visually appealing to young readers but also require them to jump back and forth between the verbal and the visual codes to deeply explore them. It is assumed that

reading a picturebook is not merely a matter of engaging with the structure and subject matter in the pictures and the text. To the child and the experienced reader alike, the picturebook is a normative space that signals implied readership, explicit and implicit ideology, and historical and cultural contexts. (op de Beeck, 2018, p. 20)

Reading nonfiction picturebooks on architecture is quite demanding because readers are invited to reflect and draw conclusions on how architecture is able to respond to social problems and give effective answers towards future challenges, like for instance creating supportive communities, promoting cultural diversity and developing environmental sustainability.

The contemporary publishing landscape of nonfictional picturebooks on architecture is extremely rich and diversified, and it is not easy to summarize their characteristics and new aspects in terms of contents and iconographic representations (Fig. 14.2).



Figure 14.2 Overview of some contemporary nonfictional picturebooks on architecture.

This is the reason why I would like to describe and organize this huge variety according to a taxonomic system. This basic classification should help to document the richness and potential of this research field, then interpret it and open a debate for further analysis.

I built my taxonomical model according to Nikola von Merveldt's (2018) study on informational picturebook features, Jörg Meibauer's (2015) taxonomy of picturebooks and Christine Pappas' (2006) reflections on the information book genre and above all on the "atypical, hybrid texts that include informational-book language along with linguistic features found in stories or poetic language patterns" (p. 243). It is the result of an analysis of a corpus of 20 selected picturebooks on houses and architecture in different languages (Italian, English, French, German, and Polish), for different ages (see Table 14.1), and published between 2008 to 2020. The selection of the picturebooks adhered to three criteria. The first criterion is one of inclusion in that only the topic of the house is considered: picturebooks about house typology, house-building processes, biographies of architects who explored the concept of house living and the quality of relationships inside a house, and so forth. There are two picturebooks that explore not only houses, but also other architectural forms, like ancient buildings (the Parthenon and Notre Dame, among others) or contemporary ones (such as Sydney Opera House and The Louvre Pyramid), but they still remain closely focused on houses, on their historical development or on their interior design. I included only picturebooks which have been published very recently (the oldest ones were published in 2008 but most of them were printed in the last five years) and are still available on the market. The second criterion is related to the quality of the graphic and typographic layout and visual, aesthetic and architectural accuracy. For this reason, the selection includes picturebooks that won prizes, were included in honors lists or received positive reviews. The last criterion refers to the idea that nonfiction picturebooks on architecture "do not just document or illustrate facts" but should "visually organize and interpret them" (von Merveldt, 2018, p. 232).

For my taxonomical proposal, I have organized the corpus of these 20 picturebooks into two main categories: nonfiction and hybrid (Table 14.2).

Within the family of nonfiction picturebooks, according to Meibauer's taxonomy, I have included three other families: early concept books, simple descriptive picturebooks, and complex descriptive picturebooks.

Early concept books are books, usually board books, that show pictures of everyday objects. They might possibly include a word which refers to the object shown in the picture. The main purpose of these works is to help readers to become familiar with the environment of the house and some architectural references.

Table 14.1 The corpus of 20 selected picturebooks on houses and architecture

| Authors | Title | Publishing, House Year | Category | Subcategory | Subsection |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| M. Slack | <i>House: First Words Board Books</i> | Chronicle Books, 2018 | NON-FICTION | Early concept book | - |
| F. Horstschäfer, J. Vogt | <i>Haus [House]</i> | Gerstenberg, 2015 | NON-FICTION | Simple descriptive picturebooks | - |
| J. Merberg, Aki | <i>Baby's First Eames</i> | Downtown Bookworks, 2018 | NON-FICTION | Simple descriptive picturebooks | - |
| M.I. Sanchez Vegara, A. Amar | <i>Zaha Hadid</i> | Frances Lincoln Children's Books, 2019 | NON-FICTION | Simple descriptive picturebooks | - |
| P. Dillon, S. Biesty | <i>The Story of Buildings: World Architecture from the Pyramids to the Sydney Opera House</i> | Walker Books, 2014 | NON-FICTION | Complex descriptive picturebooks | Historical |
| M. Pesce, M. Tonello | <i>Case nel mondo [Houses in the World]</i> | Electakids, 2018 | NON-FICTION | Complex descriptive picturebooks | Geographical/Cultural |
| A. Machowiak, D. Mizieliński | <i>D.O.M.E.K. Doskonałe Okazy Małych i Efektownych Konstrukcji [H.O.U.S.E.: Homes That Are Outrageous, Unbelievable, Spectacular, and Extraordinary]</i> | Wydawnictwo Dwie Siostry, 2008 | NON-FICTION | Complex descriptive picturebooks | Geographical/Cultural |
| D. Cornille | <i>Toutes les maisons sont dans la nature [Who built that? Modern Houses]</i> | Hélium/Actes Sud, 2012 | NON-FICTION | Complex descriptive picturebooks | Technical |
| B. Beck | <i>The Future Architect's Handbook</i> | Schiffer, 2014 | NON-FICTION | Complex descriptive picturebooks | Technical |
| S. Martin, E. Kimpimaki | <i>Architect Academy: Are You Ready for the Challenge?</i> | The Ivy Press, 2016 | NON-FICTION | Complex descriptive picturebooks | Technical |
| C. Lazzari | <i>Come casa mia. Viaggio nel mondo dell'architettura [Like my house. A Journey Through Architecture]</i> | Editoriale Scienza, 2016 | NON-FICTION | Complex descriptive picturebooks | Technical |

| Authors | Title | Publishing, House Year | Category | Subcategory | Subsection |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| J. Winter | <i>The World Is Not a Rectangle: A Portrait of Architect Zaha Hadid</i> | Beach Lane Books, 2017 | NON-FICTION | Complex descriptive picturebooks | Biographical |
| Á. LeÓN | <i>Lina. Avventure di un'architetta [Lina. The adventures of an architect]</i> | Topipittori, 2019 | NON-FICTION | Complex descriptive picturebooks | Biographical |
| P. Geis | <i>Frank Lloyd Wright: Meet the Architect!</i> | Princeton Architectural Press, 2019 | NON-FICTION | Complex descriptive picturebooks | Biographical |
| A. Demois, V. Godeau | <i>Cache-cache Ville [Hide and Seek City]</i> | Editions du Seuil, 2018 | HYBRID | Simple descriptive/narrative picturebooks | Fictional narrative in factual context |
| F. Viva | <i>Young Frank Architect</i> | MOMA Museum of Modern Art, 2013 | HYBRID | Complex descriptive/narrative picturebooks | Fictional narrative in factual context with factual elements |
| M. Meredith, H. Sample | <i>Case in vendita [Houses for sale]</i> | Canadian Centre for Architecture/Corraini, 2019 | HYBRID | Complex descriptive/narrative picturebooks | Fictional narrative in factual context with factual elements |
| J. D'aam | <i>The Dutch Look at a House/ Gli olandesi vedono una casa</i> | Corraini 2020 | HYBRID | Complex descriptive/narrative picturebooks | Fictional narrative in factual context with factual elements |
| S. Guernaccia | <i>I tre porcellini [The Three Little Pigs]</i> | Corraini, 2008 | HYBRID | Complex descriptive/narrative picturebooks | Fictional narrative in fictional context with factual elements |
| M. Bellei | <i>Mille case per mille storie [A thousand houses for a thousand stories]</i> | Fatatrac, 2018 | HYBRID | Complex descriptive/narrative picturebooks | Fictional narrative in fictional context with factual elements |

Table 14.2 A taxonomic proposal for classifying the main narrative solutions in nonfiction picturebooks on architecture

| Nonfiction Picturebooks | | | Hybrid Picturebooks | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Early concept book | Simple descriptive picturebooks | Complex descriptive picturebooks | Simple descriptive/narrative picturebooks | Complex descriptive/narrative picturebooks | Fictional narrative in fictional context with factual elements | |
| Pictures & labels (isolated words or phrases) | Pictures & simple information (single-sentence or sets of sentences that are ordered or somehow organized around actions, environments or people) | Historical WHEN The most relevant paratextual framing: TIMELINES, HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT LAYOUT | Geographical/Cultural WHERE The most relevant paratextual framing: MAPS, PORTRAITS OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES | Technical WHAT The most relevant paratextual framing: GRAPHIC LAYOUTS, TABLE OF CONTENTS, SUMMARY, NARRATIVE OR NON-NARRATIVE DIALOGUE BUBBLES | Biographical WHO The most relevant paratextual framing: AUTHOR'S NOTES, PHOTOS OR DRAWINGS, BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES | Fictional narrative in fictional context with factual elements (factual elements like those from the Complex descriptive picturebooks category) |

House (2018) is a kit with 5 miniature board books for toddlers (see Table 14.1 for picturebook examples mentioned in the following paragraphs). Each book features different rooms, including furniture and objects, in the house: the living room, bathroom, kitchen, bedroom and garage.

Simple descriptive picturebooks are nonfiction picturebooks which include a series of picture-text combinations. Pictures do not contain many details and written texts are not very long, “a minimal text consists of at least two sentences or utterances” (Meibauer, 2015, p. 67). These picturebooks are quite useful in offering pre-readers more detailed information about the typology of house (a tall or short house), its environment (a house in the city, an igloo), its function, a few architectural features or in providing an encounter with well-known modern houses like in the picturebook *Baby's First Eames* (Merberg & Aki, 2018) or renowned architects like *Zaha Hadid* (Sánchez Vegara & Amar, 2019).

Complex descriptive picturebooks are informational picturebooks that contain a complex and challenging interweaving of visual and verbal codes and a high degree of scientific and aesthetic accuracy. Contrary to Meibauer's taxonomical model, I have integrated complex descriptive picturebooks with four new different subsections which are more strictly connected to the paratextual framing like author's notes, prefaces, bibliographies, maps, timelines, table of contents, index, text boxes, and appendices (von Merveldt, 2018, p. 241)

The first subsection is the ‘historical’ one which focuses on the historical development of important residential buildings of the past and contemporary architecture around the world. Stunning examples of building cross-sections and cutaways organized according to historical development are included in *The story of buildings* (Dillon & Biesty, 2014).

The ‘geographical/cultural’ subsection refers to nonfiction picturebooks that contain outstanding depictions of houses and buildings, but again the organizational structure is developed according to geographical or cultural priority. These picturebooks usually convey ideas about the richness, cultural diversity and heterogeneous functions of houses around the world. A very good example is the picturebook *H.O.U.S.E. Homes that are outrageous, unbelievable, spectacular and extraordinary* (2012). It presents 35 houses from around the world. Small icons are included in every doublespread with a new house to explain where and when the house was built, what materials were used in its construction and what functions it can serve. The structure of this book is less linear than that of a typical informational picturebook. There are a lot of side stories, comic-style dialogues, icons, and doublespreads with aliens or monsters very loosely related to the house theme. The reader can skip the main text and just read the side notes and curiosities scribbled in the margins.

In the ‘technical’ subsection, the focus is on the house itself, and its building elements and building process; the subsection includes ingenious picturebooks illustrating house-building techniques and structural details like in *The Future Architect’s Handbook* (2014) or in *Come casa mia. Viaggio nel mondo dell’architettura* (2016), cultural changes, creative process, aesthetic ideas and social values behind a building. In many cases, the quality of the graphic and typographic layout is outstanding, like in *Toutes les maisons sont dans la nature* (2012). This picturebook introduces young readers to the conventions and revolutions of architectural history. Cornille’s illustrations are controlled and precise like architectural plans and lead readers to explore the most relevant houses by the greatest architects of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Each chapter starts with a traced snapshot of the architect, putting faces to the names of Le Corbusier, Charles and Ray Eames, Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright, Frank Gehry, Rem Koolhaas, and Shigeru Ban, to name but a few. The explanations of the innovation within the creative process of these architects are entirely left to the thoughtful executed drawings by Cornille in super-fine coloured felt pens.

Finally, the last subsection is the ‘biographical’ one. These picturebooks portray the lives of a few famous architects. In some cases, biographical notes and sketches of their architectural masterpieces can be elaborated in very unusual and innovative ways as in the picturebook *The World Is Not a Rectangle: A Portrait of Architect Zaha Hadid* (2017). The book follows Hadid’s life from her childhood in Iraq to her success as a top architect in London. The author recreates the architect’s ability to synthesize nature’s curves into her buildings in her sinuous illustrations with flowing text.

The second category “hybrid picturebooks” was not present in Meibauer’s model. As the scholar Pappas accurately pointed out (2006), the hybrid nonfiction picturebook is a very rich and complex typology where intertextuality is extremely relevant.

Hybrid texts enact intertextuality; that is, there are communicative occasions where there is the juxtaposing of texts from other genres, where elements from different genres are incorporated or embedded within texts [...]. This intertextuality is a social construction [...], stemming from the particular purposes of the authors to “mix” genres or create new texts, in this case, different atypical information books. (Pappas, 2006, p. 240)

For the purpose of this study, I will limit my analysis to two categories: simple descriptive/narrative picturebooks and complex descriptive/narrative picture books.

The first category includes picturebooks which present simple descriptive/narratives referring to “Fictional narrative(s) set in factual context”. Pictures are quite evocative and often use visual metaphors. Texts are quite short. For this reason, it is not so easy to create picturebooks of this kind. A valid example can be found in the picturebook *Cache-cache Ville* (2018). The two graphic artists develop a fictional and challenging city landscape which allows readers to travel in an urban, graphic, and poetic environment through a magical magnifying glass. They will see through walls, and peep into houses discovering the exciting interiors and weird everyday lives of the inhabitants of this fictional urban landscape.

The “complex descriptive/narratives” family of the hybrid category includes very innovative and challenging picturebooks. While reading these fictional stories, readers are informed and instructed about contemporary architecture and architects, house design, building components (materials, structures, roofs, floors, rooms, doors, windows), design objects and more besides. In the case of “Fictional narrative in factual context with factual elements”, these fictional narratives are able to reproduce a lively and convincing realistic world relating to architecture. In *Case in vendita* (2019), published in collaboration with the Canadian Centre for Architecture, the two authors transform a fictional narrative into a factual double reading itinerary. On the one hand, readers discover a series of houses designed by big names in architecture and the peculiarities of each of them through outstanding drawings printed in five colours, with a black fore-edge and a bright headband. On the other hand, they experience how long and complicated searching for a home can be, above all if you must match unrealistic expectations with striking architectural choices (Fig. 14.3). Throughout its creation, the authors treated this picturebook like an architectural project, “a metaphor for the architectural discipline and its constant search for architecture” (Meredith & Sample, 2019, p. 129). By contrast, in the “Fictional narrative in fictional context with factual elements” subcategory, picturebooks offer readers the opportunity to enjoy fictional narratives, at the same time exploring important historical residential buildings and contemporary architecture around the world as in *The Three Little Pigs* (2009). The author sets this classical fairy tale among the houses of three great architects of the 20th century: Frank Gehry, Philip Johnson, and Frank Lloyd Wright. The endpapers are also full of the well-known design objects which appear in the story. Readers are encouraged to find and recognize them by leafing through the book. The sharp contrast between the fictional tale of old and the current nature of these architectural features helps create a superbly engaging experience for young readers.

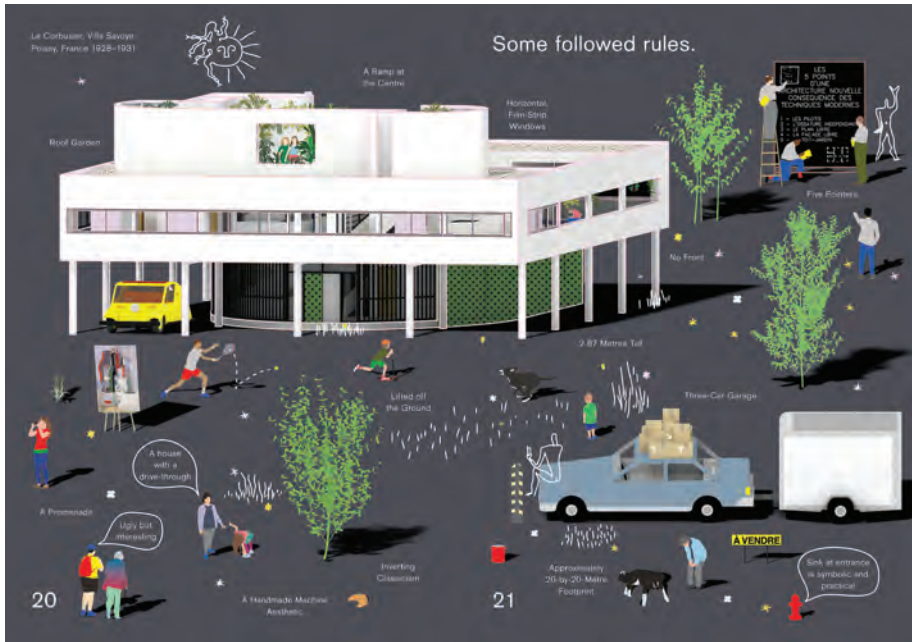


Figure 14.3 *Case in vendita* (2019), by Michael Meredith and Hilary Sample, Canadian Centre for Architecture/Corraini.

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FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

My analysis outlines the characteristics of contemporary nonfiction picturebooks about architecture and proposes a taxonomy for classifying the main narrative solutions. The selected corpus of 20 contemporary picturebooks, which proves to be impressive for the quality and the variety of its artistic styles, its scientific accuracy, and its ability to offer stunning visual conceptualizations that help young readers to step into the world of houses, demonstrates that nonfiction picturebooks about architecture serve important functions such as introducing young readers to the functions of spaces in our history, the knowledge of famous buildings and the stories of great architects who managed to improve the quality of life or work through architecture. They contain historical and political facts, they reveal the secrets of the creative process, they develop aesthetic literacy and they let readers become familiar with the technical side of architecture through both verbal and visual languages.

Although categorization can become a tough task to accomplish in these picturebooks because historical facts, personal memories, and technical details are sometimes mixed in a thrilling way, the five taxonomical categories which have been investigated (see Table 14.2) confirm that this methodology is a highly promising field in nonfiction research.

This classification can be further enriched with other subcategories and in the same cases “there are many intermediate and overlapping categories” (Meibauer, 2015, p. 52). Nevertheless, it could be applied, for instance, to investigate historical, geographical, cultural, and urban differences and transformations among picturebooks over the past century which register a marked reduction in representing public spaces, streets, squares, riverbanks, and woods.

In 2018, architecture and design critic, Alexandra Lange, wrote the book *The design of childhood. How the material world shapes independent kids*. This book investigates the importance of constructing spaces that make people, and children in particular, feel both welcome and independent. The book has five chapters: blocks, houses, schools, playgrounds, and the city. Each single chapter is a space where children interact with design. In many parts of her book, Lange celebrates children's literature and, more specifically, books about houses and spaces as the tools that taught her most of what she needed to know.

This testimony once again confirms, if necessary, the importance of providing nonfiction picturebooks about architecture in childhood. These picturebooks can be considered to be metaphorical seeds that, from a very early age, will potentially contribute to the growth of responsible and culturally aware citizens, who will be able to transform their habitat into a better place for themselves and for others.

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15. Can a city map be a picturebook? Alternative publishing formats for children

Ana Margarida Ramos

Abstract Based on the analysis of maps in children's literature, including picturebooks, this text presents a collection of seven city maps distributed by Pato Lógico, as evidence of an alternative and personal geography. The chapter explores how city maps resemble picturebooks in the way that they create, through text, illustrations, and material support, an emerging narrative about a special place,

Keywords picturebooks, nonfiction, maps, cities, travel guides

INTRODUCTION. NONFICTIONAL GENRES: MAPS AND PICTUREBOOKS

Several authors have analysed the presence and relevance of maps and cartographic information in children's literature (Pavlik, 2010; Druker & Dahlberg, 2012; Sundmark, 2014), including picturebooks (Kümmerling-Meibauer & Meibauer, 2015; Meunier, 2017; Goga & Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2017) in the last years, stressing their contribution to convey different messages and meanings. The main forms used and the functions and roles of maps in book construction and reading processes have been identified in those previous works, as well as the way in which maps make readers engage in the development of specific geographic and spatial competences.

The significance of nonfictional or informative picturebook reading has also been stressed (Palmer & Stewart, 2005; Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007; von Merveldt, 2018). The importance of presenting information through the use of images, schemas, and appealing design in books that promote scientific knowledge

“serve[s] a special comprehension function in that these elements help readers link information – containing portions of the texts” (Donovan & Smolkin, 2002, p. 510). According to Wolfenbarger & Sipe (2007), “Nonfiction picturebooks offer a compelling and readily available resource for raising critical questions about authorial viewpoint, the language of inquiry vs. the language of authoritative statements, and the relationship between image and text in conveying evidence and possibility” (p. 277).

In the case of maps, the analyses published so far are more linked to the functions of those documents inside a narrative or a picturebook than to the maps as objects and autonomous publications. This is probably related to the scarcity of publication of this type of materials, but also to the lack of attention that nonfiction formats still receive from scholars.

The implications of the interpretation of maps and the complexity involved in their creation do not seem to affect their attraction for children, including the very young, probably also due to the symbolic connotation of maps, relevant as clues to discover mysteries or treasures, and their “imaginative power” (Goga & Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2017, p. 1). The advantages in terms of the development of different competences, such as spatial awareness and orientation, but also geography and map literacy, including specific knowledge about the rules of mapping and its specific code and language, have also been stressed by researchers in different areas, from geography studies to literary and cultural studies, including semioticists, for instance. Related to a visual interpretation of space, maps are abstract and coded representations of space, using verbal and visual information, a sort of iconotext.

Christophe Meunier (2017) uses clear examples to identify and define four types of maps in picturebooks, analogue, figurative, model and mind maps, “corresponding to their forms and the mode of artificialisation through the representation chosen by the map-author” (p. 25).

The books under analysis can be included in the second category presented above, the figurative, since, unlike analogue maps, they allow “the map-author greater liberty with the metrical aspects and the graphic code(s) employed” (Meunier, 2017, p. 25). Figurative maps are also characterised by the use of “more freehand drawings and more figurative rather than symbolic elements; also, the preservation of the proportions is not regarded as a priority” (Meunier, 2017, p. 25). Thus, this type of map is not related to the space depicted (real, fantastic, etc.) but to the personal interpretation of the author, or, as Meunier (2017) states, “The point is less to represent a geometrical reality than to express a perceived

reality” (p. 30). Meunier also analyses the relevance of the size and place of the maps in picturebooks, attributing different roles to them. In our corpus, however, as maps are invariably at the centre of the publication (marking/defining the beginning and the end of the story), we could say that they play all the roles described by Meunier: locating the action, expressing the author’s perception and associating a physical and a mental itinerary (p. 32). As far as their functions are concerned, the maps under analysis also combine different ones, because if they are published to serve as travellers’ guides to the readers, they also operate as personal journals or memoirs of the creators, identifying their favourite places and the way they perceive the territory.

“MY CITY” COLLECTION

Pato Lógico, a Portuguese publisher which specialises in children’s books and is well known for the publication of nonfiction books and alternative formats in children’s editions, published a collection of seven city maps entitled “My City”.

This collection includes maps of three Portuguese cities, Viseu, Beja and Coimbra, and a map of Edinburgh (Scotland, United Kingdom), Madrid (Spain), São Paulo (Brazil), and Quito (Equador). Given that the purpose of the collection is to offer a personal view of each place, an illustrator who was born or lives in one of the cities was invited to create their own city map. Comprising a foldout map and a description of 12 different places of interest selected by the artist, each book is then the result not only of each illustrators’ own aesthetic style and illustration technique but also of their personal relationship with the city. With the collaboration of creators such as Susa Monteiro, Ana Seixas, Catarina Sobral, Manuel Marsol, Andrés Sandoval, Marcus Oakley, and Roger Ycaza, each map corresponds to a personal depiction of a territory, a sort of a shared intimate secret between the author and the reader.

The publication of this collection started in 2016, with the first map, *Beja*. More volumes were then added: *Madrid*, *Edimburgo* and *Viseu* in 2017, *São Paulo* in 2018, and, more recently, the maps dedicated to *Coimbra* and *Quito* in 2019. Given the differences between the style of each illustrator and of the city depicted, the format of the map-books emerges as the main cohesive element, since all the books have to follow the same construction rules, established by the publisher and sent to all the creators upon invitation to participate in this series of maps-books. Peritextual features are therefore decisive in the creation of a unified collection, defining ways of reading and interaction between the volumes.

CORPUS ANALYSIS

The collection's peritextual features: format, dimensions, binding, packaging and illustrations

Each volume includes a large-size folded map in a coloured and illustrated slipcase, printed on heavyweight matte paper. The variation of colours between volumes is significant, as well as the illustration style and technique, the colours and dominant shapes and the perspective adopted in each map. These aspects are indeed responsible for the diverse nature of the collection, since all the other peritextual features are strictly defined beforehand by the organiser of the collection. Each slipcase also functions as the book's cover and back cover, including all the mandatory bibliographic information. The cover (Fig. 15.1) includes the name of the collection, the name of the city and the identification of the author at the top, and below is an illustration (that may be a repetition of an illustration appearing inside



Figure 15.1 “My city” collection (slipcases), by Ana Seixas (2017), Andrés Sandoval (2018), Manuel Marsol (2017), Roger Ycaza (2019), Catarina Sobral (2019), Marcus Oakley (2017), and Susa Monteiro (2016). Pato Lógico.

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or a different one or even modified one). The back cover includes a brief presentation (first person text) of the author and of his/her relationship with the city (it could be the place where he/she was born or the place where he/she has lived/lived for a long period of time); a world map on which the country is identified, as well as the country map with the location of the city. Various data about the city are also presented in a scheme format (country, region, district, area, inhabitants, official languages, the demonym/gentilic and the geographic coordinates), along with the bibliographic data of the book and a description¹ of the collection's project.

Each map measures 60 cm x 96 cm and is folded in half and then four more times, creating a 12-page accordion-book (30 cm x 16 cm). Each page includes an illustration and a brief text dedicated to a special place of the city chosen by the author. Those 12 places are identified by their numbers in the map and they constitute the verso of the map, once unfolded. The maps also include a brief global description of the city. Other pieces of information such as the names of the streets and neighbourhoods can also be included in the maps, but freedom regarding the presentation of information, colours, shapes and text, scale, perspective and proportions is unconditional. They also include drawings of special buildings and well-known monuments, or very small, unidentified ones. In the majority of cases, the authors include characters (people and animals) in the map, adding narrative details to the geographic information and "humanising" the cities. These aspects are particularly relevant in the case of the three Portuguese cities.

The illustration technique is also quite different from book to book, as are the colours used by the creators, with consequences for the realism or detail of the images, for instance, which varies a lot. The use of intraiconic text is very frequent in Marsol's illustrations, and is also present in a few of the images by Sobral, Oakley, Yzaca and Seixas. Marsol's level of minutia and detail allows the inclusion of some interesting visual games, such as the introduction of intertextual references, by depicting several children's books published by Pato Lógico in a Madrid bookshop, among many others, including his own map, in a sort of visual *mise en abyme* (Fig. 15.2). A similar procedure is also visible in one illustration by Yzaca, where the announcement of his book launch is also included in an image, stressing the metafictional dimension of the collection. In addition, the authors handwrite all the information in the volumes, which reinforces the idea of personal appropriation of the space, but it also gives a more personal and artistic touch to the maps. Only two maps (*Madrid* and *Quito*) have

1 "Cities of the world to unfold and to discover through the eyes, hands and feet of the illustrators who inhabit them".



Figure 15.2 *Madrid* (2017), by Manuel Marsol, Pato Lógico.

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an indication of orientation, a compass rose and a simple sign pointing north, respectively; information about scale is absent, contradicting the idea of rigorous scientific data (Pavlik, 2010, p. 36). This highlights the idea of these maps being more figurative than analogue (Meunier, 2017) and that their inconsistencies encourage readers' personal interpretation and "the active, participatory role that is required when viewing/reading maps" (Pavlik, 2010, p. 35).

The collection's reading proposal

The child is conceived as the first (but not the only) implied reader, whose cultural and geographical repertoire will be enriched and widened through the reading/exploration of these maps (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003; Nodelman, 2008). The inclusion of personal information and a first and subjective point of view sets the difference between this collection of "figurative maps" and "analogue maps", by creating a sort of alternative geography, although equally true and accurate.

Transformed into a personal guide of the city, where subjective meanings are added to the different places of interest represented, each map also creates an emerging narrative by the means of text, illustrations and/or material support (even if made of fragments) about a special place. In this sense, these city maps seem to share several elements with the picturebook format, as well as travel guides or even, in some cases, with the memoir genre, since the authors incorporate personal stories and references regarding some of the chosen spots.

Each map includes not only the main and best-known aspects of the cities, like the significant monuments, but also lesser-known places and almost private spots, revealing a hidden part of the depicted places, a sort of a personal secret. In some way the revelation has two sides, since the author also unwraps some of their own private information (favourite places, personal habits, tastes, and routines).

The visual and verbal discourse can vary substantially between volumes, according to the author's style and options. But the analysis of all the maps published also shows that the bigger cities, such as São Paulo (Fig. 15.3) or Quito, for instance, seem to pose more challenges in terms of visual representation. By using a different



Figure 15.3 *São Paulo* (2018), by Andrés Sandoval, Pato Lógico.

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scale and even a different perspective (these two maps use the perspective view or first person view instead of the traditional map view), the distance between the reader and the space depicted is bigger in those cases and the city seems a more distant and even a place which is “colder” and impenetrable. The textual elements as well as the 12 selected spots are smaller and more difficult to read and find in the map, since the space is completely occupied by the city, creating an overwhelming sensation of smallness facing a sort of urban jungle. The choice of the colours underlines this trend, since the white background dominates the palette where a restrained set of tones is used, creating a monotonous and very compact landscape, dominated by similar buildings. The illustration technique used in those two maps, by using coloured pencil or brush drawings, explores the details of the depicted elements, stressing the suggestion of size, volume, and massification that, in the case of *Quito*, even the presence of small human figures is unable to erase or diminish completely. In the case of the Portuguese cities, the authors take advantage of their smaller size, allowing the use of a different scale, and of a richer, wider and, in some cases, warmer colour palette and of the coloured background. The scale used allows the inclusion of lots of visual elements, especially buildings and monuments, and several architecture details, in the case of *Beja*, along with transports and several human and animal characters. The cities become smaller and more human, like sets for different stories that can be told. In the case of *Coimbra* and *Viseu* (Fig. 15.4), the visual style of Catarina Sobral and Ana Seixas, respectively, is even more related to a children’s audience, visible in the choice of colours, shapes and forms. In their selection of special spots, these two authors also include plenty of their childhood and adolescent memories, such as schools they attended, parks where they played or their first visit to museums. Even favourite streets and shops are related to memories such as buying school-books or special sweet treats, adding personal notes.

The limited number of roads and geographic elements depicted also has an impact on the simplicity of the two maps, creating the idea of proximity and familiarity, as the cities seem small, suggesting the idea of walking distances. The use of capitals in the lettering and its size and colours also suggests that they are aimed at younger readers. Susa Monteiro, the author of *Beja*, seems particularly concerned with the realistic depiction of architectural heritage, representing monuments in a very recognisable way. In this case, the use of a dark grey background allows the white traditional Portuguese monuments to stand out visually, dominating the central space of the map. In addition, this map includes a wide range of characters taking part of the city’s life in darker colours, and in different sizes and more peripheral places. The reading of the



Figure 15.4 *Viseu* (2017), by Ana Seixas, Pato Lógico.

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12 texts regarding *Beja* even allows the reader to identify the author in some of these illustrations, since she talks about her personal preferences, such as riding a bike or reading in open air spaces. The illustration technique reinforces the details, by the use of thin marker pens, and creates proximity with the visual style of a graphic diary. The maps about *Edinburgh* and *Madrid* can be situated between the two extremes previously described because, although they depict capitals and big cities, they tend to represent them in a simpler way, either by taking advantage of a more geometrical style (*Edimburgo*), or by exploring the potential of a lighter and softer-coloured palette and of a combined technique of illustration which resorts to different painting and drawing materials (*Madrid*). In both cases, the work of selection and simplification done by the authors is evident, reducing the information in order to facilitate reading, especially by young readers, and interaction with the map. As a sort of first contact with a foreign city, the maps function as orientations and guides aimed at helping readers discover the most relevant (or most curious and hidden) aspects of the place; therefore the idea is not to include all the information available. By doing so,

they seem more concerned with the cultural aspect of the cities and not with the geographical one.

But if, visually, the maps in this collection can appeal to different audiences – adults, children or both – the texts about the 12 places chosen by the authors seem, with the few exceptions already mentioned, to be addressed to adults, stressing adults’ routines, preferences, and habits (Table 15.1). This is particularly evident in

Table 15.1 Places depicted in each map

| | Viseu | Coimbra | Beja | Madrid | Edinburgh | São Paulo | Quito | Total |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------|------|--------|-----------|-----------|-------|-----------|
| Streets; Neighbourhoods; Surroundings | xx | xxx | x | xxx | xx | x | x | 13 |
| Squares | x | | x | | | | x | 3 |
| Museums; Exhibitions/ Cultural Centres; Art Galleries | x | x | xx | xx | xx | x | xx | 11 |
| Theatres; Cine- mas; Show Rooms | x | x | x | xx | xx | x | x | 9 |
| Castles; Palaces | | | x | x | | | | 2 |
| Schools; Universities | x | xx | | | | | | 3 |
| Parks; Gardens | xxx | xx | xxx | | xx | xxx | x | 14 |
| Markets; Fairs | x | | | x | | x | | 3 |
| Shops; Shopping Centres | | x | | | xx | x | x | 5 |
| Bookshops | | | | x | x | | | 2 |
| Libraries | | | x | | | | | 1 |
| Restaurants; Coffee Shops; Bakeries | | | | | | x | xx | 3 |
| Pubs; Taverns; Bars | x | | | x | x | | xx | 5 |
| Stadium | | | | x | | | | 1 |
| Train line | | x | | | | | | 1 |
| Cycle path | | | X | | | | | 1 |
| Sounds | | x | | | | x | | 2 |

references to pubs, taverns and bars, for instance, but also in references to restaurants or shops. Even cultural or outdoor experiences depicted do not relate easily to the children's imagination, since they are perceived from an adult's point of view.

Maps, picturebooks: both or neither?

As hybrid objects, the maps/books under analysis combine elements from different literary genres, such as short stories and memories, but also from nonfictional ones, since they are maps and include accurate information regarding specific places, their location, history, and data. The reading possibilities are, therefore, wide, as are the potential readers, depending on the different uses of each map-book.

Even if some aspects are common to all the volumes, some of them can be more objective and informative and others can be more subjective and personal, depending on the creator's style. In fact, by reading the texts about the 12 highlights of each city, the reader discovers not only information about the city, but also information about the authors and their habits, routines and preferences, their favourite places, food and drinks or even their special, beloved football club.

A more rigorous reading of these publications concludes that they do not respect the rules of map-making, especially in geographical terms, since they do not include a scale, orientation, or even a unified/cohesive perspective. As travel guides, even if they include some relevant references and important spots, the choice is neither objective nor rigorous, depending on the tastes and personality of the authors. As picturebooks, they lack a coherent narrative, being more episodic and presenting a fragmented discourse. Combining factual information with personal perspective, the texts could also be read as chronicles, another "hybrid" literary genre that bridges fiction and nonfiction, literature and journalism.

The hybrid and ambiguous condition of these maps can, in fact, define the collection, illustrating the possibilities of contemporary trends in terms of the publishing industry. The main trends in the creation of contemporary picturebooks in Portugal include: the introduction of elements that foster surprise, humour, challenges, and reflection; the growth of the illustration inside the picturebook, occupying entire book pages, as well as its displacement into other parts of the book (back cover, cover sheet, endpapers...); the investment in playfulness via the introduction of visual games, promotion of intertextual readings and parody, as well as the construction of visual narratives and parallel ones; and the relevance of book design and book materiality, by creating special art reading objects (artefacts). The experimental creative efforts by special publishers such as Pato Lógico, known for creating children's books in different formats, stresses the potential of children's

literature and children's books and their singularity, by presenting new and challenging proposals and by defying traditional classification in terms of genres and formats, but also in terms of readers, becoming gradually crossover, as the books analysed here illustrate. Therefore, they seem to create a new "genre" of format, combining elements of several different ones.

FINAL REMARKS

One of the most striking aspects of the "My city" collection is the diversity of places depicted, in terms of location (5 different countries), size, and dimension (from a small city in the Portuguese interior with 23,500 inhabitants like Beja, to a big metropolis with more than 12 million inhabitants like São Paulo), with obvious consequences in terms of scale of the different maps. The choice of places seems to be more related to the selection of the illustrators and their special relationship with a specific city than to a marketing strategy connected to tourism, for example. In the case of the Portuguese cities, it is interesting to see that they are smaller cities in the interior, rather than big cities, such as Lisbon or Oporto. In fact, only three of the maps dedicated to countries outside Portugal, such as Spain, Ecuador, and Scotland, depict their capitals, Madrid, Quito, and Edinburgh. Nevertheless, regardless of the size and location of the cities, it is curious and relevant to see that all the creators underline the same aspects of a place, establishing a sort of elements that define "city living" or "quality of living". These aspects can be related to cultural and artistic experiences, but also to social interaction and leisure.

The variety of authors has also consequences in terms of the diversity of aesthetic aspects of the illustrations and the maps, visible in the different techniques and colours used. Therefore, each map also functions as an individual portfolio of the creator, illustrating their technique and personal style. In some cases, the inclusion of personal information such as the part of the city where they (have) live(d), the shops where they (used to) buy things, their favourite football club or childhood memories stresses the individuality of the map even more, transforming it into a sort of a personal graphic journal.

The publications seem to aim more at the promotion of the chosen spaces (and illustrators) than to be used as "real" travel maps for travellers and tourists. Each map can be read as an illustrated collection of personal "short stories" about a city, accompanied by their specific location on a map. Therefore, this collection is characterised by its hybridity in terms of genre (or even format), in the sense that each book is, as a special object, both a large-size map and a collection of illustrated stories in the format of an accordion-book.

Peritextual features are relevant elements in terms of unifying the collection, establishing a set of creative rules that all authors must follow. The format, size, type of paper, and folding are common to all the maps, but the content of the map is completely free, creating a diversity of proposals from the same material elements.

In terms of places depicted, the importance of cultural spaces and cultural experiences is evident, related to museums and art exhibition centres, but also concerts, theatre, and cinema. The reference to libraries and bookshops can also be included in this category, with the total of 23 mentions, present in all the maps.

Outdoor spaces, especially those concerning nature such as gardens and parks, are also very frequent: 14 in total. In relation to different activities, such as sport, reading and walking, they seem to establish a sort of special and different natural microcosm in the urban space, connected to leisure, relaxation, and tranquillity. The reference to streets or neighbourhoods is also common (texts underlining different aspects in the area), identifying a sort of special places inside the city, with emphasis on traditional and old parts of the towns, for instance.

With few exceptions, the maps are centred around adults' references and the relevance of places related to social interaction and sensorial experiences underline this perspective. The reference to cultural entertainment (theatre, cinema, music shows) and to eating and drinking places (restaurants, coffee shops, bars, pubs, etc.) is perceived as part of adults' preferences and daily routines and only the maps by Ana Seixas and Catarina Sobral (two of the youngest authors of the corpus) escape this dominant adult perspective to some extent.

Analysis of the places selected by the authors can also provide information regarding identity markers, especially those associated with cultural particularities of the countries, including history, language, music and food, for instance. The reference to special dishes, drinks or activities is frequent in all the maps of countries which are foreign to Portuguese readers, as well as the use of words in different languages contributing to the reader's discovery of new cultures and to the development of their multicultural/intercultural awareness. There are some aspects that can be associated with specific political and social ideologies or, at least, they can have an impact in terms of decision-making regarding life conditions. The valorisation of public transportation and outdoor green spaces as part of the city development, the concern with ecological sustainability, the protection of traditional small shops and of independent commerce, the concern with traditional old neighbourhoods, streets and buildings are values that seem to be present in almost all the volumes. The attention to cultural and historical heritage is perceived in a broad way, including not only art and architecture, but

also the intangible heritage, such as cultural traditions, food and drink, traditional music, and native languages. These values have significant repercussions in terms of the humanisation of the big cities and metropolises, creating a culture of proximity.

In that sense, each map can also be a sort of *manifesto* for a more human and friendly space and way of living in a familiar city, depicted in a very personal and peculiar way. In a certain way, the most striking and unforgettable places and references in each map are not the best-known tourist spots, but the most indistinct and personal ones, presented to readers via an illustrated story. Indeed, each map emerges as a sort of a trip led by a local person, showing the secret and hidden spots ignored by the most famous and acknowledged travel guides.

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THE PICTORIAL TURN



16. Interacting with nonfiction picturebooks in art museums

Betül Gaye Dinç and Ilgım Veryeri Alaca

Abstract This chapter analyses nonfiction picturebooks that ease children’s interactions in art museums as they practice meaning-making of the artworks. First, it examines relations between museums and picturebooks to explain art. Second, it gives examples of books offering sensorial, spatial, hands-on and bodily engagements that educate children on art history via guided play. Thus, it presents how nonfiction picturebooks support understanding of art and museums through guided and embodied experience.

Keywords nonfiction picturebooks, museums, interaction, guided play

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines nonfiction picturebooks that support children’s engagements with artworks in museums. These fabricated spaces foster museum literacy by assessing the artworks on display. Children practice abstract thinking, cultural or geographic mapping, and aesthetic appreciation to fully value the object’s site-specific affordances and significance in relation to its period. Nonfiction picturebooks can ease the task of looking beyond the surface of art objects by providing background details and initiating guided play scenarios that facilitate meaning-making on the path to museum literacy.

Lord (2007) defines education in a museum as “a transformative experience” where art appreciation and change of values may take place (p. 17). The multisensory involvement and physical activities transform a child from a passive receiver of knowledge to “an embodied experiencer” (Birch, 2018, p. 518) and can affect how the artworks are processed and what is retained. Johnson (2017) identifies knowledge and knowing as “embodied, fallible, and perspectival... situated, value

laden and action oriented” (p. 222). As such, is the museum experience sufficient to leave a lasting impression on young minds? Can nonfiction picturebooks reinforce children’s engagement with artworks to make it more memorable?

Reynolds (2012) discusses the spectator’s kinesthetic perception process, citing Grosz’s (2008, p. 72) premise that “Sensation is neither in the world nor in the subject but is the relation of unfolding of the one for the other through a body created at their interface”. Considering the body’s formidable capacity for perception, physical methods of inquiry that instructs children’s playful actions with a certain level of autonomy initiates guided play in museum learning (Weiseberg et al., 2016, p. 178). Picturebooks related to the museums further children’s art-based, experiential and active engagements by offering options to personalize the narration. Recognizing the benefits, museums publish picturebooks to help children navigate the space while suggesting hands-on, kinesthetic involvement to inform and evoke interest in art. The picturebook selections for this study prioritize the transmission of museum content that facilitates gathering information through the sense of the body’s movement and then provides activities as a physical outlet to react to the given content.

This chapter investigates the complementary relationship of learning about and experiencing art to demonstrate this relationship between museums and nonfiction picturebooks. In doing so, an examination is conducted of a selection of nonfiction picturebooks that incorporate sensorial materials or guidance, orient children in space, trigger creative decisions via hands-on activities and heighten museum presence through bodily engagement. Finally, we demonstrate the capacity of these picturebooks to convey information about the museum and trigger children’s deeper involvement with artworks and meaning-making of artistic and curatorial practices while providing an active experience via sensory engagement, performative action, and physical manipulation.

FUSING ART EXHIBITS AND NONFICTION PICTUREBOOKS

Scale aside, picturebooks and artworks in museums stage their visual, textual and material affordances similarly, though as pages and individual pieces respectively. The handling of content that connects them (Nodelman, 2018, p. 19) and strengthens children’s aesthetic understanding is the same handling of content in the selected books that blend fiction and nonfiction to bring children’s world closer to the artistic realm. What differentiates picturebooks from artworks is their varying proximities to the observer (Spector, 1995, p. 17; Moebius, 2017, p. 30) and the difference between how we view the content. Our interaction with the

artworks is confined to the museum usually restricted to a safe distance with the occasional installations that invite touch. However, the nonfiction picturebooks that resemble portable art galleries permit children to experience the art on their own wherever they are (Lechner, 1993, p. 34) and without restrictions. During a visit to the museum, perusing art history picturebooks benefits children's learning that continues even afterward. Yohlin (2012) asserts, "as visual art objects that are already relevant to a child's prior knowledge and experience, picturebooks can be used as natural extensions into museum learning, facilitating the creation of new knowledge through existing knowledge" (p. 261). Kiefer and Wilson (2011) assert that picturebooks (both fiction and nonfiction) should not only inform and develop a better understanding of ourselves and others but also delight (p. 291). As such, many of the museum picturebooks include narratives to explain the presence and behaviors of the characters appearing in the artworks to help children form a connection between the books and the artworks (Yohlin, 2012, p. 261). And since the fictional narrative and nonfiction picturebooks together transmit a symbolic but innocuous space for the viewer to critically reflect upon and physically interact with artworks, they demystify art and make it accessible to children.

The nature of the artwork itself proposes a system of inquiry changing from era to era, artist to artist. Since art is "prefigured in the very processes of living" (Dewey, 2005, p. 24), art as a way of knowing based on experience is flexible and contextual. To understand an artwork, people connect different experiences, think through symbols and metaphors, make meaning from ambiguity, respond through their feelings and bodily involvement (Bruner, 1979, pp. 59–74). Art triggers critical thinking, emotional engagement, and a physical state of perception as revealed in the selected nonfiction picturebooks where information is attained through interaction, contemplation, and sensation. Thus, these nonfiction picturebooks are not so much a replication of the exhibition in narrative form as a repository of inquiry. Thus, recommended activities pique children's interest in the exhibition and ease their meaning-making process before the visit as well as during and after the exhibition.

INTERACTIONS WITH MUSEUM-RELATED NONFICTION PICTUREBOOKS

In the 17th and 18th centuries, visitors to museums were able to touch and hold the art objects (Classen, 2017; Howes, 2014), granting adults multisensory and kinesthetic interactions with the artworks. It was only once concern for preserving the art object's integrity that artworks became strictly an ocularcentric experience

and a museum turned into “a site of pure spectatorship” (Howes, 2014, p. 260). Nowadays, museums are again becoming “sensory playgrounds” (Classen, 2017, p. 17), and curatorial decisions now include how to incorporate touch, smell and taste as well as movement into the outreach programs that are accompanied by picturebooks.

Nodelman (2018) views interactions with picturebooks and museums as quite similar in that both benefit from a playful approach to the object and related information. Art and play are frequently linked since aesthetic activity is often regarded as “an extension and universalization of play, performing durably for whole societies those benefits which play bestows temporarily upon the individual participants” (Hein, 1968, p. 69). Any playful interactions nonfiction picturebooks facilitate not only support the art experience, but also provide the rudimentary terminology needed to acquire museum and artistic literacy. Roskos and Christie (2013) explain that to optimize the literacy experience in a play environment one must offer animated literacy activities that should be done with adults (p. 92). Nonfiction picturebooks are examples of the type of literacy objects that provide directed playful activities. Zosh et al. (2018) instigated a range of free play to guided activities to observe the effects of play on learning and discovered that children benefit from guided play the most (p. 8). Weisberg et al. (2016) describe guided play as, “learning experiences that combine the child-directed nature of free play with a focus on learning outcomes and adult mentorship” (p. 177). Nonfiction picturebooks for museums in particular utilize guided play. The activities therein direct children to observe the artworks and repeat the information through activities and interactions designed to initiate embodied learning. The embodiment, “the enactment of knowledge and concepts through the activity of our bodies” (Lindgren & Johnson-Glenberg, 2013, p. 445), offered in these books is based on “child autonomy and adult guidance” (Weisberg et al., 2016, p. 177) merging into the guided play.

Sensory engagements

As mentioned earlier, art museum visitors were once encouraged to engage in tactile and kinesthetic sensations (Classen, 2017) despite art historians defining the illusion of the senses as a painting’s principle objective (p. 123). Passionate art patrons not only desire to touch the artwork but embody the experience depicted in the artwork attaining closeness to the immersion of the artist into the creative experience. Nodelman (2018) explains “there is something magical about the fact that any one particular combination of canvas and paint that hangs in a museum was once touched by its artist, actually brought into existence by its

creator's hands" (pp. 9–10). And since "touch demands exchange both between bodies and within the self" (Mileaf, 2010, p. 10), tactility provides a significant personal interaction with the picturebook and indirectly with the artwork. Picturebooks can provide background for the artist's sensorial experience relating it to the scene in the artworks. *More than meets the eye* (2003) by Bob Raczka introduces the sensory involvement in the paintings initiating the readers to the artist's sensation. It suggests the smell of the shoes in Van Gogh's *Three Pairs of Shoes*, the sound of the water's voice in Hockney's *A Bigger Splash*, the taste of milk in Vermeer's *The Kitchen Maid* furthering sensorial engagement than just looking at art.

Touch the art: Make Van Gogh's bed (2006) by Julie Appel and Amy Guglielmo as well evokes the senses thus to create a tactile experience. The book reproduces famous Impressionist paintings to appear as if framed and mounted on a wall with information labels giving details of the work like in a museum. The difference, however, is that children may touch these artworks enriched with materials and textures such as the fabric blanket on Van Gogh's bed, the tulle curtain on Morisot's cradle or the sand on Cassatt's beach. Since sensation of touch perception differs dramatically from surface to surface (Hollins & Risner, 2000, p. 702), children benefit from exploring painted textures in real by smoothing the blanket or feeling the sand to gain material awareness and learn to distinguish between smoothness and roughness. Exploring textures while reading is beneficial to consolidating memory as "haptic exploration is consistently more sequential and more time-consuming than visual exploration" (Heller & Gentaz, 2013, p. 41). Hence, the text's direction to touch the art itself expands the experience from the fingertips to the whole body especially when the narrator directs the children to extend their arms and take a peach in Cezanne's *Still Life*. As children touch the imitation skin of the peaches whose real skin can be unpleasant for some, this creates intimacy between the figures and the child reader in a form of guided play that supports memory and learning because children are expected to complete an action related to these textures. Moreover, the story takes children on a circadian circuit from morning to night. As children spend more time reading and feeling this picturebook than looking at the images, they become aware of paintings representing a day cycling through to night-time. The story starts with Van Gogh's bedroom and the concept of starting the day by making the bed, it continues by recommending outdoor activities (e.g. visiting *Water Lilies*) and ends with *Starry Night* as the closing scene and an indication that it is time for bed. The story tells tales of daily life and mundane activities that children can relate to so as to create a connection to art and evoke the emotions encapsulated while reading and touching the book.

Spatial engagements

Museums of necessity put restrictions on their visitors, and therefore being in a museum space requires a certain careful control over our bodies and a heightened sense of proprioception, “the awareness of one’s body in space” (Mileaf, 2010, p.10). Just walking through a museum, regulating the pace and distance from the artworks becomes a bodily performance of the art spectator (Leahy, 2012, p. 75). Adults are accustomed to moderating their behavior based on their surroundings, but children need to be taught. The picturebook *The terrible Captain Jack visits the museum or a guide to museum manners for incorrigible pirates and the like* (2007) by Diane Matyas is essentially a manual for proper behavior in a museum that uses humorous examples to advise children on what not to do in this setting. Space in museums’ nonfiction picturebooks applies to any exhibition place as well as the space around an artwork. By educating children on museum etiquette beforehand creates a familiarity with that space and the concept of behaving according to a certain manner (Falk & Dierking, 2018, p. 123). Hackett et al. (2018) divide interactions in space into the four categories of abstract, physical, social and embodied (pp. 489–502) from which they create a grid that combines these as abstract physical, abstract social, embodied physical, and embodied social. Nonfiction picturebooks employ all four incarnations of these interactions and the combinations. The maps in these picturebooks are abstract physical representations of museum space, the narratives an abstract social commentary on the space, open-ended questions and activities embodied physical usage of the space, and dialogic reading with peers embodied social activity in the space. Thus, nonfiction picturebooks allow children to explore space metaphorically, physically and socially in abstract and embodied ways without strict restrictions.

I spy with Rembrandt’s eye (2004) by Robert Kana-Devilee and Petra Uterwijk also plays with abstract physical and social space as the narrator Rembrandt takes the reader on a room-by-room tour of the Rijksmuseum. For example, when Rembrandt enters the Dolls’ Houses room, the book first shows the painting of Petronella Oortman’s *Doll’s House*, which is a miniature of a canal house. The following pages show photos of the collection cabinet that houses the doll house furnished with objects made to scale from authentic materials. When the child opens the cabinet doors of the canal house in the book, she can see into the miniature doll house and play with it in the space of the page unlike the real doll house. As the story invites children to partake in Petronella’s daily activities changing every hour, they start to imagine living in that space in a miniature canal house. By leading children to

picture themselves there, it arouses “embodied interpretation” (Steier, Pierroux, & Krange, 2015) through social gestures such as pretending to have afternoon tea with Petronella. Playacting creates a fictional space around the artwork and the nonfiction picturebooks, and it is here that children discover art through individual or group activities that allow them the autonomy to physically and socially embody that space.

Hands-on and bodily engagements

For children, touch is as crucial part of the reading process as seeing and hearing. Hands and touching enrich the reading experience and create intimacy between the book and the child (Mackey, 2017, p. 178) just as bodily engagements enhance the museum experience. Non-discursive activities such as mimicking the perceived events and actions as well as sounds in the artwork (Hubard, 2007) combined with the hands-on and kinesthetic activities in picturebooks promote embodied learning and artistic literacy. Recognizing that picturebooks offer engagements with artworks, the Sadberk Hanım Museum’s two activity books, *Sadberk Hanım Museum archaeology activity book* (see Fig. 16.2), *Sadberk Hanım Museum art history activity book* and iPad application, *Along to the Museum!*, all support developing children’s basic motor skills through activities that include cutting and drawing (Zanbak et al, 2015a; Zanbak et al, 2015b; Zanbak et al, 2015c).

It is through materialized activities, however, that the narratives based on the art in the museum recommend children role-play to re-create the undetermined performances as well as the culture (Holzman, 2008, p. 52) in acts of embodied learning. For example, this museum has Roman masks from Anatolia (see Fig. 16.1) in its collection, and as such the book provides a paper mask that children can cut out and wear as they attitudinize as a Roman actor might. Acting a part as an embodied activity can be regarded as loosely guided play in that though the nonfiction picturebooks propose it, once the acting begins the child asserts independence. Also, the iPad application of the picturebooks contains audio stories and games about artworks (e.g., coloring pages, jigsaw puzzles, labyrinths, riddles, matching games), extends the exhibition’s interactivity through digital affordances and induces transmedia reading during the visit due to the app’s valuable contribution to the whole experience of visiting and reading (Hamer, 2019, p. 391). Although interactivity in museums should not overshadow critical engagements (Hamer, 2019, p. 397), combining exhibition designs, print and digital picturebooks intensifies children’s embodiment of museum space through playful and critical activities that provides different movements.



Figure 16.1 A satyr mask from Roman period, Anatolia (2–3th century BC), Sadberk Hanım Museum Collection.

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Figure 16.2 Sadberk Hanım Museum archaeology activity book (2015), by İdil Zambak, Leyla Demirbağ Atay and Sadberk Hanım Museum, Vehbi Koç Foundation.

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Other playful activities can arouse children's agency such as choosing where to place the stickers in *Stickyscapes at the museum* (2018) by Laura Junger (see Fig. 16.3). This book finds merit in moving children through the museum space innovatively while taking a critical look at the restrictive museum rules that are often taught in books such as *The terrible Captain Jack visits the museum* and *I spy with Rembrandt's eye*. The aim is not to disobey museum rules per se but to transform a contemporary museum experience from a didactic one to an interactive one and expand children's thinking in order to free their imagination. To this end, the book portrays the museum during the day on one side, showing children swinging on Calder's *Mobile* or holding hands in an imitation of Matisse's *Dance*. But the flipside shows a night scene with a mummy escaping its sarcophagus and a ghost painting a ballerina's portrait while children swim in an aquarium with a shark and other creatures. Thus, the picturebook provides a vivid representation of some plausible and some implausible interactions to embody the art experience.

While the stickers in this book provide material to create a museum environment, the stickers in the hybrid book *Le Petit Musée de Picasso* (2015) by Beatrice Fontanel, which targets older children, are for curatorial purposes. The accordion pages of this book represent the walls of the museum and the stickers provide critical engagement with the museum concept through the hands-on activity of making curatorial choices. According to Sanders (2018), "Critical engagement is characterised by a sharing of authority between reader and text, allowing for a form of active dialogue between text and reader rather than the reader's passive receipt of information from the authoritative text" (p. 13). Hence, as children contemplate this symbolic museum as a space for implementing creative ideas, their figurative co-curation of this nonfiction book helps them to understand the curator's job. Eventually, these tie-in merchandises remediate the book, further the hands-on engagement with artworks (Hamer, 2019, p. 396) and act as souvenirs that are the tactile metonymies of experiences in specific contexts and a narration tool to curate memories afterwards (Stewart, 1993, pp.134–135).

In Boston Fine Arts Museum's picturebook, *A grand tour: Sharing stories from art* (2006), children hang up their curator's hat and embark on a tour of the Boston Fine Arts Museum as this nonfiction picturebook guides them from one artifact to the next. The inserted map suggests various activities that support performative actions for the children to try out and has tips for the adult reader to guide children through the space. The map even plots the steps an adult should take to narrate the tale of an artifact: 1) choose the objects, 2) find them on the map and



Figure 16.3 *Stickyscapes at the museum* (2018), by Laura Junger, Laurence King Publishing. Reproduced with permission.

create a route, 3) observe each object, 4) read the story aloud accompanied by exaggerated playful actions. The fact that adults are mischievously participating in the jesting narration of these stories gradually decreases children's apprehension of the museum experience until they become accustomed to and less intimidated by the museum. Even as children are put at ease in the museum proper, it is still important that there be a room where they can discuss the artifacts presented in this book and engage in guided play such as pretending to be an archaeologist or posing like *Durga*. For instance, since one of the book's fictive stories is based on Cernigliaro's *Carousel Figure of a Pig*, children are asked to imagine a carousel in the museum space. The story is about a pig named Cornelius who is unsatisfied with his comfortable life in a barnyard and finds his calling as a carousel animal. Imagining the pig's transformation, children jump up and kneel down while running in large circles mimicking the up-and-down motion and rotation of the carousel pig. Integrating performance in the informational context creates opportunities to embody the text (Branscombe, 2015) and the artwork. As movements that are oriented by museums through guidelines or design and initiated by children through their bodily capacities effect each other (Hackett et al., 2018, p. 12), these books transform the practices in museums by inviting children to experience the space with their autonomy, pace, and perception. Picturebooks which illustrate this embodiment include *The museum* (2013) by Susan Verde and Peter H. Reynolds; it depicts a child whirling "twinkly, sparkly, super swirly" (p. 4) in *Starry Nights*. Posing as *The Thinker* helps her question and mimicking as the figure in a Picasso internalizes the Blue Period's sadness. Reynolds (2012) suggests, "motor imitation carries affective charge that intensifies emotional response" (p. 88), thus she ultimately reflects her feelings on a blank canvas. While asserting that the museum lives inside of us in the book (p. 28), activities in "The educator's guide for *the museum*" (2013) by FableVision Learning et al. hint an ongoing learning by linking reading and the actual visit. Thus, once children are presented with the activities the books outline, they themselves initiate embodied interaction to extend their museum learning beyond those lines.

CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the possibilities for embodied reading experiences of nonfiction picturebooks that enable guided play to heighten understanding of art history and museums. Considering that artistic knowledge is fluid and filtered through personal encounters and perspectives as well as social, geographic, and historic information, preparing nonfiction picturebooks for a museum

environment requires an integration of both fiction and nonfiction as well as building in guided play. To bring children closer to free artistic thinking, the selected books prompt children to employ their senses, hands or bodies to deepen their appreciation for and conceptualize complex artifacts, surface textures and their installation space. Using spatial, narrative, and material engagements to facilitate children's processing of art, these books present opportunities to perform in relation to the art supported by multisensorial, spatial, hands-on, and bodily endeavors. The picturebooks where children may handle images of artworks, move according to the instructions as well as take on curatorial responsibilities via relocating artworks in books are examples of the type of embodied learning supported by guided play that facilitate children's autonomy and team building with peers. The chapter demonstrated that vital transformative interplay between nonfiction picturebooks and art museums that makes use of interactions to further children's creative choices and sensory involvement channel their meaning-making of artworks.

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17. Learning, playing, and falling asleep: Portuguese nonfiction picturebooks for every occasion

Inês Costa

Abstract This chapter focuses on the literary and artistic analysis of three contemporary Portuguese nonfiction picturebooks: *Ir e Vir* (2012), *ABZZZZ...* (2014), and *O Que Há?* (2012). It aims to identify the specific elements that enable the inclusion of these books in the categories of information books, alphabet books, and game books. One also intends to bring up for discussion the traditional evaluation of nonfiction books based on their educational purposes rather than on their literary quality.

Keywords information books, alphabet books, game books, Planeta Tangerina, Isabel Minhós Martins

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, Portuguese children's literature has become more internationally relevant, due to its increasing quality and to the willingness of some publishers to take risks, making room for new artists and their fresh and edgy experiments. The international recognition is measured by the global and consistent acquisition of translation rights and by the amount and importance of the received literary and artistic awards. Just to mention a few, in 2014, the book *O Meu Avô*, by Catarina Sobral, won the International Award for Illustration at the Bologna Children's Book Fair. In 2013 and 2019, two Portuguese publishing houses, Planeta Tangerina and Orfeu Negro, respectively, won the Bologna Prize for the Best European Children's Publishers of the Year. By the end of 2018, Isabel Minhós Martins – currently the most translated Portuguese children's author – was one of the finalists of the NSK Neustadt Prize for Children's Literature. Therefore, this chapter focuses on three picturebooks written by this Portuguese author



Figure 17.1 *Ir e Vir* (2012), by Isabel Minhós Martins and Bernardo Carvalho, *ABZZZZ...* (2014), by Isabel Minhós Martins and Yara Kono, *O Que Há* (2012), by Isabel Minhós Martins and Madalena Matoso, Planeta Tangerina.

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and published by Planeta Tangerina (Fig. 17.1). Although most of Isabel Minhós Martins' oeuvre is labelled as fiction, these three picturebooks can clearly be identified as nonfiction literature (Colman, 2007; Kiefer & Wilson, 2011). As I intend to prove, they fit in three very distinct nonfiction categories such as information books, alphabet books, and game books. Another interesting aspect of this *corpus* is that these picturebooks were illustrated by three different artists, all of them internationally awarded and part of the team of Planeta Tangerina. The main purpose of this chapter is to analyse the textual and visual strategies employed by the author and the different illustrators and to identify the specific elements that enable the inclusion of these books in the three mentioned categories. The focus on the aesthetic features aims to counteract the traditional evaluation of nonfiction books based on their educational purposes rather than their literary quality (Kiefer & Wilson, 2011, p. 294).

IR E VIR, AN INFORMATION PICTUREBOOK

The first picturebook, *Ir e Vir* [*Coming and Going*] (2012), illustrated by Bernardo Carvalho, raises awareness of the unsustainable way humans travel around the globe, differentiating themselves from other species able to migrate (by air, water or on the ground) without harming the planet. It starts by recalling how humans moved around in the prehistory, how they, then, invented the wheel, cars, boats, airplanes and rocket ships, and how it became easier and easier to travel and transport commodities. Although the human inventiveness is praised, it comes along

with the awareness of how we became so self-absorbed in our comfort and civilizational conquests, disregarding other species and the environment at large. Growing from a narrative to an expository style (Colman, 2007, p. 263), and to put things into perspective, the narrator then gives a few examples of other animals that make impressive journeys in a much subtle way. Terns and monarch butterflies are admired for performing long migrations, despite their small size, longevity, or apparent fragility, while, conversely, airplanes are recalled for not being able to fly without releasing harmful gases. From the sky to the sea, baleen whales and tunas are applauded for their long – despite their weight – or fast locomotion. Once more, motorised vehicles (in this case, freighters) are used for comparison and, again, animals emerge, at least morally, victorious. Lastly, land animals are praised for their capacity to travel vast distances in extreme conditions.

The text leans on literary strategies that are usual in books intended for children: rhymes, repetition, long enumeration of objects that can somehow be included in the same category (e.g. “we could now carry / everything around town: / clothes, shoes, timber, pears, / cars, flour, clocks, chairs, / mangoes, bananas, garlic and biscuits / flowers and computers... / and little rubber ducks.”). It also includes humorous notes or passages, like the one just quoted. Drawing upon different punctuation marks – e.g. ellipsis, exclamation points, question marks, colons, parentheses for asides or explanations – and typographic variations, the author creates an interesting reading rhythm that also takes advantage of the page turns. At times, the reader’s attention is convoked by the narrator (“Just look”, “Imagine”), but not in a patronising way. In fact, the recurrent use of “we”, “us” and “our” makes clear that both reader and narrator are in the same boat: as humans, they both perpetrate the selfish and greedy behaviour. The narrator’s complicity in the criticized conduct recalls Sanders’ “visible author” (2018, p. 55–64), i.e. by acknowledging its imperfections, the “visible author” divests itself of its authority and, therefore, makes room for critical engagement.

Bernardo Carvalho chose collage as the art technique, assembling multiple coloured cellophane sheets previously cut in several shapes (Fig. 17.2). The layering of more than one sheet of different shades or colours gives depth to each illustration and the semi-transparent material allows that, even overlapped, different shapes (whether depicting trees, animals, humans or smoke) remain visible and distinct. Colours play a major role in each illustration: warm colours like red, orange, or yellow are used to imply African savannahs where zebras and wildebeests run free; different shades of blue and green allude, respectively, to the ocean or sky and to trees or forests; yellow is often associated with the sun or bright dawns, and grey with smoke and pollution. These two aspects – multiple layering and colouring – present

in most of the illustrations, are oddly absent in the last doublespread: this time, the white background and the minimal amount of shapes help to create a pause for introspection and, again, critical engagement (Sanders, 2018). Depictions of movement and shadows are also impressive. Round shapes are used to represent volatile natural elements (e.g. clouds, wind, or water) or objects in movement or with less defined contours (e.g. treetops), while angular shapes are mainly employed in tree trunks or human creations such as cars, airplanes, and cranes. The simultaneous presence of round and angular shapes adds multiple dimensions to each illustration. It also contributes to the illusion of different speed movements (e.g. in Fig. 17.2, the horizontal disposition of angular shapes suggests a much faster movement than the one depicted in the previous doublespread where a man is running).

Considering the theme and the mentioned textual and visual features, does *Ir e Vir* qualify as an information picturebook? The definition of information book (let alone information picturebook) is far from consensual. Heeks (2005) recalls their traditional purpose: “information books have set out to present facts about a specific subject” (p. 429). Mallett (2004) defends that information texts are those “whose *main* intention is to impart knowledge and ideas” (p. 622). Nikola von Merveldt (2018) adds that “informational books distinguish themselves from textbooks and scholarly books by their desire to amuse, entertain, and inspire their readers – they popularize knowledge to make it accessible” (p. 232). One can agree that *Ir e Vir* presents facts about a specific subject (whether it is environment or ecology at large or the contrast between humankind and wildlife), however it is



Figure 17.2 *Ir e Vir* (2012), by Isabel Minhós Martins and Bernardo Carvalho, Planeta Tangerina.

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plausible to think that the author's intention is both to impart knowledge and ideas and to amuse, entertain, and inspire young readers. This possibility probably increases Heeks' concerns when she states: "we are not yet clear whether information books are in the business of presenting facts or communicating with readers" (2005, p. 436). Current trends, in which the pedagogical purpose is not more important than offering a pleasant aesthetic experience to the reader, led von Merveldt (2018) to stress that "the boundaries of what still qualifies as an informational picturebook are fluid" (p. 233).

This particular book indeed lacks features that some may consider essential in an information book: a table of contents or index to offer a clear guide to the book's coverage and to help the reader to find specific information (Heeks, 2005, p. 431); glossaries, maps and timelines to clarify and organise information; or any other paratextual framing that establishes the authorial credibility and the accuracy of the content, such as the author's biography, forewords by authorities in the field, indication of scientific proofreading, bibliographic references, etc. (von Merveldt, 2018, pp. 235–241). One can also add that the information given isn't very precise, being presented in round figures, or that illustrations don't even respect a real scale. All these aspects are certainly relevant in an educational context – in fact, most of the scholars who tried to define information books were mainly focused on their potential use in instructional processes, especially regarding science teaching (Donovan & Smolkin, 2002; Mallett, 2003; Pappas, 2006) –, but are they essential in a more informal recreational context, being the main purpose to deliver, in an overview perspective, a light amount of information, simply offering food for thought and a stimulating aesthetic experience? Sanders (2018) answers this question by conceiving nonfiction literature as a field that should aim to promote inquiry and critical engagement instead of authoritatively presenting facts. Furthermore, despite the literary and visual literacy, should one disregard the important role these picturebooks might play as a transitional reading for more complex genres of information texts (Mallett, 2003, p. 111)?

Considering its global structure, style and disposition of information, *Ir e Vir* fits in the category of narrative information books (Mallett, 2003). It also meets most of the criteria established by Donovan and Smolkin (2002) for the same category, although these authors impose a sequence of the factual events over time, mainly associating the category to life cycles or procedures (p. 506). Mallett (2003), in turn, subdivides the narrative information books in four different categories: "life cycles, journeys, instructions (e.g. for experiments and recipes) and information stories" (p. 88). *Ir e Vir* would fit in the latter. But, then again, terminology is

ambiguous, since some authors only use the term “story(ies)” when both fiction and nonfiction are present (Donovan & Smolkin, 2002, pp. 504–505). In general, *Ir e Vir* meets Mallett’s criteria of a good narrative nonfiction book, such as having a strong structure; a lively but clear language; an interesting authorial voice; appealing illustrations; “a spark of originality and the qualities which fascinate and involve young readers, encouraging them to talk, reflect and want to find out more” (2003, p. 91), being the latter the openness to critical engagement praised by Sanders (2018).

ABZZZZ..., AN ALPHABET BOOK

Mallett (2004) inserts ABCs or alphabet books on the list of “children’s very first books with an informational function” (p. 623). Lately, however, more than their educational uses when it comes to knowing the letters (order, shape, sound, etc.), scholars have been stressing the importance of alphabet books as tools to “provide access to a range of other verbal and visual skills” (Nodelman, 2001, p. 236). As Silva and Martins (2016) claim, an alphabet book is an “useful instrument that, explicitly or implicitly, prompts the child to an early contact with the double artistic dimension that characterizes this type of publications” (p. 161). In fact, as Litau-don (2018) argues, “nowadays the ABC book is a genre which is mostly devoted to the celebration of the creative act” (p. 177).

Considering the myriad of existing alphabet books, it seems more and more difficult to create something unique and original in such a structured type of publication. *ABZZZZ...* (2014), by Isabel Minhós Martins and Yara Kono, has an interesting approach, using the sequential enunciation of the alphabet as a count-down to get children to sleep. The book requests an interactive behaviour from the first page: it brags that it “never fails [...] nearly everyone is snoring by the time they reach S” and, addressing the reader directly, poses the challenge: “How many letters will there be before you drop off?”. The journey starts with recurrent invitations and instructions that require the reader to be physically involved (e.g. “Try closing your eyes for 3 seconds. Let’s count... 1, 2, 3. See? Nothing scary happened!”). The tone and methods for persuasion vary from explanations of the benefits of sleeping (e.g. “sleep is a wonderful way to tidy up your brain”) or asking the reader to imagine themselves elsewhere (“Now we’re somewhere warm and sunny...”), to appeals for the imitation of successful examples (cats curling up and purring or bears hibernating) or even the use of reverse psychology mixed with subtle threats (e.g. “if you want to be the last to fall asleep, that’s ok. But, as

in races, the last one is a rotten egg”). By *Z* the book has been switched off and, if the reader is still awake, there’s only one last resort: a red button that they need to press to be turned off. Again, a physical interaction is requested, demanding an active participation.

Most pages have the same structure and content disposition (Fig. 17.3), a common feature in alphabet books. In this case, the capital letter is centred on the top of the page and right below there’s a word or small sentence (also in uppercase) that starts with the featured letter. The rest of the page is filled with the illustration and one or two paragraphs with a variable placement. This creative option – of placing the text inside or around the illustration, both centred or right- or left-aligned, of using different font sizes and styles or resorting to intraiconic remarks – helps to break the monotony that alphabet books are more prone to have. The textual register is informal, even colloquial, not only considering the use of the pronoun “you”, but also the use of expressions such as “Come on...” or “Ok, ok...” and the use of made-up rhyming sayings (e.g. “Like they say: ‘If you want to stay bright, sleep well this night!’”). Playing with words and other literary devices like anaphora, alliteration, or rhymes is also recurrent. The linearity is, sometimes, promoted – which, again, is likely harder to achieve in an alphabet book – and, other times, intentionally broken (e.g. on *Q*, the reader is asked to go to *T* to see what happens



Figure 17.3 *ABZZZZ...* (2014), by Isabel Minhós Martins and Yara Kono. Planeta Tangerina.

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next). In this latter case, the alphabetic order is dismissed, which suggests the secondary role of the alphabet. The protagonism is given to the interactiveness with the reader and to the task of convincing them to go to sleep. Considering the list of features that Mallett (2003) considers appealing in an alphabet book, one finds most of them in *ABZZZZ...*: an organising theme to give coherence; an imaginative choice of headwords; a dynamic that invites readers to interact with the text; originality in format and style to catch the young imagination; a lively written text and intriguing and challenging illustrations (p. 32). The only characteristic missing is the use of “clear letters in both upper and lower case to make for easy demonstration and familiarization” (Mallett, 2003, p. 32), supporting the hypothesis of a less pedagogical concern.

Yara Kono’s illustrations are intriguing and challenging; and they enhance the sense of cohesion. Even though two pages don’t perform as a doublespread, which is often visually reinforced by different background colours, one easily finds connections between facing pages. It might be the presence of continuous lines or geometric similarities (Fig. 17.3), or the focus on the same element in two different moments (e.g. A–B). The economy of colours – mainly bright red, yellow and blue, along with black and white – meets simplicity where it’s needed (e.g. on X, a yellow circle illustrates the Portuguese word for pee followed by “Ok, this one is important. Did you go before you got into bed?”). In other cases, Yara Kono adds details that unfold mininarratives (in the English version, the red balloon on Q resembles the balloon inflated by the child on O), intertextualities, or other inter-artistic references (e.g. a yellow submarine or an Alice card soldier) and humorous notes (e.g. lost socks in several pages). Some of her choices (e.g. the presence of a Yoda toy) may push the book into the crossover universe (Beckett, 2012). If alphabet books are supposed to expose the reader to the sound of letters and language, they require – at least at an early stage – a mediator that already knows the alphabet and its sound (Nodelman, 2001, p. 236). It seems, then, logical that an alphabet book should be appealing both to the child and to the adult mediator. However, in this case, this strategy seems to envision the adult not only as a mediator but as a reader on its own.

O QUE HÁ, A GAME BOOK

O Que Há [*What’s inside?*] (2012), by Isabel Minhós Martins and Madalena Matoso, is the first book of the *Round Corners* collection of Planeta Tangerina. According to the publisher, in these “interactive and digital paper books”, “readers can take part in creating each adventure – having fun, playing, and producing sound and

naively detailed remarks (e.g. “a diary tied with an elastic band with three pieces of paper sticking out”), but also due to personal comments about the narrator’s early life (e.g. “a dummy that used to be mine”).

The lower right corner holds a question or instruction. Visually, they differentiate themselves from the captions for the placement in the doublespread and for the use of a highlighted uppercase font. The answer to the question may be found a few pages ahead (“Where is the other earring?”), on that same page (“How many paper clips are there in this drawer?”) or may require previous knowledge (“Do you know a story with three bowls like these?”). A deductive reasoning may also be required: “What does not need to be kept in the fridge?” or “Which three things did I bring in from the garden?”

Although depicting objects instead of characters, the visual structure of the doublespreads shares some features with *wimmelbooks* (Rémi, 2011, 2018): the same perspective view to depict a large amount of information “in a certain degree of disorder and chaos” (Rémi, 2011, p. 117) – though I’ve claimed the objects are orderly laid out, a chaotic feeling is induced when one thinks of bottle caps laid next to a roll of sticky tape – and an invitation to the reader to take their time to analyse each object and to think about the correlation that might exist between them. In fact, each object holds an implicit mininarrative and the reader’s eyes can wonder around and stare at each image without a specific order – although, in a few cases, the captions do require to be read in order: “a bus ticket from last year”, “a dirty paper tissue (also from last year)”. What mainly distinguishes this book from *wimmelbooks* is that the latter are usually wordless and, unlike game or puzzle books, are known for “lacking clear rules or instructions” (Rémi, 2011, p. 117). One can, then, classify *O Que Há* as a visual game book as it invites “the reader to interact with the pictures, find hidden objects, compare changes from one picture to another, match, predict ahead, create stories, or visually play with illusions and transformations on the page” (Dowhower, 1997, p. 61).

Although game books are often considered nonfiction, one might claim that this book has a certain level of hybridism (Lierop-Debrauwer, 2018), as a fictional universe is revealed through captions and illustrations: the objects tell the story of the family of the author of the captions. The gender of the protagonist is undefined – one could only guess based on their toys and clothing –, but an attentive reader infers that they live with their parents, a small sister (that smudges the walls with her mother’s red lipstick), a close grandmother that likes to knit and to make puddings, and a dog (a can of dog food sits on the kitchen counter). It is also possible to infer that this family celebrates Christmas and enjoys spending time outside – on the beach, in the garden, fishing, catching small flowers, dried leaves

and shells – and playing traditional games like cards and domino. The broken pieces, the pens without lids and the protagonist remarks (a mobile phone “left behind on the kitchen counter”, a “deck of cards almost certainly incomplete”, a block of butter which should be in the fridge but “somebody forgot to put it away”) stress the normal disorganization and untidiness of a house with two small children. All the details reveal that this book intends to impart different reading levels, suggesting implied readers of different ages. Besides the discreet fictional universe, what makes this book captivating is that the questions and challenges are just the first fine layer of playfulness and interactiveness. With only two colours – red and green –, other than black and white, Madalena Matoso created a complex universe where the impalpable and unseen are depicted (e.g. the sunlight shining through blinds or the objects that are missing, drawn with dashed lines) and the intraiconic text plays an important role (e.g. the missing items on the fridge are written on the shopping list). As a true postmodern picturebook (Sipe & Pantaleo, 2008; Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007), with its characteristics of playfulness, intertextuality, nonlinearity, self-referentiality (“What’s inside this book?”), self-mocking tone and antiauthoritarian text (Goldstone, 2002), *O Que Há* exceeds its own content and invites the reader to “[enrich] and [support] the storyline by infusing personal emotions and experiences [and to] actively creat[e] parts of the narrative” (Goldstone, 2002, p. 366). The same postmodern characteristics were also found in *ABZZZZ....*

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

These three Portuguese picturebooks share the purpose of inspiring readers and combining nonfiction content with aesthetic sophistication. In fact, as Kiefer and Wilson (2011, p. 291) argue, the concern about aesthetic quality is simply what distinguishes works of literature, whether fiction or nonfiction, from other works. In the best-case scenario, both text and illustrations can contribute to achieve a higher artistic level, turning the book into an aesthetic object. Whether resorting to hybridism – a term associated with works that incorporate both fiction and nonfiction, and which in adult literature can be considered as creative nonfiction (Bloom, 1998) – or to simpler narrative strategies to convey meaning, these books can be appealing for young readers as they “offer more of a literary experience and may be read all the way through like a fiction text” (Mallett, 2003, p. 92). They can also appeal to educators who desire to improve their children’s visual and literary skills, and “critical literacy” (Sanders, 2018). These picturebooks also have in common the requirement for the reader’s participation: an active participation that

goes beyond the passive act of reading. In fact, these “new narrative guidelines [...] propose a stimulating deconstruction of the act of reading” (Silva, 2018, p. 258). The reader is not only invoked, but asked to co-author the story (Goldstone, 2002). The book becomes an interactive object that poses challenges (whether immediate, as in *ABZZZZ...* or *O Que Há*, or for the long run, as in *Ir e Vir*), prompting the reader to reflect and assume more sustainable behaviours. As Sanders (2018) advocates, this antiauthoritarian approach signals an openness to dialogue and critical engagement – to question instead of blindly relying –, while the sentimental identification and immersive strategies drive the reader to an effective response to the call for action.

Children’s nonfiction seems to be following the path that children’s fiction once had to tread: stepping aside from the focus on the pedagogical utility – certainly inherent to all literary works (Nikolajeva, 2016) – and embracing more ludic and artistic approaches. Ultimately, one can argue that the borders between genres and categories are more and more diffuse; this leads us to question whether there will be any gains from a strict demarcation between them.

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18. Information and delight. A study of visual transmission of knowledge

Anne-Stefi Teigland

Abstract This chapter discusses visual strategies and visual interpretations of information and knowledge in three selected Norwegian nonfiction picturebooks. What role do the illustrations play in conveying facts and information, and how are visual strategies used to communicate knowledge to different possible child readers?

Keywords visual strategies, presentation of knowledge, visual reader connections

INTRODUCTION

Inspired by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's (1996) understanding of visual coding orientations, I have studied visual strategies and visual interpretations of information and knowledge in nonfiction, or informational books as Nikola von Merveldt (2018) and others call them nowadays. What role do illustrations play in conveying facts and information, and how are visual strategies used to communicate knowledge to different possible child readers?

To illuminate these questions, I have chosen three Norwegian informational picturebooks, aiming to reach different age groups and conveying different topics. The books that frame my material are all illustrated by award-winning and acknowledged Norwegian illustrators. The first book *Møt fjellreven (Meet the Arctic fox,* 2013), is written by Nina E. Eide, Terje Borg, and Camilla Næss, and illustrated by Inger Lise Belsvik. It addresses rather young children, from pre-schoolers to the youngest in primary school, and as a book about Arctic foxes, it lies within the field of zoology. The second book, *Grønne greier. Om natur og miljø og sånt (Green Stuff – Nature and environment and things,* 2018) is written by Ole Mathismoen and illustrated by Jenny Jordahl. The topic is nature and the environment, and the

book belongs to the areas of ecology and social sciences. It addresses readers in primary school and pre-teens. The third book, *Amundsen gjennom Nordvestpassasjen* (*Amundsen through the Northwest Passage*, 2014), is written and illustrated by Bjørn Ousland. This is a biography; it tells how the Norwegian polar explorer Roald Amundsen discovered the way through the Northwest Passage. It addresses young adults and can be categorised under history and geographic.

PICTORIAL TURN

For decades, the focus in studying informational books has been on themes and topics – and on how verbal strategies are used in different presentations of knowledge. This has changed, and today many researchers interested in this field, such as Anne Løvland and Nikola von Merveldt, claim that the visual strategies are just as important as the verbal ones. After all, informational books aimed at children and youngsters are mostly multimodal texts, meaning texts that use several modes, visual and verbal, to present knowledge and to create meaning.

Still, there are different ways of understanding the many visual modes and codes used in informational books. While Løvland (2016) is concerned about the role visual strategies play in conveying truth and facts, she uses three distinct forms: “correspondence truth”, “pragmatic truth” and “hermeneutic truth” (p. 9). Whereas von Merveldt (2018) sees illustrations in informational books in a wider perspective. She claims that illustrations “[...] do not merely represent or illustrate transparent data of facts; rather they render them visible or visualize them, which means they take on an active, interpretative role” (p. 232). Kerry Mallan and Amy Cross (2014) support this point of view. In informational picturebooks, both words and images construct knowledge, and to do so they offer cognitive, emotional and sensory experiences.

Although informational books can be and are used in school, they mainly address what we might call leisure reading. They are therefore intended to entertain and amuse; they establish insight into various topics by popularizing knowledge. Tone Birkeland, Gunvor Risa, and Karin Beate Vold, the authors of *Norsk barnelitteraturhistorie* (*The History of Norwegian Children's Literature*, 2018), point this out in their definition of informational books for children: “[Such] books are often richly illustrated, they can frame narratives and use fictional characters, and they use different strategies to involve the child reader in the inquiries that different topics generate” (p. 485).¹

1 “[Fagboka] er ofte rikt illustrert, nyttar gjerne rammeforteljing og fiktive personar og går ikkje av vege for å involvere lesaren i dei faglege spørsmåla stoffet reiser” (Birkeland, Risa & Vold, 2018, p. 485, all translations from Norwegian to English are mine).

In informational books we find *selected* and, as Nina Goga (2019) points out, *organized* knowledge. The aim is not only to reach children and young people's fields of interest, viz finding topics and themes that young readers would like to read about, but also to expand the young readers' areas of interests. Representation studies can provide us with insight into what kind of knowledge, facts and information we consider important and useful for different age groups, and maybe even more importantly; what kind of knowledge is absent. However, in this study, my focus is not on what kind of subjects and themes we find in informational books for children and youngsters. Having chosen three completely different books, the purpose is to avoid such a quest. Instead, I have focused on how visual strategies are used to communicate knowledge and information to different age groups. If we want a better understanding of informational books, we must focus not only on what kind of knowledge they present but also on *how* they communicate the knowledge, and of course that includes how they link information to different child readers. This is also one of Patricia A. Larkin-Lieffers' arguments. She claims that studies of the implied reader are just as important in informational books (or information books as she calls them) as in fiction (Larkin-Lieffers, 2010). How then, do the illustrations in the three books that frame my material connect to different child readers, and what roles do the illustrations play in conveying facts, information and knowledge?

REALITY PRINCIPLES

In *Reading images. The grammar of visual design*, Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996) discuss how modality is realized in what they call "a complex interplay of visual cues" (p. 167). Realism, as Kress and van Leeuwen point out, is a term motivated by signs, and to establish what they call different "reality principles", they have formed four types of visual coding orientations: "technological coding", "sensory coding", "abstract coding" and "naturalistic coding" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 170; van Leeuwen, 2005, pp. 168–169). Kress and van Leeuwen use these categories to explain how we respond to images and visual signs. Realism though, as they point out, is not neutral and objective; it defines what counts as real, and what counts as real will change along with different cultural and historical norms.

Technological coding is a term that refers to visual "effectiveness". A technically drawn diagram, for instance, can be more effective than a photograph if the purpose is to explain how something works. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) explain this code as a "blueprint" representation (p. 170). In the sense I use it, it is a code that

can define images that show what something looks like on the inside, for example, a human body. *Sensory coding* refers to how different visual modes work to communicate with the reader's emotions. In informational books for children and young people, such codes are used to promote engagement, stir the reader's feelings, and capture the reader's interest. The third type is the use of *abstract coding*. Since it is possible to argue that any illustration is an abstraction, this is a difficult one. The purpose of this coding is to make something clearer through visualization, for instance, the use of charts and maps. The term refers thought to knowledge and understandings that are already culturally established. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) claim that this is a coding orientation used by sociocultural elites and they use examples from modern art: "In such contexts modality is higher the more an image reduces the individual to the general, and the concrete to its essential qualities" (p. 170). *Naturalistic coding* is the visual expression and representation that mimics actual things and actual occurrences. When an illustrator wants to show us what a person, a building, or scenery looks like, they are most likely to use naturalistic coding.

Images are more complex than language. An image can, for instance, have high sensory coding and at the same time use both abstract and naturalistic codes. In the end, it is the interplay of different cues and codes and how this interplay connects with the viewers (readers) that creates meaning: "What one social group considers credible may not be considered credible by another" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 175). In the following, I use these four categories of codes as tools to provide insight into understanding how images in informational books for children and youngsters communicate knowledge and information to different age groups.

Since the illustrations in the three books that frame my material are interpretations of different verbal signs, I have also investigated how the illustrations connect and relate to different verbal expressions. To do so, I have included Roland Barthes' concepts of "anchorage" and "release" in my analyses (Barthes [1964] 1980). Anchorage is a term that refers to how words and pictures link information, and release refers to how an image can transcend and complement verbal signs (Birkeland, Mjør & Teigland, 2018, p. 118).

EXAMPLE ONE: MØT FJELLREVEN (2013)

As the title implies, this is a book about Arctic foxes, and as already mentioned, it can be classified within zoology and it is aimed at pre-schoolers and early readers in primary school.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part is linearly organized. Here we follow a fox through a year from when it is born in May until it starts its own family a year later. The second part is what we might call a spatially organized factual presentation. Here we can read about size, weight, food, how many puppies Arctic foxes give birth to, how many Arctic foxes there are altogether around the world, and so on. Some of this information has already been brought to us in the first, linearly organized part, but here it is repeated and shaped into fact-oriented framings. In this second part, the fact-oriented verbal text is in focus while the illustrations play a more decorative role. In the first part, on the other hand, the illustrations have a more significant role in conveying information about Arctic foxes, their living conditions and behaviour. I even claim that the illustrations make it possible to read a narrative into the presentation of the Arctic fox. In the following, I focus on what is going on in the first part of the book.

The verbal text in this part tells us about Arctic foxes' living conditions in general.

It is not as lexical as the framed verbal facts in the second part of the book, but still, the verbal text is quite sober and knowledge-oriented:

In a den under the ground puppies are brought into the world. They are Arctic foxes. At first, they are so small that you could have one in each pocket. However, due to the goodness in the rich milk they get from their mother, they grow fast.

In Latin, we call the Arctic fox *Vulpes Lagopus*. It is a small fox related to the dog, and it does not get much bigger than a male cat when it is fully-grown.

Arctic foxes live only in the mountains and in places up north where it is cold. They live together two and two in pairs and defend their territory from other foxes. Both the male and the female feed and care for their young. (Eide, Borg & Næss, 2013, doublespread three)²

Belsvik uses mostly naturalistic coding (she shows us what Arctic foxes look like and what their environment looks like), sometimes also technological; the

2 "I et hi under bakken kommer valper til verden. De er fjellrever. I begynnelsen er de så små at du kunne hatt en i hver lomme. Men de vokser raskt fordi de får god og feit melk av mora. Fjellrev heter *Vulpes Lagopus* på latin. Den er en liten rev i slekt med hunden, og den blir bare litt større enn en hannkatt når den er fullt utvikst. Fjellrever bor bare i fjellet og andre steder langt nord i verden der det er kaldt. De lever sammen to og to i par, og forsvarer området sitt mot andre rever. Både hannen og hunnen mater og steller ungene sine."



Figure 18.1 *Møt fjellreven* (2013), by Nina E. Eide, Terje Borg, Camilla Næss, and Inger Lise Belsvik, Mangschou.

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cross-section made on this doublespread (Fig. 18.1) is of course an abstraction, but it is also what I call a technical code. The verbal text in the example above is relatively sober, it is eager to give information about Arctic foxes in general. The illustrations confirm, or *anchor* in Barthes' term, but they also *release* or expand the information given by the verbal text. Inside the den, Belsvik introduces us to a “happy family image”, sensory, emotional codes are strong in this image. The mother is looking at the reader, inviting us in. Furthermore, visual clues give us information about what is going to happen next. In this doublespread, such a visual clue is the small yellow and black rodent called a lemming – the one the male fox brings into the den. Another visual narrative “clue” is that one of the puppies differs from the others. All the others have reached their mother's teats, except for one. On the two doublespreads that follow, we meet the six puppies exploring the environment outside the den. One of them, though, uses a little longer time than the others to get out, and in the illustration that follows on the next doublespread, we can see that two of the puppies are a bit more reserved than the others; one is looking out from a hole in the ground, while the other is peaking at us from behind a stone in the back. One of them is most likely “our” puppy. After these three doublespreads (one showing the puppies inside the den, and two doublespreads showing the puppies exploring the environment outside the den), Belsvik leaves the litter of puppies and concentrates on one of them. We are never told in words, but a likely interpretation is that we are following the same fox, and that “our” fox is the one that differs from the others by being a bit slower and maybe also a bit scared. The paratexts reinforce this interpretation. On the front-page, we meet one



Figure 18.2 *Møt fjellreven* (2013), by Nina E. Eide, Terje Borg, Camilla Næss and Inger Lise Belsvik, Mangschou.

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lonely fox looking right at us from behind a stone, and the image on the back of the book conveys what might be our fox and her new family.

The illustrations focus on the environment of the Arctic foxes. They take us through different seasons and thereby different living conditions. They show us danger, such as how the red foxes and mountain eagles (Fig. 18.2) chase and threaten the Arctic fox. We learn about the winter coat though the illustrations cannot specify that the Arctic fox has the warmest winter coat there is, even warmer than that of the polar bear. That information is brought to us through the verbal text, but the illustrations can show us that the winter coat is white and fluffy and that the fox seems to manage very well in the cold snow.

Being illustrations, Belsvik's visualizations are of course abstractions. Belsvik simplifies, leaves out details and uses different value perspectives. Still, I argue that the illustrations in this book have what we can call, in Kress and van Leeuwen's terms, "high reality modes". The Arctic fox is a threatened species. The knowledge the book provides is therefore not just what characterizes the Arctic fox in general, it also provides information about how to save them. In this sense, the book has both a factually oriented perspective and a strong normative, value perspective. The interplay between verbal texts and visuals manage to unite these two aspects in a successful way. Belsvik uses naturalistic coding, also technical and, as I have tried to explain, sensory or emotional codes to engage the child reader. The illustrations do not merely give us information and knowledge, they also promote feelings and furthermore, they make connections between information and emotion. They also align with a young child reader and give the child the opportunity to read the first part of the book as a narrative.

EXAMPLE TWO: GRØNNE GREIER. OM NATUR OG MILJØ OG SÅNT (2018)

Grønne greier. Om natur og miljø og sånt gives information about nature and the environment – and the connection between them. The need for understanding is explicitly expressed in the introduction: “To do what’s best for nature, we have to know things about nature” (Mathismoen and Jordahl, 2018, p. 8)³. This book addresses older children than *Møt fjellreven*. Much of the material is a reproduction of cartoons printed in a newspaper for children. Two figures, named Ole and Jenny, take us through the book, explain, and convey facts and attitudes towards nature and different environments. Their appearance, and of course their names, have similarities to those of the book’s creators: Ole Mathismoen (verbal text) and Jenny Jordahl (illustrations). Together, Ole and Jenny, as figures in the book, present knowledge through dialogues and images. Jonas Bakken, who has studied the dialogues, concludes though that they are more monologues than dialogues. The two figures lecture and express viewpoints; they don’t really discuss them (Bakken, 2019, p. 27). What then about the images?

Ole and Jenny obviously work as identity figures. They seem to have a lot of fun together. Throughout the book we follow them exploring environments and discussing different topics concerning environmental sustainability. We see them together with medicinal plants in the rainforest, talking about rain, exploring the jungle, discussing Donald Trump, visiting Lofoten, and sorting waste, just to mention some of many situations and environments Ole and Jenny explore. We can see that they convey emotions, they get angry, sorry, upset, happy, and exhilarated, but they address each other, not the reader, and without explanations provided through the verbal text, it is sometimes difficult to decode what is going on.

The book is divided into seven chapters. It contains 160 pages, most of them are cartoon-spreads, but it also contains pages with lists of facts, several quizzes and pages that complement the cartons and represent verbal and visual explanations of different subjects connected to the book’s topic. Obviously, I cannot take you through the whole book. Instead, I will try to show how the illustrations communicates with the reader by looking into one doublespread (Fig. 18.3).

The color palette used, and of course the verbal title of the doublespread; “Naturen om høsten” (Nature during autumn) tells us that we are looking at an autumn image. The visual code used is not naturalistic; it is a kind of mix between

3 “For å gjøre det som er best for naturen, må vi kunne ting om naturen”.

five are placed on trees. Keeping focused on the *information* this image provides, the task we are asked to perform does not help us much. It might be entertaining, it might be fun, but it does not give the reader insight into the topic of this doublespread.

There is a lot going on in this image. Some animals are sleeping. The hedgehog is even snoring. Two hares, in winter coats, are placed in a landscape without snow, they are having what looks like a nice chat, and a salamander is about to say hello to – or eat – one of the ants, just to mention some of many different things that are going on in this particular doublespread. The challenge is that some of the things going on are connected to what we can call reliable fact-framed information (salamanders do eat small insects, like ants), others have a more decorative, entertaining function (for example the huge, dominant Arctic fox).

Jordahl uses mostly what I call abstract coding. The images in *Grønne greier. Om natur og miljø og sånt* are what we may call iconic representations of things, plants, animals, and different phenomena concerning climatic changes and environmental measures. A cloud with a happy face in this book is a happy cloud, a cloud with an unhappy face is an unhappy cloud, and so on. Through abstract codes, Jordahl correspond with visual styles that modern child readers are familiar with. Here the child reader represents the “culture elite”, to use Kress and van Leeuwens term. However, and as I have tried to explain, the connection between entertainment and information in the illustrations are not integrated in the same successful way as in *Møt fjellreven*. Without the text frames, the knowledge provided by the images is limited, sometimes even a bit confusing.

EXAMPLE THREE: AMUNDSEN GJENNOM NORDVESTPASSASJEN (2014)

Amundsen gjennom Nordvestpassasjen aims to reach older children and youngsters. The title and cover illustration refer to actual historical events, and the information provided in this book follows a linear, narrative organization principle.

This book has many layers, both verbal and visual, and thus several entries. It conveys a historical event, and it tells the story of seven men who went out into the world on a small ship. It also focuses on one man in particular, the polar explorer and scientist Roald Amundsen, and furthermore, it narrates Amundsen’s expedition through the Northwest Passage. Along the way, we also get to know about some of the earlier expeditions that failed. We retrieve information about the Inuits, about the ship *Gjøa*, the one that Amundsen used and which we can see today at the Fram Museum in Oslo. We also learn about climate. In 2010, Bjørn Ousland’s

brother, Børge Ousland, and Thorleif Thorleifsson used four months in a small boat to travel the same route that earlier demanded years, and this information is reproduced both verbally and visually at the end of the book.

With a focus on the visual part, we find that images reproduce events and high-light historical details. It is easy to see that Ousland is eager to display information. He wants to show us what the ship *Gjøa* actually looks like, the one Amundsen used through the Northwest Passage, and he wants to give a truthful interpretation of Amundsen and his expedition. The naturalistic coding is strong, the rendering of details shows accuracy. At the same time, the collection of different scenes and events is rather playful, and there are many humorous elements in the illustrations.

As we can see in doublespread three (Fig. 18.4), Ousland combines different visual codes. He portrays historical persons, like Roald Amundsen, Adrian Gerlache, Fredrick Cook, and Fritjof Nansen, and he renders details in clothing, furniture, and environment. The verbal texts in this doublespread tell us that preparations were important for Amundsen. He therefore took part in a Belgian polar expedition



Figure 18.4 *Amundsen through the Northwest Passage* (2014), by Bjørn Ousland, Cappelen Damm.

Reproduced with permission.

to the Antarctic without pay and experienced that leadership is crucial. To avoid scurvy, and together with Frederic Cook, he hunted and ate seals and penguins. The illustrations anchor this information. We see Amundsen and Cook together, and we see penguins and a seal. Scurvy is explained in verbal text in a small frame at the bottom of the right in this doublespread, and here an illustration provides us with insight into what a person with an illness like this could look like.

Two ships, Belgica and Gjøa, are visualized. We are not told in words but still it is easy to see that Gjøa, the one Amundsen used on his expedition through the Northwest Passage, is smaller than Belgica, the one used on the Belgian expedition to the Antarctic. Different scenes and episodes are also communicated through illustrations. At the top on the right in this doublespread, we see a tiny Amundsen standing in the doorway, trying to convince Fridtjof Nansen that he is the right man to lead a new expedition that can find a way through the Northwest Passage. In the verbal text, we can read that Amundsen “felt smaller than the man who had to go twice through the door before anyone could see him” (Ousland, 2014, third doublespread)⁵. In the image, Ousland renders this feeling by placing Nansen behind a desk and a tiny version of Amundsen in the doorway.

Throughout the book, selected episodes are dramatized through cartoon sequences. Even though these sequences contain many fun elements, they also communicate credibility and accuracy. It is therefore possible to argue that entertainment is connected to the knowledge the book provides. Ousland combines naturalistic and sensory coding by visualizing actual events in a humorous way. There is also examples of abstract coding in this book, rendering maps for instance, and technical codes are sometimes used, but the dominant coding principle is naturalistic coding, in combination with sensory coding.

As already mentioned, and as you can see in the doublespread above, the reader must navigate through different levels of information, both in the verbal text and in the illustrations. The book therefore requires an alert and explorative reader. In *Kart i barnelitteraturen* (*Maps in children's literature*, 2015), Goga points out that while the participants of the expedition, the ones we are following, are advancing in unfamiliar waters, the readers must advance in Ousland's dissemination of knowledge. The reader therefore becomes, as Goga (2015) suggests, “adventurer” and “conqueror”, “expedition leader” and “scientist” (p. 41). This comparison is good since the reading process is complex in this book. However, the connection

5 “Jeg følte meg mindre enn han som måtte gå to ganger gjennom døren for at noen kunne se ham.”

between naturalistic and sensory coding is helpful. In this book “information” and “delight” are bound together.

TO CONCLUDE

The analysis of the three books that frame my material obviously do not reveal all the many tasks illustrations provide in informational books for children. Still, the study shows that illustrations play an important part, not just in making connections between different topics and different child readers, but also in conveying information and knowledge. The interplay of visual codes and cues are complex, and to explore this complexity, I find Kress and van Leeuwen’s coding orientations useful. The four categories (technical, sensory, abstract and naturalistic) make it possible to identify different visual strategies and provide insight into how illustrations are used in informational books. The study also shows that fun-framing, or emotions and entertainment, are important aspects in aiming to make connections between different topics and different child readers, and that images can be used in different ways, as entertaining entrances to the verbal text, as well as independent knowledge markers.

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