

**THE METAFICTIVE IN PICTURE BOOKS:**  
**A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE NATURE AND**  
**ORIGINS OF CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S PICTURE**  
**BOOKS, WITH CASE STUDIES OF CHILDREN READING**  
**PICTURE BOOK TEXTS**

Submitted by **David Harry Lewis** to the University of  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The thesis is about picture books and how children read them, and is divided into three parts. In part one I identify a striking parallel between certain exemplary contemporary picture books and the tendency within adult fiction known as postmodernism or metafiction. I enlarge upon this analogy and attempt to establish a tentative taxonomy of metafictional picture books. Part one concludes with an account of an early attempt at exploring how young children read such texts, and with the establishing of the core questions of the thesis: i.e. what is the relation of the metafictional picture book to the form in general?; why is such a highly self-conscious, reflexive form of text found in picture books for young children?; and how do young children read such books? In part two I begin by reviewing the available literature on picture books and then attempt to construct a theory of picture book text. These core theoretical chapters (chapters five, six and seven) are concerned with the nature of pictorial representations and how readers read them; with a revisionist account of the historical origins of the picture book; and with the developing of a view of the picture book as a distinctively *polysystemic* form of text - i.e. a form of text closely akin to the novel. An attempt is then made to answer the first two of the three main questions. The final part of the thesis explores, through a number of case studies, how young children might construe metafictional texts and traces some of the different ways in which they attempt to make sense of them.

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## **PART ONE**

### **POSTMODERNISM AND PICTURE BOOKS**

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1. Seeing the problem**

This thesis is about the nature of picture books and how children read them. Picture books for the young constitute an expanding area within publishing for children and are considered by many to be an exciting and innovative form. (e.g. Chambers, 1985; Meek, 1992a; Stahl, 1990) Moreover, picture books are increasingly seen as an appropriate form of text with which children might begin to learn to read. (Bennett, 1991; Meek, 1988; Snow and Ninio, 1986) Nevertheless, very little attention has been given to the picture book as a special kind of illustrated text, nor has there been any substantial research into how children read them.

I first began to pay serious attention to picture books for young children shortly after my own children were born. As a primary school teacher I had always been aware of such books as an important part of the bookcorner and the school library but I had never considered them a distinct category of children's literature, seeing them simply as stories with pictures rather than as complex texts in their own right. However, once I became involved in buying books for my own children and began the long-term enterprise of reading aloud to them and sharing books with them I soon became aware of the vast range of styles, manners, modes, and genres exploited by the makers of picture books. I also began to realise that many of the books I was beginning to know well were not simply illustrated stories but were often structured in ways that seemed to invite a particularly *playful* mode of interaction on the part of the reader, a mode wholly dissimilar from that required by the kinds of storybooks that I read daily to my class of older primary children. In many cases there seemed to be a deliberate attempt on the part of the author and/or illustrator to transgress, in a spirit of fun, some of the conventions of the storybook, and of storytelling, familiar to most older children and adults.

A good example of a contemporary picture book embodying this playful mode is *Bear Hunt* by Anthony Browne. In this book the pictures occupy the majority of each page, separate fragments of the short written text being placed underneath each illustration. The setting is a stylised jungle, but one that mingles plant-like forms with everyday objects such as lightbulbs and matchsticks. The central character, the Bear of the title, is able both to move around within this setting and also add to and alter the contents of the jungle world by 'drawing' new elements with the aid of a magic pencil - a parody of the creative act of the author/illustrator. The playfulness is evident in the way the reader's attention is drawn to the slippage between the story world of the bear and the primary, 'real' world of the creative artist, and in the comical and surreal mingling of the everyday with the exotic within the jungle. The printed text also mixes modes in its combination of matter-of-fact narrating voice with excited exclamation. In *Bear Hunt*, nothing stays the same for long.

The existence of such works - further examples of which are not hard to find - problematises for us the reader/text relationship, for it is far from clear how readers, and beginner readers especially, come to make sense of such texts.

## **2. Parallels with contemporary adult fiction.**

Such children's books grew in significance for me largely through an awareness of, and interest in, the movement in writing for adults which came to be known in the 1970's and 1980's as postmodernism or, more narrowly, metafiction. In America, writers such as John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Richard Brautigan, Robert Coover, Thomas Pynchon, Leonard Michaels, William Gass, and Kurt Vonnegut Jr.; and in Europe, Italo Calvino, Samuel Beckett, John Fowles, B.S. Johnson, Milan Kundera, and Alain Robbe-Grillet have explored in their novels and short stories the codes and conventions of storytelling that usually remain implicit, and thereby invisible, in works of Realist fiction. These writers were, and still are, considered to be experimental and unorthodox although, increasingly, metafictional elements may be found in mainstream contemporary fiction.

In reading such works I began to recognise some striking parallels between postmodernist fiction and some of the picture books that I was reading daily to my children. They were, for example, both happy to transgress narrative boundaries in the manner of *Bear Hunt*. There are many critical moments within the works of writers such as John Barth, Julio Cortazar, Milan Kundera and Kurt Vonnegut, for example, when the author appears to address his readers directly, thus interrupting the flow of the narrative; or, a character from one level of narration will appear in another. Similar examples of 'boundary-breaking' are easy to find in picture books too. There are the adventures of Anthony Browne's Bear (there are sequels to *Bear Hunt* in *Bear Goes to Town*, and *A Beary Tale*) but further examples may be found in *Benjamin's Book* by Alan Baker, *Simon's Book* by Henrik Drescher, *The Story of a Little Mouse Trapped in a Book*, and *Another Story of... the Little Mouse Trapped in a Book* by Monique Felix, and *The Book Mice* by Tony Knowles. All these books expose and playfully subvert levels of narrative which, in Realistic fiction, are normally quite stable.

The awareness of parallels such as this dawned on me only slowly. It was necessary for my views about reading and adult literary texts to be challenged and transformed before I could begin to perceive the distinctive features of the books my children and I were sharing. However, the pattern of similarities between the two domains of metafiction and children's fiction began to grow clearer for me as I began to read works of literary theory. In reading about postmodernism in literature I was led to the work of the structuralists Gerard Genette, Roland Barthes, and Tzvetan Todorov. Such writers offered me the beginnings of a way of understanding more clearly what the writers I enjoyed seemed to be doing. What they could not do was provide any insight into why such narrative playfulness appeared to be so widely prevalent in books for the young and what effects such a widespread phenomenon might have on the developing competences of the young beginner reader.

I was left with the conviction that reading the metafiction is not at all like reading conventional story text. The pleasures to be derived from such reading are of a different order altogether, as is the invitation to the reader and the nature of the subsequent interaction, should that invitation be accepted. The metafiction would seem to make a significant difference to the experience of reading and hence, we might conclude, to the experience of learning to read. The thesis thus sets out to articulate and explore the hypothesis that the metafiction in the contemporary children's picture book makes a significant difference to the early experience of learning to read.

### **3. The structure of the thesis**

The thesis is in three parts. In part one (chapters one, two and three) I explore the phenomenon of metafiction in the contemporary picture book; in part two (chapters four, five, six and seven) I build a theory of the picture book, exploring the nature and origins of the form as a whole; and in part three (chapters eight, nine and ten) I report and analyse some case studies of children reading a number of picture books.

i. In chapter two I develop the analogy between contemporary picture books for children and experimental, postmodern fiction for adults. First, I site the phenomenon of metafiction within the broader cultural concept of postmodernism in general and characterise it as exemplary in its opposition to illusionistic and Realistic forms of writing. I also critically discuss a number of ways in which metafiction has been theorised. I then consider the extent to which certain kinds of picture book might be considered metafiction and suggest a simple, preliminary taxonomy of picture book metafictions. Finally I raise the question of what kind of effect such works might have on the experience of learning to read.

ii. Chapter three reports a first attempt at exploring how young children read metafiction picture books. In this pilot study I analyse and interpret the efforts of my own

two children to retell the story of one openly metafictional book, *Where's Julius?* by John Burningham. My analysis is informed by the work of Gerard Genette (Genette, 1980) and Susan Stewart (Stewart, 1984) amongst others, and concentrates mainly upon how the children's readings were guided by Burningham's text. Having analysed the children's readings I offer some suggestions as to how the book might be read. The chapter concludes with the main questions that the remainder of the thesis will directly address.

iii. In chapter four, as a preliminary to addressing the questions raised at the end of chapter three, I review the available literature on picture books. I begin with a critical review of histories of the picture book and conclude that there are serious problems of omission and interpretation in this particular domain. I then examine the few works that refer to postmodernism and the picture book and set out their limitations. The final two sections of the review concern, respectively, the different ways in which picture books are constituted in critical works, essays and reviews; and the ways in which picture books appear in the context of the teaching and learning of reading.

iv. In chapter five I begin to construct a theory of the picture book. As a first step I argue that in order to constitute the picture book as a form of *text*, it is necessary to view the pictures in picture books as something that must be *read* - i.e. as a source of meaning. To this end I discuss two ways in which we might be said to read pictures: firstly as symbol systems, or forms of social semiotic, that enable artists to re-present the world in pictorial images, and viewers to read pictorial images as representations; and secondly as representations that have significance over and above the level of denotation. At this second level, the level of connotation, I survey a range of well-known and established pictorial codes that have application to the picture book and complete the chapter with an analysis of a picture sequence taken from Jan Ormerod's wordless book *Sunshine* to demonstrate how some of the codes discussed work in context.

v. In chapter six I temporarily turn away from the world of the contemporary picture book to consider the origins of the form. The chapter is a long one and the reasons for



this are threefold. First, and most generally, we understand contemporary phenomena more fully when they are set in their historical context. Second, in order to make good the omissions and address the distortions of emphasis discussed in the first part of chapter 4 a close attention to the details of historical development is necessary. Third, to prepare for chapter seven certain features of the picture book's development need rescuing from the margins and planting firmly at the centre. What I offer in this chapter is a revised interpretation of the history of the picture book which helps to prepare the ground for the redescription of the form that follows in chapter seven.

vi. Chapter seven argues that there are compelling parallels between the nature and origins of the picture book and the nature and origins of the novel. Drawing upon M.M.Bakhtin's analysis of the polyphonic novel, I suggest that the picture book is best seen as a *polysystemic* form of text - i.e. a form of text composed of more than one semiotic system, more than one source of meaning. For Bakhtin, however, the novel is more than a form, it is a literary historical *process*. The novel is inherently flexible, open-ended and, to a high degree, indeterminate and thus endlessly capable of adapting itself to linguistic, cultural and literary change. The picture book too, by a process of pictorialisation, is capable of ingesting other forms, and is thus similarly open-ended and ever evolving. Viewed against this background, the metafictional picture book is seen to be an extreme form of a tendency inherent in all picture books.

vii. In chapter eight we return to the question of how children read picture books, and in particular, how they read the metafictional kind. The chapter briefly reviews the reasons for adopting a case study approach to addressing this final question and critically discusses case study methodology.

viii. In chapter nine I report and discuss a number of case studies of children reading and talking about picture books. I discuss these cases at length because, as yet, no one has addressed the question of how children read picture books in quite this way. I take as my exemplars two children from the top class of an inner-city infant department. Singly,

and as members of a group, these children read with me and talk freely about their reading. My analyses and interpretations are based upon a close scrutiny of transcriptions of these conversations and inevitably the focus of attention switches from the nature of the books, to the nature of the interactions. I believe it is possible to show from these cases that different readers construct meaning from metafictional texts in radically different ways and that also, in the end, the concept of the metafictional text as something that might exist independently of a reader is somewhat misleading.

ix. In chapter ten I review the investigation as it is embodied in the preceding chapters and consider what it is possible to learn about reading and about picture books that is new. I also raise some issues that remain unresolved and suggest some further avenues of research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **POSTMODERNISM, METAFICTION AND CONTEMPORARY PICTURE BOOKS**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The terms 'postmodern' and 'postmodernism' rarely occur in works devoted to children's books and learning to read. They appear to belong to a rarefied world of theory and the cultural avant garde that has little to do with the practical business of teaching.

Nonetheless, this practical task, and the thinking that we do about it, inevitably take place within a social, intellectual and cultural context. Reading and learning to read is always of its time. It would be naive to believe that the broad cultural movements of our age have no bearing and no influence upon teaching and learning, upon the books our children read and, indeed, upon children themselves. The age in which we now live has been dubbed by many a postmodern age, and we would do well to try and make what sense we can of the term.

In chapter one I identified what I felt to be a powerful analogy between certain kinds of contemporary picture books and certain kinds of contemporary writing for adults, most commonly termed 'postmodern'. In chapter two I enlarge upon, and try to clarify the analogy. In part B I identify those trends within contemporary culture that have been termed postmodern and then turn to the example of literature, taking what has been termed 'metafiction' as an exemplary postmodern phenomenon. I then examine the ways in which metafiction works, focusing upon the ways in which it attempts to expose and thus undermine the received practices of modernism and the Realism that has become the pre-eminent fictional mode since the nineteenth century. Part B concludes with an outline of the ways in which metafiction has been theorised.

Part C consists largely of an attempt to exemplify the metafictional picture book through the five categories of *boundary-breaking*, *excess*, *indeterminacy*, *parody*, and *performance*.

In part D I indicate the ways in which the existence of a metafictional strain within the picture book might have a bearing upon the teaching and learning of reading to young children.

## **B. POSTMODERNISM IN FICTION AND THE REVOLT AGAINST MODERNISM, REALISM AND ILLUSIONISM**

### **1. Postmodernism as a cultural concept**

The tendency towards postmodernism in literature is part of a much wider change within Western culture that has affected the arts, philosophy, critical theory, popular culture, even common modes of cognition and perception (Lyotard, 1982; Jameson, 1982; Hassan, 1986). As a cultural category it has been notoriously difficult to circumscribe, virtually any innovation within the arts or the mass media being readily absorbed into its territory. For this reason postmodernism has not been taken seriously in many quarters. Since anything from the latest fashions to the collective ingredients of a meal might be deemed postmodern the tendency - if it is unitary enough to be considered a tendency - can seem hopelessly frivolous

Nevertheless, that the term does have some meaning and some use value there is, I believe, not much doubt. At the very least, for example, it can be and is used to demarcate an historical period. Jameson points out that postmodern works of architecture, literature and art arose out of, and in reaction to, the canonisation of the works of High Modernism in the museum and the academy (Jameson, 1982). When originally subversive and 'difficult' modernist novels and poems, such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, began to appear on undergraduate reading lists and the modernist paintings of Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock began to fetch huge sums in the saleroom, artists and writers like the novelist John Barth and the sculptor Joseph Beuys began to repudiate modernism and seek alternatives. In this sense, postmodernism is a movement of the avant garde which can be dated fairly precisely from the beginning of the 1960's.

Jameson also points out that some of the confusion surrounding the term arises out of the fact that the variety of types of modernism gave rise to a plurality of *postmodernisms*. Moreover postmodern works insouciantly bridged the gap between high and low culture that modernism largely respected and had even widened. The apparently inchoate noise of punk rock; the kitsch obscenities of the artist and sculptor Jeff Koons; the pop art of Andy

Warhol; the proliferation of pastiches and parodies of genre literature such as science fiction - all have been considered manifestations of postmodernism.

It is beyond the scope of the present section to attempt a wide ranging review of postmodern phenomena, my intention here being to provide a context for the following discussion of postmodern fiction and its similarity to certain kinds of picture book. In what follows I briefly review those broader features of postmodernism as a general *cultural* phenomenon that have a bearing upon following sections and chapters that deal more specifically with literature. I have freely selected, and adapted, the features listed below from a list compiled by Ihab Hassan (Hassan, 1986).

**a. indeterminacy**

Hassan claims that postmodern indeterminacies include developments in philosophy, such as Kuhn's paradigm shifts; in science, such as Heisenberg's uncertainty principle; in literary and critical theory, such as Barthes' 'writerly' texts and the post-structuralist concept of 'aporia'. In postmodern fiction, as we shall see, it is not uncommon for readers to be left literally not knowing which way to turn.

**b. fragmentation**

Postmodernism suspects totalisation. All synthesis is taken to be the imposition of a spurious, ideological order. According to Hassan, the postmodernist prefers the "openness of brokenness, unjustified margins" to the tendentious unity brought about by the various forms of artistic closure. Thus the Bauhaus dictum, 'form follows function' for example, seems now to be just one more ideological position and thus the product of naturalisation rather than nature.

**c. decanonisation**

Perhaps one of the most widely disseminated tenets of postmodernism is that the governing narratives of our culture - 'les grands recits' - have broken down (Lyotard, 1982). We no longer believe the overarching stories we used to tell ourselves

about the good, the true and the beautiful because the authorities that underwrote such stories are no longer viable. All we have left are 'les petits recits', serviceable works and languages that do not aspire to global significance, but operate at the level of discrete language games. A further effect of decanonization is the ironing out of differences in value between cultural artefacts and images. The boundaries separating pop- and high-culture become blurred, the technologies of image-reproduction placing high-culture icons such as the Mona Lisa on the same plane as photographs of film stars and the labels of baked bean cans.

**d. irony**

Indeterminacy, fragmentation and decanonization inevitably lead to irony. We are not only aware of what we look at but are also aware of from where we look at it. Hassan borrows the term 'perspectivism' from Kenneth Burke to express irony's sense of situated looking. In the postmodern world it is almost impossible to act, to create, to think unselfconsciously in the expectation that others will automatically understand us. All works, all languages are thus held to be 'ironised'.

**e. hybridisation**

The dissolving of boundaries characteristic of postmodernism has given rise to bizarre hybrid genres; the non-fiction novel, the new journalism, and other 'threshold literatures'. Parody, travesty and pastiche flourish in a climate where nothing is sacred and everything is accessible, including the cultural forms of the past. Thus skyscrapers capped with motifs borrowed from Chippendale furniture become possible, as well as fake Georgian mansions that are indistinguishable from the real thing.

**f. performance, participation**

The more that authorities dissolve and the more the author abrogates responsibility for leading the reader towards sense and meaning, then the more the reader has to write the cultural text he/she reads. Much art is now conceived in terms of performance, the processes of the performance being deemed as important as any products.

**g. constructionism**

The post-Kantian view that the mind is antecedent to reality, i.e. that the latter is, in some sense, the creation of the former, is something of a commonplace in contemporary philosophy, criticism and theory. Postmodernists tend to take a radical view and conceive of reality in terms of so many fictions (*les petits recits*). Interestingly, Hassan claims that, "Scientists seem now more at ease with heuristic fictions than many humanists, last realists of the West." We find this stance in philosophers like Nelson Goodman whose *Ways of Worldmaking* and *Languages of Art* (to which I shall refer in chapter five) demonstrate the extent to which we now see the intervention of mind in nature and culture.

**2. Postmodernism in literature: metafiction as exemplar**

**a. metafiction as a self-referential fictional mode**

In section 1 I reviewed some of the features of postmodernism as a broad tendency within contemporary Western culture and suggested that despite its notorious diffuseness the term can be characterised in a useful way. If we now turn our attention to postmodernism in literature I believe we can delimit the concept even further. To begin with we should note that although I have so far employed only the label 'postmodern', the works under consideration here have been grouped together, at different times and by different commentators, under different headings. Postmodernism might be best considered as an umbrella term covering works that have variously been called 'fabulation', 'surfiction', 'metafiction', 'the self-begetting novel'. I am personally happiest with the label 'metafiction' for reasons which the rest of this chapter will, I hope, make clear. In what follows I consider the characteristics of metafiction and its relation to the fictional mode of Realism.

The first, and perhaps pre-eminent reason why I prefer the term 'metafiction' to other possible substitutes is simply that the prefix 'meta' gives us a clue to the concerns of the authors who write such stories. As with other 'meta' terminology (e.g. metalanguage,



metacognition) *metafiction* suggests that the stories we read under this heading have something to say about the nature of fiction as well as being examples *of* fiction. Metafiction is thus 'fiction about fiction', it "...explore[s] a theory of fiction through the practice of writing fiction" (Waugh, 1984).

Waugh's view, and it is one that is shared by other critics (e.g. McHale, 1987), is that there are two terms, two realms, implicated in the auto-critique of metafiction: 'fiction' and 'reality'. Metafictions, it is claimed, can help us rethink not only the fictionality of fiction but also to question the ontological status of the world beyond the text. I intend to postpone a consideration of this latter sense of fictionality - the putative fictionality of everyday life - until later in this part of the chapter, for the time being, concentrate on the ways in which the metafictional aims to critique literary fiction itself. This will require a short digression into the nature of fictional Realism \*.

#### **b. Realism as the pre-eminent fictional mode**

Realism has become, since the nineteenth century, the pre-eminent mode in literary fiction. (Belsey, 1980; Rose, 1984; Waugh, 1984) For many readers it is the fictional mode *par excellence* and as such it largely goes unquestioned outside the academy. Its ubiquity and obviousness make it culturally invisible and it is this invisibility that metafiction attempts to subvert. In what follows I examine three characteristics of Realist fiction that account for its transience: illusionism, closure and the hierarchy of discourses.

##### **i. illusionism**

The reading of Realistic fiction seems to require that we lose our normal, everyday consciousness of self and submerge ourselves in the virtual, illusory lives of others. Many writers have commented upon this phenomenon, and upon the value that it possesses for

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\* I use a capital 'R' in Realism to distinguish the term from the genre category, 'realism', which is placed over against genres such as fantasy, science fiction etc. Here, Realism implies the creation of a convincing secondary world whether it be set in Middlesex, Middle Earth or on Mars.

those who enjoy stories (e.g. McHale 1987). The critic Gordon Craig, for example, remarks upon the 'double withdrawal' involved in reading fiction of this kind - a withdrawal from the everyday world and a withdrawal from self (Craig, 1976). Characteristically, we say the reader becomes *lost* in the book.

So used are we to losing ourselves in this way that we tend to take it as natural and normal. In its most extreme form the medium itself (language) becomes invisible to us as we read (Belsey, 1980; Rose, 1984). This illusionistic mode is well nigh ubiquitous in Western culture and our unreflective experience of such stories has tended towards the naturalisation, the uncritical acceptance, of a *mimetic* view of Realism (Todorov, 1967, 1980; Genette, 1980). Commonsense would seem to tell us that Realist fictions achieve their effects because they *resemble* reality. When we read Realistic stories we experience recognition - this is how the world is, and these are the kinds of things real people do. Such stories appear to reflect back to us how the world appears in our everyday experience - allowing for the artful rearrangements that enliven plot and characters.

## ii. narrative closure

Belsey (1980) surveys and summarises much of the theoretical work in this field and she adds to the illusionism discussed above two further key features of the Realist mode. One is the sense of closure that we have as readers when we approach the end of a Realist text. As we read we have a sense that the story is 'going somewhere' and that all will be satisfactorily resolved in the end. Loose ends will be tied up and we will retrospectively come to understand much that has gone before.

There will always be some variation in the extent to which such closure can be effected but, generally speaking, the vast majority of narratives proceed from the establishment or assumption of some kind of order, through a disturbance or disruption of that order - an adventure, a mystery, a murder, a love affair - towards an inevitable resolution wherein the original order is reinstated or developed. Our implicit and naturalised understanding of

narrative closure ensures that we are no more aware of it as a feature of the constructedness of such texts than we are aware of what produces the phenomenon of illusionism.

### iii. discourses and narrative

Belsey's third key feature of realist text is what she terms the hierarchy of discourses. She draws attention to the fact that stories which aim for realistic effects are usually composed of a number of different discourses, languages or voices. Sometimes this simply means the weaving together of the strands of a dialogue and this will involve the author in creating a form of writing that is convincing as speech. In a complex novel the forms of language that an author might employ could include different kinds of written text - letters, diaries, various technical vocabularies - as well as a great variety of spoken forms. What we habitually refer to as an author's style is actually determined by the distinctive ways he or she orchestrates these different forms of language

Those writers working squarely within the traditions of Realism manage to convince us of the naturalness of their tales and this is achieved by ordering the disparate voices and languages that make up the story into a hierarchy. Belsey argues that the hierarchy is governed by a privileged discourse that places all the other voices and discourses in subordinate positions. Most often this privileged discourse takes the form of an authorial, narrating voice which guides the reader into interpreting the other voices out of which the story is woven. As we read we naturally and effortlessly seem to understand motives, thoughts, emotions, consequences and so on.

What analyses such as Belsey's teach us is that the stories we take to be most natural and straightforward are in fact sophisticated textual artefacts that work upon us as readers to create the illusion of a real world that we share with the characters. Such stories are shaped and ordered in such a way that they make a powerful appeal to us. Thus we savour the resolutions and the denouements without being aware of the constructedness of such moments.

Realism is the commonest coin in the literary economy and is thus most easily overlooked and misunderstood - it is naturalised from the moment we begin to hear stories and share books. From the beginning we take it for granted and thus its techniques become invisible to us. It is, however, no more natural than any other type of text and whether we realise it or not we learn its techniques and its conventions as children, for most of us at the same time that we learn to read. In the next section I briefly review some of the ways in which writers of metafiction attempt to draw attention to the constructedness of Realism.

**c. the metafictive assault on Realism**

Metafiction, then, is not prepared to accept the Realist mode on its own unreflective terms. It wants to say something to the reader about the nature of the fictive experience in the midst of that experience and it has developed a vast range of strategies for doing it.

David Lodge, an early enthusiast for postmodern literature, suggested five possible strategies for avoiding the characteristic forms of both Realism and modernism:

**contradiction, discontinuity, randomness, excess and short circuit** (Lodge, 1977).

McHale (1987) cites categories from Hassan, and Peter Wollen. I intend to be guided by the list of characteristic features of metafiction proposed by Patricia Waugh in her book *Metafiction: the Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction* (Waugh, 1984).

According to Waugh, strategies characteristic of the metafictive postmodernist include:

- i. the over-obtrusive, visibly inventing narrator.

The storyteller steps out from behind the curtain to address the reader directly as in John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* and Robert Coover's *Pricksongs and Descants*.

- ii. ostentatious typographic experiment

Enlarging, distorting, inverting and otherwise manipulating the print on the page foregrounds the objectivity of the book. Such experiments are found in Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing*, and the work of Alasdair Gray, Christine Brooke-Rose, Donald Barthelme, Ronald Sukenick.

iii. explicit dramatization of the reader

The reader is addressed like a character in the tale as in Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*.

iv. Chinese-box structures

Embedded stories that can regress through many levels, e.g. John Barth's, "Menelaiaid" from *Lost in the Funhouse*.

v. incantatory and absurd lists

Over-extended or bizarre lists like those found in the novels and stories of Donald Barthelme make the illusion of reality impossible to sustain.

vi. over-systematized or overtly arbitrarily arranged structural devices

The adoption of arbitrary, non-literary conventions such as the alphabet for structuring stories as in Walter Abish's *Alphabetical Africa*

vii. total breakdown of temporal and spatial organisation of narrative

The rejection of authorial control and substitution of aleatoric devices, e.g. many of the works of B.S. Johnson.

viii. infinite regress

Plot sequences structured so that they either circle around endlessly like a Moebius strip or simply regress to infinity, e.g. William Burroughs' *Exterminator!* and John Barth's "life-story".

ix. self-reflexive images

Images that call attention to themselves - a favourite device of Nabokov.

x. critical discussions of the story within the story

The irruption of an alien discourse into the world of the story as in, John Fowles "The Enigma", John Barth's *Sabbatical* and David Lodge's, *How Far Can You Go*.

xi. continuous undermining of specific fictional conventions

Examples of this very general strategy are legion. Waugh mentions Muriel Spark and John Fowles. We might also include here examples of a device that Waugh mentions nowhere else: the 'short-circuit', or 'slippage' between diegetic levels within a story that Genette (1980) calls *metalepsis*.

xii. use of popular genres

Examples include *romance* (John Barth's *Sabbatical*, Margaret Drabble's *The Waterfall*); *science fiction* (Kurt Vonnegut Jr's *The Sirens of Titan* and *Slaughterhouse Five*, Donald Barthelme's "Paraguay"); motifs from *pornography* (Gore Vidal's *Myra Breckinridge*, Robert Coover's "The Babysitter"); the language of *comic books* (Clarence Major's *Emergency Exit*); the *family saga* (John Irving's *The World According to Garp*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Ada*) and the *western* (Richard Brautigan's *The Hawkline Monster: a Gothic Western*)

xiii. explicit parody of previous texts, literary and non-literary

Parody inevitably draws attention to the discourse parodied. Examples include Gilbert Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew*, Alan Burns' *Babel* and perhaps works like Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*.

All of these metafictional devices are deployed to foreground the constructedness of fictional text, to interfere with the seductions of illusionistic Realism, and to provide a commentary on the business of making fictions. In the next section I consider some of the different ways in which metafiction has been theorised .

d. how does metafiction work?

So far I have sketched in outline the concept of postmodernism as it applies in the arts, sciences and theory, and identified metafiction as an exemplary form of postmodern writing. I have characterised the kind of fiction that metafiction comments upon and critiques, and have surveyed a range of techniques commonly used by authors of metafiction. To complete this section, and as a way of approaching the relationship between metafiction and 'reality', I discuss the various ways critics and commentators have theorised metafiction.

Lodge's (1977) analysis is classically Structuralist in its reliance upon the concepts of 'defamiliarisation', 'foregrounding', 'metaphor' and 'metonymy'. Working with this vocabulary and within this tradition he inevitably frames postmodern fiction as an attempt

to break free from the confining structural constraints of preceding literary forms. For Lodge, at least at the time of this analysis, postmodernism's concern's were purely *literary*, and postmodernism a phase within literary history.

Scholes (1974) similarly works within a Structuralist frame of reference and conceives of postmodernist works as responses within contemporary fiction to what he terms the 'structuralist imagination'. Scholes, like Lodge, thus conceives of the metafiction as a purely literary matter. Viewed in this light, metafiction is an acknowledgement in fiction of the hermetic insights of Structuralist theorists, and their relation to the world, or worlds, beyond the text is simply not on the agenda.

Neither Scholes (1974) nor Lodge (1977) is concerned solely with metafiction or postmodern writing, but Scholes readdresses the topic in *Fabulation and Metafiction* (Scholes, 1979). Here, in trying to establish a typology of metafictional texts he argues that such works incorporate a *variety* of critical stances. This could amount to no more than a way of ordering the many disruptive and subversive techniques that postmodern writers are prone to deploy. However, his analysis is based upon a categorisation of both fiction and 'being' into *essence* and *existence*. Thus Scholes argues that, just as human actions are tied to "...the essential nature of man", the varied forms of fiction are an expression of the basic 'ideas' of fiction. These, in turn, are an aspect of man's essential nature and cannot change until man's nature changes.

Although this analysis permits Scholes to distinguish effectively between the kinds of fiction written by John Barth, Robert Coover, Donald Barthelme and William Gass, it does tie him to an *essentialist* account of fiction and of life which runs counter to much postmodern theorising. Postmodernism is *constructive* and will hear of no appeal to Platonic essences whether they be of life or literature. Both life and literature are 'constructions' and not interruptions of essence into existence.

Hutcheon's (1980) analysis is avowedly eclectic, although she claims to rely heavily upon two methodologies - Saussurian structuralism and Iserian hermeneutics. She argues that her choice is governed by the fact that metafiction is concerned both with linguistic and narrative structures *and* with the role of the reader. The former methodology permits her to discuss features of metafictional texts and the latter, to discuss the 'concretising' of texts in reading. Neither of these perspectives, however, readily allow for a discussion of the relationship between text and 'reality' - a relationship that metafiction purportedly problematises.

In contrast both Waugh (1984) and McHale (1987), like Hassan (1986), take a radically constructivist view (see part B section 1). They argue that metafiction not only draws attention to the way *fictional* worlds are constructed through language, but also point to the fact that the real world too - the world beyond, or outside fiction - is constituted through language. Irrespective of whether it possesses an objective substrate, we can have no knowledge of reality other than through the structures of perception and cognition formed through language. In brief, language gives us the world. (This view, that language is antecedent to our experience and understanding, is one that informs the thesis as a whole. I shall discuss one formulation of the view, central to my argument, in chapter seven). I now move on to suggest some ways in which metafictional *picture books* might be ordered and categorised.



## C. THE METAFICTIVE PICTURE BOOK

### 1. The metafictional picture book: some types and kinds

Picture books differ from prose fiction in a number of ways, some very obvious - the presence of pictures that do a good deal of the storytelling work, for example - and some less so. We should therefore not expect a perfect overlap of picture book strategies with those listed in part B, section 2. I have been guided by my understanding of prose metafiction in the formulation of the following catena of features but I have also tried to remain sensitive to the unique features of the picture book. As we shall see, despite the differences between the two types of text - prose fiction and the picture book - the kinds of rules that get broken are remarkably similar.

#### a. boundary breaking

I have already discussed *Bear Hunt* by Anthony Browne and a number of other titles so I shall mention them again only briefly here. The metafictional feature they all share is *boundary breaking*. The fictional character of the Bear, for example, belongs to the diegetic realm of the narrated story and as such would not normally have any influence upon the *narration* of the story but that is precisely what his magic pencil allows him to do. Bear appears to be able to appropriate to himself the role of story-creator and effectively draws his way out of his difficulties. This is a variation upon the form of slippage between levels that Genette termed *metalepsis*.

A further variation occurs when Shirley Hughes' *Chips and Jessie* address the reader directly at the beginning of the book in which they appear for all the world as though they were really existing people. They even speak of Shirley Hughes (their creator) as a friend. In *The Story of a Little Mouse Trapped in a Book* (Monique Felix) the trapped mouse having pushed at the confines of her page, nibbles around the edges of the page and appears to create an aeroplane from the paper upon which she flies down to safety 'out' of the book.

*Simon's Book* (Henrik Drescher), *Benjamin's Book* (Alan Baker), and *The Book Mice* (Tony Knowles) all rely upon similar effects. Benjamin, for example, is a rather inept hamster who gets into scrapes through such tricks as walking across the page upon which he is represented leaving a trail of muddy paw prints behind him. In attempting to wipe the page clean he only makes matters worse.

**b. excess**

*Excess* is a common metafictional strategy (Lodge, 1977) although it does not appear in Waugh's list (see part B, section 2). It is a particularly common device within picture books and I shall be discussing it further in chapter three when I examine the responses of two children to John Burningham's book *Where's Julius?* Here I shall confine myself to a review of one or two variations on this theme.

Picture books often have an 'over the top' quality. They frequently involve a stretching and testing of norms - linguistic, literary, social, conceptual, ethical, narrative etc. Such books explore the outer limits of what constitutes the normal and the acceptable. In such works thresholds are dissolved and the decorum of what is adequate to the story ignored as authors and illustrators pose the question *how far is it possible to go?*

Jill Murphy's *On The Way Home* tells the story of a little girl who, having fallen from a swing in a playground and grazed her knee, makes her slow way home telling fabulous, tall tales to her friends about how the accident occurred. The book is structured in such a way that the reader only discovers the real reason for her injury at the very end of the book when she dissolves into tears on her doorstep when confronted by her mother, and finally tells the truth about what happened. The effect is produced very simply by withholding from the reader any sight of, or information about, the playground in the first pages so that all we know about Claire at the beginning of the book is that she has a hurt knee and is making her narratively devious way home. In this respect the story pivots around a simple use of Roland Barthes' hermeneutic code in establishing an enigma and delaying its resolution (Barthes, 1974).

The act of reading the story involves the reader in experiencing, at each turn of the page, an accumulation of preposterous tales involving witches, giants, ghosts, crocodiles, gorillas, flying saucers and so on - in fact, all of the stock characters and figures from children's tales. The stories are, from the beginning, clearly incompatible and thus resist any simple totalisation as the story proceeds. Claire is an untrustworthy narrator and her differing accounts clearly belong to the tall-tale tradition. Stewart (1984) refers to the "tall-tale session" as a "festive display of accumulation over balance". However, although Claire's tales can clearly be seen as fabulations she herself is not a particularly fabulous narrator - indeed she is portrayed as a recognisable, contemporary suburban schoolgirl. Thus for many child readers her tales are not so much fabulations as *fabrications*: ie. untruths or lies, and therefore monstrous not just in a narrative sense but in an ethical sense too. One response to *On The Way Home* is 'how could she say such things?'

The unthinkable or the unmentionable appears with startling regularity in picture books. Alarming, disturbing or exciting possibilities are put to the test in *Would You Rather* by John Burningham. In this book narrative is abandoned and the reader is invited to choose between extraordinary, exciting or disgusting possibilities. Many of the options on display are grotesquely comic in the manner familiar from the children's comics and cartoon strips, others put social norms to the test. Indeed, the book can cause embarrassment as readers recognise the enormity of some of Burningham's suggestions.

Many picture books for children exhibit "a festive display of accumulation over balance". Stories such as Burningham's *Mr. Gumpy's Outing* and *Mr Gumpy's Motor Car* are rooted in the tradition of the cumulative tale (see: Opie, 1980, *A Nursery Companion*, for nineteenth century examples - in particular, *Aldiborontiphoskyphorniositikos*, a paradigmatic work of accumulation and verbal gigantism). The *Mr. Gumpy* books are essentially simple narratives wherein a formula, repeated with variations throughout, creates a heaping up of elements to the point of instability and resultant chaos and catastrophe. More recent examples of this type of tale are *Mrs. Armitage on Wheels* by

Quentin Blake and *The Grumpalump* by Sarah Hayes and Barbara Firth. The bicycling Mrs. Armitage is one of Blake's eccentrics. She keeps on adding Heath Robinson-like appendages to her cycle in order to remedy a host of deficiencies and inefficiencies with the result that her fabulously unstable vehicle reaches insupportable speeds and inevitably crashes. The Grumpalump is a mysterious creature who is puzzled over by a growing crowd of animals. As they wonder what the creature can be, "The bear stared, the cat sat, the mole rolled, the dove shoved, the bull pulled..." and so on. Burningham's two books, and *The Grumpalump* rely largely upon the repetitive printed text for their effects but Blake's illustrations are central to the success of *Mrs. Armitage*.

*Angry Arthur* by Hiawyn Oram and Satoshi Kitamura portrays the extravagant results of one little boy's temper tantrum - the destruction of the universe, no less. Once again there is an accumulation of increasingly extravagant imagery that goes well beyond the bounds of Realism, but in this instance there is a clear metaphorical purpose to the depicted events. In the real world the actual results of bad temper are more localised but the images of chaos in the book serve as the perfect objective correlate for the sense of boundless outrage experienced by angry infants. The dissolution of one's personality in blind rage is well portrayed in the loss of a universe.

### c. indeterminacy

Indeterminacy is the opposite of excess. In the latter case readers are presented with an accumulation of one sort or another way beyond the norm for Realistic stories; in the former, they are left with too little information. The contrast between these two extremes reminds us of the fact that stories in the Realist mode depend upon what Susan Stewart calls "an economy of significance" that is governed by generic conventions (Stewart, 1984) - the writer must say neither too much nor too little or she risks losing the reader. In addition, what makes for Realism can change over time: the novels of Zola, for example, can seem suffocatingly overstuffed with detail to a modern sensibility tuned to the literature of the late twentieth century.

All stories are thus built upon gaps, upon absence. We know how to read the cinematic cut when we jump from one scene to another in a film (although it was not always so), and we have no problems building up a tale from partial information. Indeed, metafictional *excess* teaches us how ridiculous it would be for a writer to try to say absolutely everything. Some picture books expose the gaps for us and reveal the comic absurdity of the situation we are left in when textual props are missing.

*How Tom Beat captain Najork and His Hired Sportsmen* by Russell Hoban and Quentin Blake has at its heart a series of three testing games that are both present and absent. Womble, Muck and Sneedball are named and illustrated and are thus actualities within the tale, but the reader is never allowed to learn the precise nature of these ludicrous pursuits. Blake's illustrations provide some inkling of their complexity, and Hoban throws us a few clues about scoring and so on, but the three games remain a pungent lack throughout the story.

*Come Away from the Water, Shirley* and its companion piece, *Time to Get out of the Bath, Shirley* by John Burningham also rely upon an absence, but here it takes the form of a withholding of information about how two sequences of images are related. The pictures and words on the left-hand pages clearly relate to the images on the right-hand pages in both these books but we are left to make up our own minds about the precise nature of the relationship. In *Come away From the Water...* Shirley visits the beach with her parents but appears on the recto pages to be fighting pirates and finding treasure while on the verso, her parents, ensconced in deck chairs, exhort her to behave herself. Adults and children who are competent readers tend to naturalise the tale according to the codes of Realism, embedding the images of Shirley's adventures within a tale of a visit to the seaside. According to such a reading the story goes like this: family visits the beach, tedious parents keep their daughter under control from their deck chairs, not realising that the latter is enjoying a fantasy which only exists in her head, i.e. the tale of the pirates. The story ends when reality supervenes and Shirley must withdraw from her fantasy world to rejoin her parents.

The text will obviously sustain such a reading, and it is probably the one we are all most comfortable with, but it is important to notice that there is no explicit authorisation for this interpretation written into the text. Burningham simply supplies two sets of incompatible images, one with words, the other without, and lets the reader do the rest. The tension can be resolved through the embedded reading described above but this removes the metafictional frisson of the book. If a bear can recreate his fictional surroundings to avoid trouble, why cannot a little girl be in two stories at the same time in the same book? The stresses caused through juxtaposing realism and fantasy are explored further in Burningham's *Where's Julius?* - a text that is not so easily naturalised as the *Shirley* books. *Where's Julius?* is the book used for the preliminary study reported in chapter three, and I have analysed it in some detail there.

Another book that leaves relationships and outcomes obscure is *Black and White* by David Macaulay. In this book the page openings are exploited to allow for the presentation of four separate narratives. Each page is divided horizontally in two and the gutter between the pages is used to further divide the opening into four. Each half page - each quarter opening - is thus available for a separate story. The four stories are told in four separate styles, one of them entirely wordless, one replete with the kinds of visual puns that some picture book illustrators delight in. There are hints and suggestions embedded in the pictures that the four stories might just be connected somehow but Macaulay makes no efforts to explain how - or even if - they are connected. In fact, he prints a warning label on the title page:

This book appears to contain a number of stories that do not necessarily occur at the same time. Then again, it may contain only one story. In any event, careful inspection of both words and pictures is recommended.

All of these picture books contain, to a greater or lesser extent, indeterminacies. They widen the gaps that are present in all types of narrative discourse, often exploiting the special gap between picture and word unique to the form, to the point where the reader's

contribution to the making of meaning becomes disproportionately large. Tzvetan Todorov tells us that all stories contain the instructions by which they are to be read (Todorov, 1980), but it is perfectly possible for writers, and illustrators too, to omit some if not all of the directions, and hand over responsibility to the reader.

#### **d. parody**

Parody, as a literary form, is usually linked to satire and ridicule. *The Penguin*

*Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (Cuddon, 1992) defines parody as,

"The imitative use of the words, style, attitude, tone and ideas of an author in such a way as to make them ridiculous... As a branch of satire its purpose may be corrective as well as derisive".

It may thus seem an unlikely trait to find within the children's picture book, but in fact, picture book makers are very adept at parodic transformations. Indeed, part of my argument later in the thesis will be that parody is inherent within the form and needs little excuse to surface in any particular book. The aim of parody in the picture book is not to ridicule any particular author or style but to make a whole book into a joke by making fun of the conventions, manners and affectations of a particular textual genre. In effect, picture book parodies are elaborate forms of Chukovsky's topsy-turvies (Chukovsky, 1963).

Chukovsky argues that the delight children take in the topsy turvy world of folk literature and the curious verbal inversions they themselves create stems from their realisation that one can play around with the rules governing how words relate to the world and that to do so is actually very funny. Similarly, when you are beginning to get to grips with how, for example, non-fiction text works, it is actually great fun to see the conventions and the rules shaken up.

Parody then is always subversive in that it refuses to accept as natural and fixed and given that which is culturally determined, conventional and artificial. This is an extremely

important lesson for children to learn and should be a part of their critical literacy learning. The engaging thing about picture book parodies is that they do it as a form of play.

*The Worm Book* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg, is an excellent example. In this book the Ahlbergs make fun of the simple, non-fiction text for children. Straightfaced captions are placed beneath silly pictures:

"All good worms have a beginning, a middle and an end".

"Worms with two beginnings, a middle and no end are apt to injure themselves".

"Worms with two ends, a middle and no beginning get bored"

A more sophisticated parody is *How Dogs Really Work* by Alan Snow. This book comes complete with table of contents, index, cut-away pictures with keys, labels with arrows, inset diagrams and so on. The target of the parody is clearly the glamorous books that have proliferated in recent years showing the insides of everything from skyscrapers to ocean liners. Snow's book, however, shows caricature dogs opened up to reveal pulleys, levers and valves and the text purports to explain how doggy behaviour can be explained in terms of the rudimentary, Heath Robinson-like machinery shown in the pictures. Thus, in the section headed, 'Legs and Getting About' we read:

"Legs are organs of support and locomotion in animals (and humans).

"In dogs, the legs are fixed at the four corners of the main body, (see diagram 1). Nearly all dogs have four legs, even the short funny ones that sometimes look like they may not, (see diagram 2).

Legs are powered by energy generated from the food the dog eats".

As befits this kind of manual everything is shown in the greatest possible detail, and there are lots of handy hints for the prospective dog owner ("Make sure you are running your dog on the right fuel. If you are not it may affect the dog's performance"). The book even comes with a warning, like David Macaulay's *Black and White*:

**"WARNING....** This book is meant to be an Owner's Manual, NOT a Workshop Manual. We hope it will



aid your understanding of dogs and help you  
with the smooth running of your own dog. Please  
refer servicing and other major work to a qualified  
expert".

Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross's *Dr. Xargle* books are parodic in a different way. What is mocked in this series of picture books are the pretensions of the teacher/lecturer who pretends to know all about his subject but in fact knows very little. Dr. Xargle, a cartoon, alien bug-eyed-monster lectures his young charges on the behaviour of 'earthlings' and the significance of their habits and pursuits, coining bizarrely appropriate names for things but getting most of it wrong. In *Dr. Xargle's Book of Earth Mobiles*, for example, we learn that, "The oldest form of transport known to [earthlings] is the Dobbin". We can read about cars too:

"A car has many eyes. It winks at its friends with  
these. It has a tail. Out of this comes stinkfume.  
Every Sunday, the earthling strokes the car with  
a piece of soft material. He lies underneath it and  
tickles its tummy. For Christmas, he buys it two  
woolly cubes with dots on".

It is significant that all of these books refer back to, or rely upon, forms of non-fiction. It is not the only genre that is treated to parodic rewriting but it is certainly a popular one. Where fiction is concerned the most frequently parodied form is the fairy-tale or folk-tale. I suspect that as with non-fiction such tales are easy prey for parodists because they are often solemn and serious. Deep and frequently dark doings take place in folk-tales, and it is often assumed that such tales are inherently didactic. In addition, both non-fiction genres, and fairy-tales are organised around fairly strict patterns and conventions. Generically they are, on the whole, extremely stable and consistent. This is why the early structuralists found folk tales so congenial for their analyses. Other genres that are more flexible and fluid are less easy to parody.

Tony Ross, for example, who illustrates the *Dr. Xargle* books, seems to have been engaged upon a long-term project to re-write the folk-tale canon from a parodic point of view, and Jon Scieszka has turned the folk-tale tables in *The Frog Prince Continued*

(with Steve Johnson) and *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* and *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (with Lane Smith). A further version of *The Three Little Pigs* has recently been published entitled, *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*, written by Eugene Trivivas and illustrated by Helen Oxenbury.

Occasionally, and relatively recently, feminist picture book makers have used parody for its original corrective and instructive purpose. In these cases the rules governing gender roles in fairy-tales have been broken, an alternative order instituted, and the solemn rendered risible.

Parody is innately metafictional. That is, the subject of a full-scale parody is never the apparent subject of the text. In *How Dogs Really Work*, for example, no-one in their right mind would actually believe what the book says. The real subject of a parody is the nature of the text parodied. Parodies present the reader with a distorted, but recognisable image of a genre or text type. Parodies break rules, break boundaries and undermine the solemn. They are topsy-turvy and as such children can use them to gain some distance from the sets of rules that they are learning how to follow, to see conventional relationships for what they are. In parody they can see the cultural for what it is and not mistake it for the natural.

#### **e. performance**

Many picture books for the young are quite deliberately interactive and participatory. Picture books with tabs to pull, flaps to lift, wheels to rotate, pages to unfold, holes to peep through and, most recently, buttons to push and sounds to listen to, are all now so commonplace that the listing of titles, authors and illustrators seems otiose.

Usually these books - 'movables' or 'pop-ups' - are frowned upon by book critics as not being entirely serious, nor even wholly deserving of the label 'book'. In chapter six, when I critically examine the history and development of the picture book, I consider this matter in some detail. For the time being I simply want to highlight these works as worthy of

attention and as exemplifications of a more general tendency or trend within the picture book form that should be taken seriously. Books such as these, which the reader is invited to play with, are swept into the margins only at the risk of artificially clearing and simplifying the field.

Books such as the explosively popular *Spot* books; the fantastically engineered works by Jan Pienkowski such as *Haunted House* and *Robot*; the cut and shaped pages in the books of Eric Carle and Ron Maris; the uninhibited experiments upon what can be done with a page carried out by the Ahlbergs in such books as *Peepo*, *The Jolly Postman*, *Yum Yum* and *Playmates*, are perhaps some of the best known examples of this phenomenon. Two more recent examples are *Making Faces* by Nick Butterworth - a book where the reader is encouraged to pull faces in a built-in mirror - and *Tom's Pirate Ship* by Philippe Dumasquier, where each double-page spread consists of two nearly identical pictures which the reader must scrutinise to find what is missing from the recto page. In what ways might we consider the books in which these liberties are taken to be at least metafictional, if not postmodern?

First of all, most movables are not expressly concerned with undermining or resiting a secondary fictive world, one of the core devices of metafiction. Alan and Janet Ahlberg are extremely good at creating a compelling sense of place and time, one of the prerequisites of the Realist enterprise, but on the whole the makers of movables seem to be far more concerned with what it is possible to do with the book as *object* rather than the book as *fiction*. They appear to be fascinated with how far it is possible to go with the book, the page, the page-opening before they cease to be book, page and page-opening. They are thus more concerned with what might be termed 'metabibliogony' than metafiction (BIBLIOGONY: "the production of books", O.E.D.).

What movables share with the metafictional is a disrespect for rules and conventions, for the decorum of the book. They involve *boundary breaking* and *excess* but in ways other than

those already described, and they seem to assume a willingness on the part of their audience to engage happily in the forms of play that they offer.

Speaking in this way about books is apt to make them seem more like agents than objects. The 'invitation' to participate has, of course, been put there by author, illustrator and publisher, and it has been argued (see for example, Moss, 1980) that the vast majority of movables are nothing more than a cynical exploitation of the propensity of the young to engage in forms of play. I do not doubt that there is truth in this view but nonetheless, viewed as a part of the development of a tendency within picture books as a whole, the phenomenon deserves much more careful attention.

Examples of *boundary breaking*, *excess*, *indeterminacy*, *parody* and *performance* can readily be found amongst the picture books published in the last thirty years. Doubtless the phenomena I have outlined above may be described in alternative ways - indeed, I argue later in the thesis that redescription of phenomena is always a possibility, and is indeed the way in which our understanding changes and develops. However, I think the case for a distinctively *metafictive* form of picture book is a strong one. I now go on to consider in the final section of part C what metafictional forms of text imply for the teaching and learning of reading.

## **2. The metafictional picture book and learning to read**

To complete this chapter, I want to raise the important question of the relationship between a metafictional tendency in picture books, and the teaching and learning of reading. Put very simply, metafictional texts - whether picture books or otherwise - have two very distinctive features that mark them out from other, more conventional, forms of fiction. First, they actively seek to prevent certain kinds of reading experience and, second, they actively seek to promote certain other kinds.

Metafiction is inherently anti-Realist in that it works against the solipsistic illusionism characteristic of the Realist mode. It is very difficult to get lost in a metafictional book, difficult to withdraw totally from what Susan Stewart calls the *every-day-life world* (Stewart, 1978), from the sense that one is holding and looking at a book. The metafictional makes it very difficult to mistake the story for life.

This sounds rather more like a loss than a gain for, after all, one reason why Realist text is so compelling is that we enjoy the experience and endow it with considerable value. If we say a book, a story, is gripping we are praising it rather than criticising it. Similarly, "I couldn't get into it..." is one of the commonest reasons offered for giving up on a novel. If the author cannot deliver the goods in terms of a convincing secondary world we take him or her to have failed. In the classroom too, we see getting lost in a book as a reassuring sign that apprentice readers have finally got it - they have discovered one of the things that books and reading can do for them. Once children have made this discovery they hungrily pursue the experience, sometimes to the exclusion of other childhood pursuits.

There is, however, a quite distinctive pleasure to be had from the metafictional. At its best it is very funny. There is great pleasure to be had from seeing the rules broken, and I have compared this pleasure to the young child's delight in the topsy-turvy identified by Chukovsky. It is a pleasure and a delight that is *interstitial*. It is like peeping behind the curtain to see the puppet-master at work.

The gains of metafiction then, are to do with this invitation to look behind the scenes, to find out how the illusion works and to play around, hand in hand with the author, with the rules that make fiction possible. I do not wish to suggest that the writers and illustrators of the picture books I have discussed all had anti-Realist aims and intentions. Nor am I trying to suggest that the books of Anthony Browne, John Burningham and Eric Carle automatically cause scales to drop from our eyes, but I do wish to suggest that since metafiction is what David Lodge calls a "rule-breaking kind of art..." (Lodge, 1977) it makes available, indeed positively invites, *critical* reading. Here then is the gain to set

against the loss. What do we gain when we lose illusion? we gain an opportunity to explore the world of fiction and of fictional text not readily available to us elsewhere.

Matters such as these are rarely discussed in works that theorise learning to read in the home and the classroom. There are exceptions, as we shall see in chapter four when I review the literature in which picture books appear, but on the whole research into early reading is not particularly sophisticated in its approach to text. More often than not the nature of the text children learn to read upon is taken 'as read'. In the past, debate has been concerned with the differences between children's literature and reading schemes - i.e. between meaningful text and non-text - with the varying quality of the texts children are offered; and with the ways in which text is mediated to children in the classroom or home contexts.

I would hazard a guess that for most people, including teachers, fiction is just fiction, story simply story. We readily accept distinctions of genre - the school story, science fiction, domestic tales of anthropomorphised animals and so on- and we happily make judgements about quality, but the stress in recent years upon story and narrative being natural and a basic feature of mind, has not lead to much curiosity about *differences*.

It is my belief that a closer study of literary fiction as a socio-cultural creation would have great relevance to research into the teaching and learning of reading. One starting point could well be the kinds of phenomena I have been trying to characterise in this chapter. If many popular picture books possess the kinds of distinctive features outlined above, what kinds of influence do they have upon the early stages of learning to read? And how do children make meaning from these curious texts? These questions are, I believe, well worth asking and in the next chapter, and in chapter nine, I offer some case studies of children negotiating metafictional picture book texts.

#### D. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In order to clarify and expand upon the similarities between postmodern fiction for adults and certain kinds of contemporary picture book I began by outlining postmodernism as a broad cultural concept. It is a difficult notion to define as it appears to have application in a bewildering array of contexts. However, the key features of postmodernism appear to be: an acceptance of fragmentation and indeterminacy; a rejection of hierarchies and canons and a dissolving of boundaries; a willingness to mix discrete cultural kinds; irony; and the constituting of reality as so many 'fictions'.

In literature, postmodernism is best exemplified in metafiction, a kind of writing that deliberately draws attention to its own construction in an effort to resist, and expose to the reader's gaze, the snares of Realism, a fictional mode which is in turn taken to be emblematic of a naive view of reality. I suggested that metafiction is a less unwieldy concept than postmodernism in literature, particularly in so far as it applies to picture books.

In section C I suggested a simple preliminary taxonomy of picture book metafiction, partly to indicate the extent and range of the phenomena in question, and partly to exemplify the argument. The categories I proposed are, *boundary breaking*, *excess*, *indeterminacy*, *parody* and *performance*. Finally, there is the question of how metafiction in picture books might affect the teaching and learning of reading, and I have suggested that readers gain something quite distinctive from metafiction - a positive invitation to critical reading.

In the next chapter I give an account of a first attempt at trying to discover how children read and interpret an openly metafictional picture book.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **PILOT STUDY: READING A METAFICTIVE PICTURE BOOK WITH TWO CHILDREN**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I examine how two young children received and responded to one picture book. I am mainly concerned to show how their attempts to retell the story gave some access to their interpretation and understanding of the book; how my own reading of the book as a metafictional text differed markedly from the readings of the children; and finally, how the book might be seen as offering a quite distinct, and unorthodox reading experience.

During the course of one year I introduced my own two children, Simon and Claire, to a number of books which I knew they had not met before, at the rate of one, or sometimes two, per month. I would ask Simon, who was eight years old when we began, to read each book to me and then, at a later date, to read the same book to his younger sister (aged 5.5 years) in my absence. Later still, I would invite both children, on separate occasions, to retell the story to me as they remembered it. Both readings and retellings usually took place at, or just before, bedtime and were always recorded on audio tape. Towards the end of the year I altered the procedure slightly in that I took over the role of reading the books to Claire with the intention of opening up the texts a little through offering opportunities for comment and discussion. Not all the stories were, however, retold. Sometimes only one of the children would retell and, occasionally, for one reason or another, we would move on to the next book with neither of them having attempted to recall the story for me. The book I examine in this chapter, *Where's Julius?* by John Burningham, was the last book we shared in this way in February and March 1987. At this time Simon was just short of his ninth birthday and Claire was six and a half years old.



In what follows I give an account of my own reading of the book and compare and contrast it with the children's readings. I then give an account of the attempts made by the two children to retell the story. In part C I try to account for the problems encountered by the children in their attempts at retelling and locate their difficulties in the book's distinctive verbal excess. I then return to a consideration of the role the pictures play in the text and conclude with some suggestions as to how *Where's Julius?* might be read as a non-Realist text.

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## B. READING *WHERE'S JULIUS?*, BY JOHN BURNINGHAM

### 1. My reading

The following account of *Where's Julius?* is largely a reflection of my own first reading. The book was published in 1986 and was, at that time, the latest addition to an oeuvre that has always remained close to the deepest preoccupations of young children whilst extending the range both of what can be said in picture books and how it can be said. I chose this book to read to my children because I felt it bore a strong affinity to other works by the same author, in particular, *Come Away From the Water, Shirley* and *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley*.

*Where's Julius?* seemed to offer similar contrasting story worlds but in a less straightforward way. The book opens with a Mr. and Mrs. Troutbeck preparing breakfast for themselves and their son Julius. The reader learns, through Mrs. Troutbeck's announcement to the family, what it is they are about to eat. Julius is called and they all sit down. A half-page illustration depicts the family grouped around the dining-table. This initial narrative moment occupies the first recto page. Overleaf the reader discovers preparations underway for the next meal of the day, lunch. Once more the menu is announced and Julius called for but this time Mr. Troutbeck declares, "Julius says that he cannot have lunch with us today because he has made a little home in the other room with three chairs, the old curtains and a broom." As a result Mr. Troutbeck takes a tray bearing lunch to where Julius is busy with his den (see fig. 1 overleaf). Mr. Troutbeck is portrayed carrying the tray whilst the printed text above reiterates what Julius is doing and lists once more the items prepared for lunch. A detailed picture of Julius at work in the other room occupies the following double page spread. His lunch lies uneaten upon a stool, though the family cat is depicted stealing a sardine. On these pages there is no printed text.

The next page once more shows a meal in preparation - this time by Mr. Troutbeck - and once more Julius is absent. Now, however, it is suppertime, and so we begin to discover that the narrative sequence is structured almost solely by this tripartite division of the day



into breakfast, lunch and supper. In fact the pattern is repeated over three days and to some extent the sequence is hinted at in the pictures illustrating Julius's absences, particularly at suppertime, when the time of day is clearly late afternoon or evening. Julius's activities during his periods of absence from the household are clearly intended to be the source of much of the interest of the book and of its momentum (we want to know what he will get up to next). Although he is present for the initial breakfast, at subsequent mealtimes he is always missing when it is time to eat. He is always elsewhere, preoccupied with his own projects, which develop rapidly from recognisably realistic and unremarkable childlike activities like making a den in the spare room, to apparently fantastic adventures in the manner of the *Shirley* books. These adventures, or journeys, place Julius in exotic locations such as half way up a pyramid in Egypt, or throwing snowballs at wolves in Siberia. Each time a meal is prepared, one of Julius's parents takes his meal to him on a tray, but by the end of the book Julius has relinquished his wanderings and returns to have supper at home once more.

Thus the reader is offered a sequence of narrative moments the loci of which are the Troutbeck family mealtimes. A formula is established in the first few pages and is adhered to until the resolution at the close. One of the parents announces the details of the current meal and asks the question of the title, "Where's Julius?". The other parent replies that Julius cannot eat with them and offers the reason, eg: that Julius is climbing pyramids, throwing snowballs at wolves, shooting rapids etc. One of them then sets off with a tray bearing Julius's meal. These moments are separated by ellipses ('events' in between each mealtime being passed over in silence) and held together in sequence through the known and repeated order of breakfast, lunch and supper.

When I first read *Where's Julius?* I was intrigued and amused by the way in which the boy's activities shift from a species of domestic realism (building dens, digging holes) to outrageous fantasy. Burningham offers no clue as to what is going on but simply leaves the puzzle in the reader's lap, just as he does in the *Shirley* books. Julius, like Shirley, appears to be in two stories (or two kinds of story) at the same time.

## 2 The children's readings

Both children were just as amused and intrigued by *Where's Julius?* as I had been but what arrested their attention most of all was not the whereabouts of the eponymous central character, but an altogether different feature of the book, one that had escaped my notice entirely. *Where's Julius?* it turned out, was even more unconventional than I had supposed. The focus of their attention began to emerge clearly as they attempted to retell the story some time after they had first encountered it.

I had bought the book one afternoon with the intention of introducing it to the children later on that same day. On their return from school I told them that I had a new book and that we might read it that evening. Simon, who was just short of his eighth birthday at this time, began to look through the book, reading odd passages out aloud, commenting on the pictures, relating events to his own life (of the den-building he remarked, "You don't let me do that,"). Appropriately, given the book's theme, this first reading was interrupted by teatime and then completed after the meal. Half an hour or so later I asked Simon to read the book to me. This he willingly did, adopting a characteristic 'performance' voice and prefacing the story by listing author, illustrator and reader (see extract a, taken from appendix 2)

### extract a. \*

|   |    |   |                       |
|---|----|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | DL |   | Off you go as soon as |
| 2 |    |   | you're ready          |
| 3 | S. | Where's Julius, written and illustrated           |                       |
| 4 |    | by John Burningham ( <i>quietly</i> ) doesn't say |                       |
| 5 |    | that, read by S _____ L _____ ( <i>quietly</i> )  |                       |

---

[ \* I have transcribed the children's conversations, readings and retellings as follows: (*quietly*, *laughing*, etc.) governs words that immediately follow; (.) = a short pause; [ ] = inaudible speech not transcribed; words in continuous capitals indicate attempts to read text aloud; my contributions and those of the children are kept in distinct columns to preserve thematic continuity of each speaker; miscues in the reading are underlined, e.g. (\*\*\*\*) = word/s omitted. For complete key to all transcriptions, see appendix 1]



6           it doesn't say that either. FOR  
 7           BREAKFAST, SAID MRS.TROUTBECK, WE ARE  
 8           HAVING SCRAMBLED EGGS WITH MUSHROOMS  
 9           CORNFLAKES AND SOME ORANGE JUICE  
 10          WHICH I HAVE UNFROZEN. WHERE'S JULIUS?  
 11          MR.TROUTBECK CALLED ON THEIR SON (\*\*\*\*)  
 12          AND THEY ALL SAT DOWN TO BREAKFAST.  
 13          FOR LUNCH TODAY WE ARE HAVING SARDINES  
 14          ON TOAST A ROLL AND BUTTER TOMATOES  
 15          AND NOTHING FOR PUDDING. WHERE'S  
 16          JULIUS? JULIUS SAYS HE CANNOT HAVE  
 17          LUNCH WITH US TODAY BECAUSE HE HAS  
 18          MADE A LITTLE HOME IN THE OTHER ROOM  
 19          WITH TWO CHAIRS THE OLD CURTAIN AND  
 20          THE BROOM. SO MR.TROUTBECK TOOK  
 21          THE TRAY WITH (\*\*\*\*) SARDINES ON TOAST  
 22          AND THE ROLL AND THE BUTTER AND THE  
 23          TOMATO AND THE PUDDING (.) AND NO  
 24          PUDDING TO THE OTHER ROOM WHERE JULIUS  
 25          HAD MADE HIS LITTLE HOME...

He hesitated over some unfamiliar and exotic-sounding names ('Neffatuteum' and 'Novosty Krosky') which he pronounced slowly and carefully and he commented on several of the large pictures, each time pointing out that some part of Julius's meal was being stolen by one of the creatures portrayed there (details I had missed on my first reading) and he regularly employed a parodic, sing-song, up and down intonation for those passages and phrases that were regularly repeated at intervals throughout the book.

Later that same evening I suggested to Claire that she might like to hear the story and look at the book too. Claire is two and a half years younger than her brother and she very much wanted me to read it to her as a bedtime story so once she was settled in bed I sat beside her and we began. Claire was keen to talk about the author's name (John) and how other writers and illustrators that she knew had the same name but once I began the story she was reluctant to intrude upon the telling even though I tried to make opportunities for her to do so, particularly when we stopped to look at the large pictures. Like her brother she quickly recognised that each picture showed some creature in the act of stealing a part of Julius's meal but her comments and questions tended to be brief responses to my gentle

promptings. We had a short discussion about what was being stolen from the sleigh by the wolves and what the fish in the final picture was holding in its mouth (see extract b. taken from appendix 3).

extract b.

|    |    |                                      |                            |
|----|----|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 65 | DL |                                      | SO MRS. TROUTBECK TOOK     |
| 66 |    |                                      | THE TRAY WITH THE          |
| 67 |    |                                      | SPAGHETTI BOLOGNESE        |
| 68 |    |                                      | THE LETTUCE AND THE        |
| 69 |    |                                      | CUCUMBER AND THE PLUM      |
| 70 |    |                                      | DUFF TO THE CHIKO          |
| 71 |    |                                      | NEEKO RIVER IN SOUTH       |
| 72 |    |                                      | AMERICA WHERE JULIUS       |
| 73 |    |                                      | WAS ABOUT TO SHOOT THE     |
| 74 |    |                                      | RAPIDS IN HIS RAFT.        |
| 75 |    |                                      | Look at her balancing      |
| 76 |    |                                      | on the raft (.) there      |
| 77 |    |                                      | he is on his raft.         |
| 78 | C. | [ ] stole the lettuce the fish has   |                            |
| 79 | DL |                                      | That's right               |
| 80 | C. | I think soon there's going to be     |                            |
| 81 |    | a little bit of lettuce (.) floating |                            |
| 82 |    | on the water                         |                            |
| 83 | DL |                                      | ( <i>laughing</i> ) why is |
| 84 |    |                                      | that? Do you think         |
| 85 |    |                                      | the fish might drop        |
| 86 |    |                                      | it?                        |
| 87 | C. | No I think the fish might like it.   |                            |

On the whole though, Claire seemed reluctant to disturb the telling of the story for too long. The only point at which she seemed to be keen to elaborate upon the text was at the very end when she wished to go back to count all of Julius's 'journey's'. Both children clearly enjoyed the book and neither of them made any remark to suggest that they felt the book to be in any way curious or unusual. After a period of one or two weeks, during which both children returned to the book from time to time, I asked first Simon and then Claire if they would retell the story to me.

In making this request I had no wish to test the children in terms of the accuracy with which they might reproduce the text as printed, though both children did at first attempt to give a verbatim account of the book. Rather, I wished to see if retelling might provide some clues as to the nature of their reading of the story. It turned out to be the first story which both of them found extremely difficult to retell and their difficulties - along with their attempts to overcome them - seemed to be related very closely to certain specific features of the text. It is these difficulties which I now wish to focus upon as I believe they provide not only insight into the children's readings, but also into the way in which the text has been constructed.

### 3. Retelling the story

Both children foundered in their attempts at retelling very early on. In fact Simon made two attempts separated by about a week. The passages that follow are, respectively, extract c: the whole of Simon's first attempt at retelling; extract d: a passage from the middle of Simon's second retelling; extract e: the most substantial parts of Claire's retelling. (N.B. extracts c. and d., being almost complete, do not appear as appendices. Extract e. is from appendix 4)

#### extract c.

- |    |    |  |                        |
|----|----|--|------------------------|
| 1  | S. | For breakfast today we are having      |                        |
| 2  |    | eggs and bacon (.) where's Julius?     |                        |
| 3  |    | Julius is sitting at the other side    |                        |
| 4  |    | of the table darling said Mr.Troutbeck |                        |
| 5  |    | (.) oh by the way, it does say said in |                        |
| 6  |    | the book (.) For lunch we are having   |                        |
| 7  |    | (.) what are we having for lunch?      |                        |
| 8  | DL |  | Mmm (.) don't know (.) |
| 9  |    |  | can you make something |
| 10 |    |  | up?                    |
| 11 | S. | For lunch we are having something or   |                        |
| 12 |    | other. Where's Julius? Julius says     |                        |
| 13 |    | he cannot have lunch with us because   |                        |
| 14 |    | he has made a den out of three chairs  |                        |



15 a blanket and an old broom in the other  
 16 room (.) so Mr.Troutbeck took the tray  
 17 with (.) the (.) whatever it is on it  
 18 into the other room (.) For tea we are  
 19 having (..) something or other number  
 20 two (.) where's Julian? Julian says he  
 21 cannot have lunch with us (.) because (.)  
 22 tea with us because he is (..) what is  
 23 he doing?

24 DL Well you try and  
 25 remember

26 S. I can't

27 DL Well if you can't  
 28 remember the very  
 29 first things he did  
 30 in order see if you  
 31 can remember something  
 32 from the (.) the (.)  
 33 the story

34 S. So Mr.Troutbeck took the tray with the  
 35 something or other on it to the somewhere  
 36 or other where Julian was something-ing.  
 37 For b (.) for breakfast we are having  
 38 toast and marmalade where's Julian?  
 39 Julian says he cannot (.) have (.)  
 40 breakfast with us because he is climbing  
 41 (.) oh I can't remember what he was  
 42 climbing (..) it was ummm.

extract d.

S. So Mr.Troutbeck took the tray with the blah blah blah blah blah blah blah and a drink for the camel as well to (.) to where Julius was riding a camel up a pyramid. For lunch we are having blah blah blah blah blah blah blah for the third time running with blah blah blah for the second time running as our drink. Where's Julius? Julius says he cannot have lunch with us because he is cooling hippos in the Lombo Bombo river somewhere in South Africa. So Mr.Troutbeck took the tray with the blah blah blah blah for the third time and the blah blah blah for the second time as their drink to the Lombo Bombo river where Julius was cooling hippos.....

extract e.

- 1 C. Well his mother said (.) Mrs. Wom (.)  
 2 what's her name?  
 3 DL Er (.) Troutbeck I  
 4 think  
 5 C. Yea Troutbeck (.) Well she said (.)  
 6 for breakfast we're having bacon  
 7 and egg and toast (.) and (.) then  
 8 she said where's Julius? and Mr.  
 9 whatever-it-is (.) he (.) he called  
 10 Julius and they had supper (.) not  
 11 supper breakfast (.) and then it was  
 12 lunch he said and she said for lunch  
 13 (..) I've forgotten what now (.) but  
 14 that doesn't say it in the story  
 15 (laughs) but I (..) (emphatically)  
 16 I (.) not her but me...  
 17 DL That's alright...

**[C\_\_\_\_\_ invents 'fried toast' as a meal  
 and dissolves into fits of uncontrollable giggles]**

- 18 C. ...I'm afraid Julius can't have dinner  
 19 with us today because he's made himself  
 20 a house with three chairs and a  
 21 broo..oom. So Mr. Troutbeck walked  
 22 to the other room (.) and (.) the (.)  
 23 lunch (..) and then in the story it  
 24 was suppertime and (.) and she sai...  
 25 and therefore (.) erm (.) I'll make  
 26 something up [ ] again (.) erm (.)  
 27 I know what (.) uh (.) uh what shall  
 28 I have [ ]?  
 29 DL It doesn't really  
 30 matter  
 31 C. Beefburgers peas and carrots again (.)  
 32 and she said where's Julius? and  
 33 Mr. Troutbeck said I'm afraid Julius  
 34 can't have supper with us today because  
 35 he is digging a hole to get to the  
 36 other side of the world (..) (laughs)  
 37 fried toast indeed (.) and then it was  
 38 breakfast and Mrs. Troutbeck said for

39 breakfast we are having blah blah blah  
 40 blah blah blah (.) and she said where's  
 41 Julius? and Mrs.Troutbeck said Ju...  
 42 I'm afraid Julius can't have supper  
 43 with us today because he is riding a  
 44 camel to the top of a pyramid in  
 45 something something near (..) near  
 46 Tibet (....) yerk (.) I just can't  
 47 really remember any more travels he  
 48 goes into.

As these extracts demonstrate, time and again the children were thwarted in their attempts to recreate the detail of the story. They lost track of the order of the meals and were unable to continue giving details much beyond the first breakfast. They were reduced to asking directly for assistance and both finally resorted to substituting conventional nonsense syllables for the contents of each meal.

They were noticeably more confident when recounting Julius's 'journeys' (i.e. the places he apparently disappeared to at mealtimes), even though they both eventually gave up the attempt at trying to fit the journeys into the sequence of meals and days. With the smallest amount of prompting at the end ("What happened? What did Julius do?") Claire was able to list Julius's adventures, omitting only one (see extract f.). Simon, at his second attempt, once he had given up the struggle to recall the meals, could also recount each adventure in the correct order including the final suggestion that Julius might be teaching the baby owls to fly or tucking up polar bears.

extract f.

|    |    |                                    |                        |
|----|----|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 72 | DL |                                    | ...what did Julius do? |
| 73 | C. | Julius did all sorts of things (.) |                        |
| 74 |    | he dugged a hole                   |                        |
| 75 | DL |                                    | Hmmm                   |
| 76 | C. | He (.) made a house                |                        |
| 77 | DL |                                    | Hmmm                   |
| 78 | C. | He (.) climbed a pyramid           |                        |
| 79 | DL |                                    | Hmmm                   |
| 80 | C. | He saw the sun rise                |                        |
| 81 | DL |                                    | Hmmm                   |

82 C. He killed the fish  
 83 DL Hmmm  
 84 C. He (.) he threwed snowballs at the  
 85 wolves (.) and then (.) Mrs (.)  
 86 just a (.) this is a little bit  
 87 with Mrs.Troutbeck (.) and at the  
 88 end when Mrs.Troutbeck said where's  
 89 Julius? is he doing all those journeys?  
 90 and then she said, or is he teaching  
 91 the owls to fly or is he tucking the  
 92 polar bears in their nice beds? And (.)  
 93 Mr.Troutbeck said Sally (.) which is  
 94 her name (.) Ju... today Julius is  
 95 having tea with us. That's all I  
 96 can really remember

Both children were greatly frustrated and a little distressed at their inability to tell me the story as well as they had wished. They had not met such problems before, having coped with deficiencies of memory by condensing or telescoping events - ie. summarising - or by embroidering and filling in gaps with their own inventions, Claire being rather more likely to adopt the latter strategy than Simon.

As they attempted to retell *Where's Julius?* both children seemed under the compulsion to give back the story in detail as accurately as possible. They appeared to have a need to 'speak the book'. Simon seemed to be trying to conjure the story into existence by launching himself confidently into his account of the first meal. Neither of the children employed conventional framing devices such as 'once upon a time' or 'once there was a boy called Julius', or attempted to explain who the characters in the story were. There was no easing of the listener into the world of the book, both children began very much at the beginning as they recalled that beginning from the first page. *Where's Julius?* begins *in medias res* with Mrs. Troutbeck's announcement of the first meal of the day. The only concession to the reader is to identify the speaker as Mrs. Troutbeck since the picture above the written text gives no clue as to who is speaking (on subsequent pages the illustrations cue the reader into who the speaker is and Burningham dispenses with the

verbal attribution). With such a distinctive opening it is perhaps no surprise that the children should wish to fit their own retellings on to its clear contours.

I believe, however, that there are reasons over and above the singularity of the book's opening that may account for why both Simon and Claire insistently groped for the details of the story right up to the point where, as far as the mealtimes are concerned, the task defeated them and they either gave up altogether or substituted repetitive nonsense for the elusive detail thus undercutting their efforts as storytellers. The reasons lie in the way *Where's Julius?* has been put together and we must return to an examination of its form to clarify just why Simon and Claire had such a hard time.

## C. NARRATIVE FREQUENCY AND METONYMIC EXCESS

### 1. Genette and narrative frequency

If we temporarily put to one side a consideration of the visual imagery of the book and focus our attention upon the way in which the narrative is verbally carried we find that it is both episodic and repetitive in form, being constructed around events (i.e. mealtimes) which are largely similar in structure. Gerard Genette's analysis of narrative frequency in *Narrative Discourse* (Genette, 1980) is of great help in understanding this particular characteristic of *Where's Julius?*. In brief, he states that,

a narrative, whatever it is, may tell once what happened  
once, n times what happened n times, n times what  
happened once, once what happened n times.

Narrating once what happened once Genette calls the *singulative*, as he does the narrating n times of what happened n times, the latter being a special case of the former. Narrating once what happened n times Genette refers to as the *iterative* - thus several occurrences of the same event might be gathered up by a narrator in a phrase such as "once a week..." or, "everyday...".

The *episodic* character of *Where's Julius?* indicates clearly that it belongs as a whole to the singulative mode. Each mealtime, and each of Julius's adventures is presented in some detail, both visually and verbally, and there are no instances of the formulae characteristic of the iterative, events and occurrences being specific in terms of both time and place. However, if *Where's Julius?* is singulative narrative the *repetitiveness* would seem to indicate that it is at the limit point of its singularity. Although the menus for each meal are reported in great detail, as are the precise whereabouts of Julius each time he goes missing, the overall outline of these narrative moments is virtually identical. There is also a good deal of formulaic repetition: "Julius says he cannot have breakfast... lunch... supper..."; "So Mr/Mrs Troutbeck took the tray..." and so on. If the tale were embedded in a longer narrative then it would be very easy for its singulative form to be collapsed into

the iterative. The words come readily to mind: "*Every* mealtime..."; "*Julius was always* missing..."; "*Julius always says* he cannot have lunch..." etc. Genette states that,

In the classical narrative...iterative sections are almost always functionally subordinate to singulative scenes, for which the iterative sections provide a sort of informative frame or background.

By the term 'classical narrative', Genette means the fictional form that I have been referring to as Realism. Indeed, this convention of the iterative frame for the singulative scene is exactly the kind of hierarchisation that Belsey (1980) refers to as the means by which the illusion of life is created and sustained. However, in *Where's Julius?* Burningham turns his back on the classical narrative, playfully levering open the iterative and returning it to the singulative.

It is this curious formal twist which, at least in part, is responsible for the difficulties faced by the children in their retelling as they are invited to found the story upon a sequence of events and occurrences which are scarcely distinguishable in outline and which differ only at the level of surface detail. The effect is one of difference within overall sameness, and it is the effort to capture and hold that difference that so preoccupies the children in their attempts at recall. Both were clearly disturbed by this effect and indeed Simon became self-consciously aware of the reasons for his difficulty towards the end of his second attempt at retelling:

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| DL      | Why do you think it was so hard to remember?   |
| S _____ | Because...they give the same things over and over again but with very detailed and different-each-time things. |

## 2 *Where's Julius?* and metonymic excess

Both children were highly sensitive to this particular feature of the text. Their parodic intonation when reading and retelling, their amusement at the endless round of menus and

meals, and the frustrated attempts to give back the story, all testify to their fascination with the curiously cumulative nature of the text. For Simon and Claire, *Where's Julius?* was a story that grew and expanded but never really went anywhere, anchored as it was to one spot (mealtimes) by a superabundance of detail.

The effect of foregrounding this superabundant detail is to propel the accumulating informational content beyond a condition of plenitude, where a secondary world can satisfactorily and effectively be brought into being and sustained in the act of reading - the level at which Realistic fiction operates - into the realm of excess. This detail is exactly the kind of detail from which Realistic fictions are built but there is far too much of it to cohere and, moreover, it lacks the hypotactic structure that makes Realism work - the detail is barely ordered, and is not subordinated or embedded within an overarching discourse. Susan Stewart, in her book, *On Longing*, echoes Belsey when she writes that,

Realistic genres do not mirror everyday life; they mirror its hierarchization of information. They are mimetic in the stance they take towards this organisation and hence are mimetic of values not of the material world.

(Stewart, 1984)

In a sense then, *Where's Julius?* offers too much of what makes Realism 'real'. Stewart again comments:

To describe more than is socially adequate or to describe in a way which interrupts the everyday hierarchical organisation of detail is to increase not realism but the *unreal effect of the real*.

(Stewart, 1984)

Lodge (1977), in a reworking of the arguments of Jakobson (1956), maintains that there are two broad axes along which discourse might be organised: the metaphoric and the metonymic. Along the metaphoric axis lie relationships of similarity and substitution whilst the metonymic axis concerns relationships of combination and contiguity. Stress upon the former gives rise to 'poetic' texts where the discourse moves along and is made to cohere through similarity and analogy. Stress upon the latter produces discourse which



achieves coherence through logical, conceptual and causal relationships, the relationships of contiguity - texts of Realist prose, for example.

The two axes are not mutually exclusive, the distinction between metonymic and metaphoric discourses being based upon the dominance of one over the other within particular texts, within genres, and at particular levels of generality (Lodge, 1977).

Nevertheless, where a predominantly metaphoric text provides us with a clear invitation to interpretation the metonymic text is composed of data which the reader seeks to unite into one meaning.

Now it is clear from the very first pages of *Where's Julius?* that we are offered a written text which is essentially metonymic. We take the narration, including what Mr. and Mrs. Troutbeck say, to be a description of the current state of affairs - the first page or two appear to be unremarkable accounts of domestic scenes - but Burningham is not concerned with adequate description for he has no Realistic story to tell, just an accumulation of typically iterative data represented singulatively, an accumulation that seems to go nowhere. Our expectations are thus thoroughly subverted, the result being a form of metonymic excess.

In attempting to retell the 'story' of *Where's Julius?* both Simon and Claire were drawn towards giving back as accurate an account as they could manage of the written text. A summary would necessitate collapsing singulative scenes into the iterative mode wherever appropriate and, as we have seen, *Where's Julius?* consists almost entirely of scenes which are so much alike that summary treatment would rob them of whatever value and interest they might have. The fascination - and humour - of these scenes lies not in their articulation into a drama or a climax as we might expect in a more conventional narrative, but in the relentless piling up of surface detail. The problem for anyone attempting to retell *Where's Julius?* is that there is really only this detail to work with and, as Simon and Claire discovered, accurate recall requires enormous effort.

Despite the fact that it is difficult to retell I would not wish to imply that the book is an effort and a chore to read. On the contrary, it is great fun. If there were only the longwinded accounts of the mealtimes to look at and to read then it most certainly would be a strange book, but we should not lose sight of the fact that it is a picture book and that there is a rhythm and a pattern provided by the pictures. It is to a consideration of the pictures that we must now turn.

#### D. THE ROLE OF THE PICTURES

So far we have considered only the written text and the children's attempts to reproduce that text. What we have not yet considered is the role of the pictures in the book and the way in which those pictures may have influenced the children's retellings and their understanding of the book as a whole.

We might begin to approach this question of the nature and the role of the pictures by recalling that the children were far more confident in their recollections of Julius's journey's than they were about what it was he was being offered to eat. The verbal form of each escapade is not so different from that of each meal - a bald, direct statement of where he is. The contents of the meal and Julius's whereabouts are then reiterated as one of the parents carries off Julius's meal on a tray. Why then do the children find this aspect of the story easier to manage? One reason, I suggest, is that each of Julius's adventures is not just verbally recounted but pictorially present to the reader who has an aid to interpretation and recollection through the visual imagery of the book.

It could be objected that the same argument might well be applied to the verbal and visual depiction of the meals. After all, the reader is shown as well as told what the Troutbecks have to eat. However, these two sets of pictures are quite different. The mealtime imagery is sketchy, the figures of Mr. and Mrs. Troutbeck, with food and table or tray, being unframed and isolated against the white of the page. There is no further detail and thus these images operate as metonyms - fragments of a wider domestic scene that stand in for that scene. The depictions of Shirley's mother and father function in much the same way in *Come away from the Water, Shirley* and *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley*. In as much as pictorial images will submit to the analysis of narrative frequency offered earlier, then these scenes may be taken to possess as little significant singularity as the printed text that accompanies them, at least as far as the movement of the narrative is concerned. To put the matter simply, there is not much difference between the visual imagery of breakfast, lunch and supper. There are differences - tomatoes on plates, chops in a grill pan, toast in a toaster - but in terms of distinct content, and in terms of

narrative function, these images are scarcely distinguishable. The large, bold depictions of Julius's journeys are another matter altogether.

These images are complete double-page spreads, unframed, bled to the edges, and completely lacking in printed text. There is none of the neutral white that backs the print on the other pages, all tones and colours having a representational function. Once the pattern of the book is established, every second turn of the page reveals an image of Julius at work, at play or simply sitting in contemplation, in locations as geographically disparate as they could possibly be. The pictures are boldly coloured and convey something of the hazy heat of the desert, the breathtaking cold of the Siberian night and the awesomeness of sunrise in the Himalayas. Such scenes are able to capture and hold the readers's gaze in a way that the embedded illustrations do not. They possess precisely that singularity and distinctiveness so noticeably absent from the domestic, mealtime imagery and this in itself might be sufficient to account for the fact that both children were able to recall and retell these episodes with some degree of accuracy. These pictures are compelling and distinctive, they lodge in the mind and enable the reader to hold on to an image of what is happening in the tale.

If we look again at extract f, we find that Claire's descriptions of Julius's whereabouts are, in fact, neat encapsulations of his doings ("He climbed a pyramid... He saw the sun rise... He killed the fish..." etc.) and, interestingly, she makes no attempt to recapture the original verbal form of each event. Her account of what Julius is doing on the Chico Neeko river ("He killed the fish") is at odds with what the text states - ie. that Julius is possibly, "...shooting the rapids on the Chico Neeko River in South America." It seems that here Claire has taken the metaphor of *shooting* (the rapids) literally and is relying, significantly, upon her memory of the picture, where a fish cheekily steals some lettuce from Julius's tray, to find an object for the shooting as there is no mention of the fish in the printed text and to shoot the rapids literally would produce a nonsense. The only point in her listing of journeys at which Claire attempts to reproduce the characteristic wording of the text was the one place where she has *no* support from the pictures. What she says

relates to the penultimate page in the book where the narrator speculates upon what Julius might be doing and suggests he might be, "...helping the young owls to fly in the trees at the end of the road or tucking the polar bears in their beds somewhere in Antarctica."

Claire rendered this as follows:

...is he teaching the owls to fly or is he tucking the  
polar bears in their nice beds?

In order to give back this form of words she switches tense so that she is no longer simply recalling and listing journeys, but has temporarily resumed the attempt to retell the story (see extract f, lines 15 to 21). Simon too was amused by this final speculation and reproduced it like this:

I suppose he's...teaching baby owls to fly in the trees at  
the end of our road...or...tucking polar bears in their  
beds somewhere in Antarctica.

The pictures in *Where's Julius?* then seem to fall into two broad categories: those that accompany the domestic scenes and those that atmospherically and powerfully depict the sites of Julius's wanderings. The former tend to be, like the written text, rather similar in outline and not especially memorable. The latter are large and bold and are clearly designed for uninterrupted contemplation. The pictures appear to belong to two entirely different story worlds and it is to a consideration of this contrast that we must now turn.

## E. HOW TO READ WHERE'S JULIUS? - SOME SUGGESTIONS

The desire of the children to 'get it right' is, as I have argued, due in part to the structure of the book and to the implicit invitation within the written text. What counts as retelling *Where's Julius?* properly or adequately - at least for these two children - is the recapturing and re-presenting of largely surface detail, larger narrative movements having been suppressed. I have also argued that their repeated failure to retell the story in this way is due to the excessive nature of this surface detail. In contrast, the children were able to recall with some clarity the sites and sequence of Julius's wanderings and they seemed to be aided in this by the large double page pictures interspersed throughout the text. These pictures are clearly not superficial in the way that the mealtime imagery is, they are gloriously gripping images involving action and feeling.

Quite what is going on in these scenes is a question to which we have not yet addressed ourselves, along with the question of how they relate to the text which they follow. Simon and Claire seemed not at all perturbed by the switch from recognisable and familiar domestic play (building dens) to an altogether more indeterminate realm of the fantastic (climbing pyramids). It is, however, important that we ask, and seek to answer, the question of just where Julius is at these moments in order for us to understand the nature of the textual game that Burningham plays. The risk is that we may misdescribe *Where's Julius?* at the very moment when we are closest to seeing what is going on, for there is a strong invitation within the text to perceive events as all belonging to the same generic category, that of self-consistent, domestic realism. Our urge to naturalise the tale, to normalise it in this way is initially encouraged by an author/illustrator who is nonetheless intent upon subverting the very expectations he arouses.

If we rely once again on Todorov's maxim that, "a text always contains within itself directions for its own consumption," (Todorov, 1980) we see that the first few pages of *Where's Julius?* appear to contain quite unambiguous directions. As the story begins there is an easy elision between pictures and text. They cohere not only at the level of visual image illustrating print but also in terms of our understanding of the everyday-life-

world. The phenomenon of parents calling for children at mealtimes is wholly unremarkable, as is the deeply engrossing activity of building dens. There are no surprises here as children are often absent at mealtimes, preoccupied with their play. Even the idea of Julius digging his hole in a field surrounded by cows and wide open spaces does little to subvert this coherence - it merely compels us to modify and extend our minimal knowledge of the Troutbeck's domestic surroundings. But how does Julius make the leap from the twilit plains of rural England to the parched deserts of Egypt in the space of apparently one night? Having accepted the lure of the opening pages we are now in a fix. The temptation is to avoid rocking the boat and to see Julius's bizarre behaviour as existing in his head, as a daydream or fantasy. In other words, to hold on to the set of directions that we began with and embed Julius's behaviour within the form of Realism we have been beguiled into accepting.

This, however, is very much a 'readerly' rather than a 'writerly' move (Barthes, 1974), an effort to preserve the unity and singularity of the text at the expense of its openness and plurality. We see this in the fact that if we make this readerly move there are problems in store for us, for we have to account for the presence in Julius's imaginings of his father in shirt, tie and slippers gingerly stepping over the sands keeping an eye on a marauding vulture. It is, of course, not impossible to accommodate the outrageous, particularly in a children's picture book, but it is very difficult to do it whilst simultaneously maintaining the the quotidian. An alternative and, I believe, more helpful reading might begin from an acknowledgement that Burningham changes the rules part way through. What we need to recognise is the shift in the generic status of the text that takes place when Mr. Troutbeck announces Julius's journey up the pyramid: "...he is riding a camel to the top of the tomb of Neffatuteum..." is superficially akin to "...he is digging a hole..." and "...he has made a little home in the other room..." but we are given a clear signal, both in words and pictures, that this is not the same kind of story world at all - the rules here are different.

Had *Where's Julius?* begun with a little middle class boy in short pants wandering the globe we would automatically have located the tale within some rule system that made

sense of what was going on, some sub-genre of fantasy. As it is there are plenty of indications to suggest that an alternative reading of *Where's Julius?* might well lie in the regular, systematic alternations of the book (Burningham only changes the rules once - his little joke at our expense) and the juxtaposition of highly detailed, indeed *excessive*, realism with events and images that stem from the literary realm of fantasy.

The book gains its coherence through this zig-zag movement from the mundane to the fantastic and back again, but with a clear separation between the two modes, a physical separation through the book's pagination and through the ways in which the two realms are presented. It is clear that the bold visual images need not be interpreted in terms of what has gone before, are not in fact part of the same secondary world at all - the lack of frame or border, the lack of a determining text - despite the fact that the initial movement of the narrative, such as it is, seems to imply that events on the different pages all belong to the same story world.

In short, the book invites the reader to take part in a game. Burningham, through the book, plays with the reader's expectations - expectations of how a story should proceed; of what can be left out and what should be put in; of how different genres work; of how to read fantasy and how to read realism.

My own first readings of the book left me amused but faintly perplexed by the 'problem' of where Julius actually was. I took this one feature of the story to be a pivotal point around which any interpretation of the tale must move. I also felt it was less easy to naturalise, in the manner described above than, say, *Come Away from the water, Shirley* where the mundane and fantastic imagery can be contemplated literally side by side. However, there is no evidence from any of the transcripts that the children were at all troubled by this aspect of the text, though they certainly found the book funny. No comments or remarks were made at the stage where the book was being read, and during the retellings there was no indication that the children were trying to normalise the text by trying to account for the juxtaposition of incompatible worlds or that they were particularly disturbed or



puzzled by its effects. Claire simply referred to Julius's journeys when counting them, and later when listing them she drew no distinction between "he dugged a hole" and "he climbed a pyramid". Both children seemed to accept the change in the rules and the alternating pattern without demur.

It is difficult to interpret the children's silence on this matter. It may simply be that they were familiar enough with Burningham's oeuvre, and with books of a like kind, to find them unremarkable. It may also be the case that children who are still learning what it means to read as well as what books can do, are less beguiled by the opening pages than we might suppose. What constitutes a book has to be learned and that includes the rules by which one might read it. When writers offer contrasting rule systems within one book and play off our expectations in a spirit of fun then such games and playfulness are more readily accepted perhaps by the apprentices than by their masters and mistresses precisely because they have a less fully formed set of preconceptions. This in fact is an important theme which I shall resume at the end of chapter seven. An adult, competent reader might wish for a more determinate answer to the question 'Where's Julius?' than the author is willing to provide, but a child may find such a question less pressing and consequently may not find the indeterminacy too troublesome.

## F. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I have described the attempts of two young children to read and retell the picture book, *Where's Julius?* by John Burningham. I have argued that their attempts at retelling revealed certain features of their understandings of the book - i.e. their readings of it. More importantly, their retellings allowed me to reframe my own reading of the book, and helped me to understand and appreciate the book's most distinctive features. The first two or three pages of *Where's Julius?* suggest that it is a fairly unremarkable story about a boy who is always missing at mealtimes, engaged upon alternative enterprises. However, instead of this theme developing into a narrative, it merely accumulates, the basic contrast between meals in the home and adventures elsewhere being repeated until the end when Julius returns home for his supper. The narrative, such as it is, is thus episodic and repetitive. Details of meals accumulate in a travesty of realistic prose creating a metonymic excess - a plethora of data lacking hierarchy and order.

Overlaying, or woven into, this verbal excess is the pictorial imagery. Accompanying the accounts of the meals are sketchy renderings of the parents preparing and serving the meals - images which are as indistinguishable from one another as are the verbal accounts. Julius's journeys, however, are rendered in gripping and involving illustrations which appeared to aid the children in their recall of Julius's whereabouts.

A further metafictional twist is given to the book through the undermining of the 'rules for reading' that Burningham inscribes into the first few pages. We are invited to put Julius's initial absence at mealtimes down to his simply being elsewhere within the same fictional world as his parents - in another room, in the garden, and so on. On his climbing a pyramid, however, we are forced to acknowledge that this cannot be so, and must find an alternative reading. The question of where exactly Julius is when he apparently roams the world is, of course, reflected in the book's punning title.

Whilst acknowledging the possibility of alternative readings of *Where's Julius?*, I suggested a way of approaching the text - a 'protocol' for reading, to borrow a term from Scholes (1989) - that involves relinquishing the attempt to naturalise the story in terms of a species of domestic realism, and to treat it more as a textual game, a metafictional commentary upon the children's picture book that is both clever and funny.

A number of possibilities now present themselves in terms of research avenues that could profitably be pursued. An obvious and, I believe, quite pressing one is the further exploration of the ways in which children attempt to make sense of picture book text that appears to resist conventional sense-making strategies. Put another way, we might ask, how do metafictional picture books affect the experience of learning to read?

Important though I believe this question to be, it seems to me that there are prior questions that need to be addressed. I have, for example, suggested a variety of ways in which picture books might exhibit metafictive tendencies (chapter 2, part C.1), and have provided examples, but there is little evidence as yet that the metafictive is anything more than the predilection of a few inventive illustrators. If it is a marginal, or ephemeral, phenomenon then it is probably not worth expending time and energy upon. Thus the relation of the metafictive picture book to the conventional picture book needs to be explored, and this in turn will require an investigation into the origins and nature of the picture book as a form.

The questions that I wish to address are thus:

- a) Is the metafictive in picture books genuinely a tendency rooted in the form itself, or simply a stylistic quirk or preference on the part of some authors and illustrators? - i.e. what relation does the metafictive bear to picture books in general?
- b) If it is something more than a marginal and ephemeral phenomenon, why should what appears to be a "rule-breaking kind of art" be offered to the least experienced and the least competent, and why should it be found particularly in the picture book?

c)      How do children read metafictional picture book text?

In order to attempt an answer to these questions I shall temporarily have to turn my back on young readers and metafictional picture books and look towards an exploration of the nature and origins of picture book text in general. In the next chapter, as a preliminary to this enterprise, I critically review the literature on the subject of picture books.

## **PART TWO**

### **A THEORY OF THE PICTURE BOOK**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Before moving on to a detailed examination of the nature and origins of the picture book it is necessary to determine how far the currently available literature will take us. In particular I need to ascertain what history can tell us of the origins of the picture book; whether the phenomenon of metafiction in picture books is recognised at all; what kind of view of its object picture book criticism takes; and what role the picture book is given in studies of the teaching and learning of reading.

I begin in part B by considering how picture books are constituted within the discipline of history and argue that at present history is ill-equipped to deal satisfactorily with the topic. Currently available histories address themselves almost exclusively to the *pictures* within picture books and tend to employ an inappropriate, art-critical vocabulary when discussing the origins of the form. This has serious implications for enquiry into the development of picture books and for any further study and analysis of the form.

In part C I review the few critical works that address the phenomenon of postmodernism in the picture book and show that they are unable to move much beyond an initial recognition and categorisation of metafictional effects. Part D makes a broad sweep of the literature and reveals some of the limitations - and some of the strengths - of general picture book criticism. The final section examines those works that place picture books within the context of learning to read and considers how this particular context affects how picture books are viewed.

## B. THE LIMITATIONS OF HISTORICAL CRITICISM.

By far the most substantial corpus of work that addresses the nature and development of the children's picture book falls within the realm of history. Bland (1958), Slythe (1970), Muir (1971), and Ray (1976) concern themselves with the history of book illustration in general; Smith (1948), Feaver (1977), Barr (1986), and Whalley and Chester (1988) focus more closely upon the illustration of *children's* books; and Darton (1932/1982), Townsend (1983), Hurlimann (1967), and Thwaite (1972) all trace the development of children's literature as a whole. Surprisingly, there is only one history of the English picture book of any substance - *Brian Alderson's, Sing a Song For Sixpence: the English Picture Book Tradition and Randolph Caldecott*. (Alderson, 1986)

Despite the fact that picture books figure prominently within these works, with few exceptions they display a near total inability to deal with the picture book as a *composite* form of text where words and pictures work together to produce meaning. Some, it is true, do not make any distinction between picture books (those where pictures and words are integrated in some way) and illustrated books (those where the pictures are an accompaniment to a free-standing text) and thus absorb the former within the latter. Many, however, do acknowledge the difference, the problem is that they are unable to move beyond conventional descriptions offered by current art criticism and aesthetics. To demonstrate this subsuming of the picture book under the more general category of the illustrated book, and the dissolving of both in the language of art, I shall quote several typical passages drawn from a range of texts.

### 1. Histories of illustration.

Bland, (1958) writing from the point of view of the history of illustration, describes the work of Walter Crane - one of the artists responsible for transmuting the nineteenth century toy book into the modern picture book - as follows:

...[the] first Walter Crane toy-book, *Sing a Song of Sixpence* (1866) marks a new departure with its use of flat colours. Crane's decorative technique was well-suited to flat colours and like Leighton he used to design the whole of his book, outside and

inside. His concern for the double page spread anticipated Morris and was unique at that date. The result was something completely different from any predecessor and at its best quite charming. *The Yellow Dwarf* and *The Three Bears* for instance have all the exuberant delight in colour that we associate with the Victorians together with a strong feeling for the large page.

In this short passage there is a clear sense that Bland is concerned with the *appearance* of Crane's books and with the *aesthetic* qualities of his images. The references to 'design', 'the double-page spread' and the 'large page' suggest a concern with the overall look of Crane's work. The repeated references to colour draw attention to features of the pictures and these in turn are qualified by the terms 'charming' and 'exuberant delight'.

Bland is fairly closely echoed by Muir (1971), Ray (1976), Feaver (1977) and Whalley and Chester (1988). When we examine the language they use to describe the work of picture book makers we again find reference only to the pictures. For example, Muir praises Caldecott's skill and finesse in drawing; Feaver focuses only upon the 'look' of the artists he discusses; and Whalley and Chester can find almost nothing to say about the words in picture books, or the interaction of words and pictures, but have a great deal to say about the pictures alone. The following passage from Whalley and Chester is typical (the emphases are mine):

This explosion onto a generally dejected market centred around the publication in 1962 of Brian Wildsmith's *ABC*, which *glowed in colours brighter than any seen before*, and, with its immediate successors, represented his fullest creative expression. It was *beautifully printed* in Austria by offset litho, and displayed an *inventive use of both shape and design*, each page *striking the eye with different combinations of colour* and little white to be seen, in complete contrast to the sparse economies of the '40's. He followed up this success with, among others, *Birds* (1967) and *Fishes* (1968), both of which make good use of *double page spread bleeds in full colour*.

...The other *master of colour* was Charles Keeping whose own quite *individual use of light and contrast* can be seen in *Shaun and the Cart Horse* (1966), *Charley, Charlotte and the Golden Canary* (1967), and *Alfie and the Ferry Boat* (1968). Although the texts of his early picture books need a good deal of smoothing down, he continually experimented with *combinations of different*



*media and colour* to produce varying effects for each book.

The writers reviewed so far are primarily concerned with various aspects of the *appearance* of the works discussed. Sometimes the commentary addresses issues of book design - the overall appearance of binding, cover, page-openings etc. - but for the most part the writers are concerned with features of the pictures. In particular, they draw upon the discourses of aesthetics and art-criticism, making frequent reference to first-order features of the works such as colour, form and content, and to higher-order, specifically aesthetic, concepts such as 'flatness', 'freshness', 'charm', 'robustness' etc., that transform picture books into illustrated books, and both into books of pictures where the pictures have an aesthetic life of their own.

Such an approach might be excusable if the writers of these texts were only concerned with illustration and the illustrated book, but there is plenty of evidence that the distinction between picture books and illustrated books is widely recognised and understood. Smith (1948) for example remarks that, "As well as making picture books, Crane was a prolific book-illustrator," - a clear indication that the two things are not the same. Whalley and Chester make one of the clearest attempts to mark out the difference:

While illustrations are not always necessary or desirable in children's novels, they are an *essential part of the picture book* and are usually treated as the most important part, although *the more rewarding examples of the genre show a complete integration of text and illustration*, the book shaped and designed as a whole, produced by a combination of *finely balanced verbal and visual qualities*.

(my emphases)

Astonishingly, this defining paragraph comes immediately before the passage about Wildsmith and Keeping quoted above where the definition is promptly ignored.

In another passage from the very beginning of the book, the confusion between pictures and illustration, and between picture books and illustrated books is quite plain:

This book is about *pictures in children's books*, but it is *not about picture books* - at least only incidentally. '*Pictures*' are *independent works* - they can stand by themselves, or

they can be put into books in which they may or may not be relevant. *Book illustration is something quite different and cannot properly exist outside its text* - artists who forget this do so at their peril.

(my emphases)

This warning to the reader appears to say that book illustration is not the same as putting pictures in books yet, despite the fact that the book's title (*A History of Children's Book Illustration*) makes explicit that it is about illustration, this early paragraph begins, "This book is about pictures in children's books..."

## 2. Brian Alderson and the history of the English picture book.

Even when the work in question specifically addresses picture books these difficulties are not resolved. Alderson (1986) is at present the only text that attempts to set English picture books in their history. This book, part exhibition catalogue, part polemical essay, attempts to establish the lineage of the English picture book and the defining characteristics of the form. In his opening remarks Alderson offers a cluster of attributes and qualities which he wishes to claim are defining of the English picture book tradition. In summary, his preferred picture book is *naturalistic* in its stance towards illustration; has *a unity of printed text and pictures* and evinces a *rhythmic progression* throughout - a sense of 'music and dance'

As an alternative to 'unity' of word and image Alderson from time to time substitutes the term 'balance'. Also the art of the picture book, according to Alderson, "does not preclude high jinks" but is "essentially one of sobriety and coherence" where "two modes of expression work alongside and enhance each other." The key terms here are 'unity', 'balance', 'coherence', and 'enhance'. Alderson makes it clear that in speaking of this unity we are tapping the very 'essence' of the picture book form. Moreover, in his Preface, he claims that,

Chauvinistically or not, one can argue that this 'English' style is a touchstone for the judging of *all picture book art*,

embodying as it does a *flexible and richly responsive interplay between text and illustration* with an emphasis throughout on the *quality of line* rather than on less essential features of *chiaroscuro and colouring*.

(my emphases)

Here, Alderson's argument seems to begin like this: the essential feature that makes the best English picture books so good is the same feature that makes any picture book good; this feature is the interplay between text and illustration. However, the argument then concludes with an emphasis upon the importance of certain pictorial qualities (qualities of line) over against other pictorial qualities. Alderson appears to slide from one kind of assertion to another - 'line' is not a feature of an 'interplay', it is a feature of one component out of two that make up an interplay. It seems to me that this slippage is characteristic of much writing in this field. We have already seen a similar kind of confusion at work in Whalley and Chester where 'illustrations', 'pictures', 'picture books' and 'illustrated books' are not wholly or clearly differentiated from one another.

Even if we interpret this short extract generously it seems that Alderson wants to have it both ways, he wants to assert the pre-eminent importance of unity, interplay and balance in the picture book while writing only about the pictures. Of *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and her Dog*, an early proto-picture book, he writes that the pictures are "undeniably stilted", that there is "much profile drawing... from a single point of vision" and that the unknown engraver was "a good man with dogs". We learn that "the flat staginess" of these pictures recurs in imitations produced by the bookseller, Harris, who eventually rejected their "rather static simplicity" and had some "more vigorous woodcuts made...". Later, Alderson tells us that Edward Lear's "hasty sketches" for his *Book of Nonsense* lost none of their spontaneity "in the woodcut versions that succeeded the lithographed editions", and that these pictures "represent a highly individual adaptation of modes of caricature." He also argues that Charles Bennett's *Aesop's Fables* depended for its success upon "the deftness of the artist in converting contemporary characters into animal equivalents" and that he could readily turn his hand to "heavy comic portraiture"

and “fluent drawing” along with other graphic styles and manners. In approaching his subject this way Alderson is doing neither more nor less than his fellow historians.

### 3. Histories of children’s literature.

In works dedicated to the history of children’s literature as a whole we find picture books treated in much the same way. Thwaite (1972) and Townsend (1983) draw the distinction between illustration and the making of picture books. Thus, Caldecott was “not merely an illustrator, but a storyteller with a pencil like quicksilver” (Thwaite) and, “Book illustration is one thing; the picture book... is another” (Townsend). However, neither is able to carry through these initial insights into their subsequent analyses. Thwaite, for example, continues,

[The] trio of artists with Edmund Evans created *the picture book of real quality*. The achievement did not arrest the acceleration towards the cheap and mediocre in *illustrated books*, but it ensured that henceforth children would never lack an aristocratic, widely influential minority of *artistic merit*.  
(my emphases)

Again we see a slippage from ‘picture book’ to ‘illustrated book’ to ‘artistic’.

Townsend too makes this familiar move despite the fact that he appears to be fully aware of the ‘defining characteristic’ of the picture book. Thus Caldecott’s ‘style’ is “spare and wiry”, and “he is first class in scenes of action”, his rustic dancers in *Come Lasses and Lads* being “...ready to dance right out of the page.” Hurlimann (1967) is better for she gives herself space to describe books and pages in full. Thus in her accounts of *Babar* and *Struwwelpeter* the reader does get a sense of words and images in partnership.

Interestingly, Townsend manages this too on one occasion when he describes *Rosie’s Walk*, and Alderson, in his brief comments from his exhibition catalogue can restore the balance of word and image.

The main lesson to be learned from this is, I think, that a close focus upon an individual text will permit an approach to its specific *modus operandi* and something useful might then be said about the interaction of word and image, but any attempt to speak more generally or widely involves the adoption of an inappropriate terminology drawn from art-criticism and aesthetics. Words and phrases such as, 'charming', 'exuberant', 'gaiety', 'freshness', 'stylish', 'firm outlines', 'flat colours', 'russet-tinted', 'textured colour', 'subdued tones', 'soft, decorative shapes', 'single point of vision', 'profile drawing', 'vigorous portrayal', 'static simplicity', 'spontaneity', 'heavy comic portraiture', 'fluent drawing', and so on abound in these books. Such terms are capable of wide and general application but they have the irresistible effect of drawing attention to the pictures alone. They thus assume an aesthetic viewer of pictorial images rather than one concerned with overall meanings. Picture books are dissolved in this medium only to be reconstituted as books of pictures.

In contrast, the only terms available to make general statements about picture books *as a whole*, as a composite form of text, are words such as 'unity', 'balance', 'coherence' - concepts which are relatively empty and desperately in need of filling out. When we are told that Caldecott's picture books evince a superb balance of word and image we are not being told the same kind of thing, at the same informative level, as when we are told that his pictures are russet-tinted or that they exhibit an exuberant gaiety. I always find I want to ask, "in what way/s are these picture books unified? How exactly do the words and pictures cohere? And in what does the balance consist?" History, it appears is not at present able to offer answers to questions like this.

#### **4. Richard Rorty and final vocabularies.**

The philosopher Richard Rorty has suggested that this kind of impasse arises directly out of the limitations imposed by a currently favoured terminology. As part of his project to describe and exemplify the 'liberal ironist' - the kind of person who reconciles the broadly

political stance of the liberal with the perception of the 'ironist' that all stances, all value-systems are relative - he has coined the term, 'final vocabulary'. (Rorty,1989) Rorty defines a final vocabulary as the set of words that we carry around with us in which we express our most firmly held beliefs and values. They are the words "...in which we tell, sometimes prospectively and sometimes retrospectively, the story of our lives."

(Rorty,1989) A person's final vocabulary is final in as much as, .

...if doubt is cast on the worth of these words, their user has no noncircular argumentative recourse. Those words are as far as he can go with language; beyond them is only helpless passivity or a resort to force.

(Rorty,1989)

An alternative is to switch to another vocabulary, another way of speaking and of seeing, another perspective. Such switching, or at least the perception of its possibility is, for Rorty, the hallmark of the ironist. The ironist is someone who is not hopelessly trapped within his or her final vocabulary.

The ironist is thus someone who, while of necessity operating within a currently useful, and persuasive vocabulary, has doubts about it; can see the persuasive power of alternative vocabularies; sees that the currently acceptable vocabulary cannot of itself resolve the resulting tensions and doubts; and does not assume that any one particular vocabulary guarantees truth or access to bedrock reality.

Rorty suggests that *redescription* is the only way out of the dead end of a final vocabulary. If an old vocabulary will not do, then a new one must be found. In the case of picture books, however, a more useful and effective redescription cannot be forged from within history as it stands at present for that history is saturated with the language of art and art-criticism. Nor can it readily be produced from within any other discipline or approach that privileges the visual over the verbal, or *vice versa*. What is required is a redescription that places words and images *on the same plain* and I suggest that this should be the plain of *meaning*. If pictures and words are viewed as the same kind of thing, i.e. as ways to mean, then the possibilities for interaction between them may be

more readily perceived. A redescription composed in these terms should then be able to address the defining feature of the picture book as a text type - its composite nature. In chapter 5 I attempt to lay the foundations for such a redescription by examining the ways in which we might be said to read pictures. In other words, pictorial images need to be seen, like written language, as a semiotic system.

### C. POSTMODERNISM AND THE CONTEMPORARY PICTURE BOOK.

Bodmer (1989), Paley (1992) and Moss (1992) are all concerned to explore the ways in which certain picture books appear to be postmodern in tenor and form. Bodmer correctly identifies the alphabet book, apparently so inflexible, as the perfect vehicle for writers and illustrators bent upon demonstrating the limits of discourse and exposing the boundaries of what counts as a book. He briefly characterises postmodernist writing drawing upon the famous essay by John Barth, "The Literature of Exhaustion" (Barth, 1967) and the work of Gerald Graff and Brian McHale, and reviews a number of examples of picture book alphabets that exhibit a tendency towards subversion such as, Sendak's *Alligators all Around*, and Remy Charlip and Jerry Joiner's *Thirteen*, but he is mainly concerned with the work of Dr. Seuss and Edward Gorey.

He sees in Seuss a rebellious and subversive spirit, citing his fondness for the kind of excessive, cumulative plot structures that I described in the previous chapter. *On Beyond Zebra* is described as Seuss's greatest anti-alphabet. In it Seuss suggests there are letters beyond 'Z' that we have not yet found and he invites the reader to set about creating his or her own ultra-alphabet. Gorey's anti-alphabets are reviewed too, but Bodmer points out that they are not primarily intended for children.

Bodmer rightly sees Gorey and Dr. Seuss as subject to the same cultural influences as all westerners in the late twentieth century and therefore sees no problem in labelling their work as 'postmodern'. In doing so, however, he fails to make very much of the differences between the two artists. Dr. Seuss's work is sunny, light, silly and effervescent whereas Gorey's work is dark, brooding, gothic, puzzling and blackly comic. We might put this down to the fact that Seuss is clearly addressing himself to children whereas Gorey's implied reader is a much more worldly and sophisticated being. There is some truth in this but it obscures the fact that these two tendencies - the dark and the light - already exist within postmodernism. There is an apocalyptic strain - a darkly comic vision of western culture disappearing down some awful black hole - but there is a frivolous, light-hearted aspect too.



A further limitation of Bodmer's essay is its close focus upon just one small corner of the picture book world. In the space of one short paper he is unable to consider the more wide-spread tendency within picture books. More seriously, his assumption that cultural influences alone will suffice to explain the development of the contemporary anti-alphabet means that he can offer little help in exploring why picture books rather than any other kind of text seem to be such congenial sites for rule-breaking experiment.

Paley (1992), like Bodmer (1989) is content to set examples of contemporary picture books within the wider context of postmodern culture as a whole. He cites Feaver's view (1977) that the work of illustrators and picture book makers has always reflected movements within the visual arts. Thus we should not be at all surprised to find postmodern characteristics within certain picture books. He analyses four contemporary picture books - *Stay Up Late*, by Maira Kalman; *Warm and Cold*, by David Mamet; *Black and White*, by David Macaulay; and *The Tiny Visitor*, by Oscar de Mejo - and calls attention to typical postmodern attributes such as the intermingling of visual styles, avoidance of narrative closure, self-referentiality, narrative excess, discontinuity, extravagant ornamentation, and ambiguity. However, Paley is no more inclined to venture beyond the identification of these features than Bodmer is.

Moss (1992) is rather more sophisticated in his analysis of the postmodern picture book. His essay is in two parts. In the first part he identifies the existence of metafictional 'counter-texts' within the body of children's literature as a whole and cites examples from the novels of Aidan Chambers (*Breaktime*) and Peter Hunt (*A Step off the Path*). He also mentions *The Book Mice*, one of the picture books referred to in chapter one. He follows Waugh (1984) in his definition of metafiction but is not content to simply identify metafictional, or postmodern tendencies within children's books. He asks some searching questions about why there should be so few metafictional texts in children's literature and later, in the second part of his essay, he correctly identifies picture books as a cultural site for artists and writers to make textual experiments. He claims that such experimentation is

possible in picture books because their primary audience - beginner readers and the very young - are only just beginning to understand how books and pictures work.

These are important insights and clearly closely related to my own interests here, but Moss devotes no more than a paragraph or two to these questions and is more concerned to suggest an emergent taxonomy of picture book metafiction, relying upon categories derived from Lodge (1977) and Wollen (1982). His ideas about just why the picture book should submit so readily to metafictional manipulation remain no more than hints and suggestions.

There is clearly a growing awareness amongst students of children's literature that contemporary picture books possess postmodern, metafictional characteristics. At present, however, there is little in print that moves much beyond preliminary taxonomic considerations and barely anything at all that looks at why picture books should so frequently possess these features. There has certainly been no attempt as yet to theorise the contemporary picture book in such a way that the metafictional tendency can be explained in terms of the form as a whole.

#### **D. APPROACHES TO PICTURE BOOK CRITICISM.**

In section B of the present chapter I explored the limitations of historical criticism and demonstrated its dependency upon an art-critical vocabulary. In section C I critically reviewed the few works that acknowledge the influence of postmodernism upon contemporary picture books. In the following two sections I complete the literature review by examining a variety of alternative ways of describing and analysing picture books. My main concern is to disclose how picture books are typically constituted within the literature. If we are to see how metafictional texts relate to the form as a whole then we need to discover, as a preliminary to further investigation, how critics and commentators describe picture books and what assumptions they make about them as a form of text.

Not surprisingly, picture books are described and analysed in a variety of contexts. One important context is the study of the teaching and learning of reading, and I shall be reviewing works within this field in section D. In the present section I shall consider a broad range of writing drawn from a variety of different sources. Much of it is in the form of short essays, interviews and academic papers collected in journals and books and there is very little extended argument or analysis in book form. Consequently I shall make a swift critical review of the shorter pieces and reserve the final subsection for a more considered appraisal of more substantial works as well as those papers and articles that take a broader view of the subject.

There are thus four subsections: a broad sweep of the literature subdivided into three according to the aspect or aspects of the picture book form most closely focused upon - pictures, stories, and words & pictures - and then the final subsection on broader perspectives.

## 1. Pictures.

It is not altogether surprising, given the bias of historical writing in this field, that the vast majority of writing on picture books also focuses almost exclusively upon the pictures. There are, however, a number of different approaches to the study of illustration and picture-making. Dressel (1984), Moss (1979) and Schwarcz (1980), for example, are all primarily concerned with different pictorial styles, manners or effects (abstraction, comic-strip, and the repeated figure against a single ground, respectively). Dressel and Schwarcz have little to say about how the styles they describe contribute to the picture books in which they are located but Moss is more interesting for in her interview with Raymond Briggs for *Signal* she draws from him some intriguing insights into the novel-like complexity of a book such as *Fungus the Bogeyman*.

Works that are mainly concerned with the artistry of particular illustrators are more numerous. Amor (1976), Despinette (1980), Engen (1972), Laws (1956), Lawson (1940), Martin (1989), McKee (1986), Moss (1973a), and Tucker (1970) are all, to a greater or lesser extent concerned with the picture book as a branch of the visual arts. Moss, for example, in another of the interviews conducted for *Signal* in the 1970's, reports Chiyoko Nakatani's view that the picture book is the "child's personal art gallery". Lawson, Tucker and Amor focus upon the graphic skills of Rackham, Ardizzone and Joseph Lada respectively. Randolph Caldecott is the subject of both Laws' and Engen's pieces, the former being primarily concerned with Caldecott's "fluid style" of "pictorial storytelling", the latter with Caldecott's putative forebears: Hogarth, Gilray, Rowlandson, Leech and Tenniel. Despite the intrinsic interest of many of these pieces the centre of gravity of their concern is not with the picture book as a whole but with the pictures only and they are thus able to make only a limited contribution to our understanding of picture book text.

More numerous still are works that contribute to our understanding of the technicalities of picture production, design and working methods. Not surprisingly many of the pieces in this category are either based upon interviews with illustrators or are written by illustrators

themselves. The interviews conducted by Moss with Kathleen Hale (1972), Quentin Blake (1975) and Shirley Hughes (1980) reveal much fascinating information about, respectively, the technicalities of lithography, the problems of preparing artwork for other's written texts, and the challenges of designing wordless picture books. In a similar fashion, Jan Ormerod, writing in 1992, takes the reader through the design stages of two of her most successful books, *The Frog Prince*, and *The Story of Chicken Licken* (Ormerod 1992).

A recurrent concern of interviewers, speaking as lay people looking at pictures rather than illustrators describing their work, is the matter of where ideas for pictures and books come from. A remarkably large number of articles and interviews either revolve around this question or are at some point concerned to explore it. Caroff and Moje (1993), Haviland (1971), Marantz and Marantz (1985), Moss (1973, 1974), and Rollin (1984) examine the inspiration for, and origins of, the work of the Caldecott Award winner David Weisner, Maurice Sendak, Anthony Browne, Pat Hutchins, Richard Scarry and Arnold Lobel respectively. Martin (1989), in his book length survey of the lives and work of 15 book illustrators, embeds the question within a biographical matrix, as do many of the other writers.

In some of the pieces reviewed above the writers have concerns over and above the discussion of aspects of picture book *illustration*. Kathleen Hale and Raymond Briggs for example, in their interviews with Elaine Moss, have illuminating things to say about how picture books are read (Hale on the way children "...look right into the illustration and seize on the detail", and Briggs on the attitude of the British public to the strip cartoon as a narrative form), but I think it is true to say that in all these works the main focus of interest is with the pictures.

Nowhere is this more true than in the work of Jane Doonan. During the 1980's Doonan built up a substantial body of work dedicated to the detailed analysis of pictures in picture books. Perhaps more than anyone else in recent years she has contributed to a view of the picture book that constructs it as a book of pictures rather than a composite form of text

requiring and engendering special reading competences. Her work has done much, however, to free picture book criticism from a dependency upon the vocabularies of art-criticism and aesthetics, and has thus helped to make possible a view of picture book text oriented towards *meaning* rather than aesthetic value.

In a series of articles published in the 1980's, mainly for *Signal*, Doonan worked at establishing a mode of picture analysis which might be loosely termed 'semiotic', although she never invokes semiotics as a discipline. Her concern has always been to show how pictures *mean* by drawing attention to the significances of line, colour, mass, shape etc Doonan writes in this mode about Anthony Browne's *Hansel and Gretel* (1983); Chihiro Iwasaki and Lizbeth Zwerger (1984); Tony Ross (1985); Sendak's *Outside Over There* (1986b); Tenniel's and Browne's illustrations to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1989); and the Kate Greenaway award winners for 1991 (1992). In 1993 she described her approach to the analysis of pictures in picture books in a *Signal* Bookguide (Doonan, 1993).

Just once or twice Doonan has essayed an alternative approach to the study of pictures in picture books. In the first of two articles dedicated to an analysis of *Outside Over There* she analyses Sendak's illustrations *iconographically*, locating his work in "the Northern Romantic tradition" (Doonan, 1986a) The result of this art-historical detective work is interesting but tells us much less about how Sendak's work comes to have meaning for readers than the companion piece published shortly afterwards (Doonan, 1986b). Again, in 1988 she modified her approach to deal with Robert Ingpen's *The Idle Bear*, (Doonan, 1988). Here she turns to another body of theory to support her analysis of a book in which "nothing is dramatic but everything is significant" and concentrates upon different kinds of time. The result is interesting but not readily generalisable to other picture books.

As a method of analysis applicable to pictures in picture books Doonan's broadly semiotic approach has a great deal to commend it and I shall be exploring just such an approach,

and its ramifications for picture book study, in chapter 5. As an all-purpose approach to the study of picture books, however, it is seriously one-sided.

## **2. Stories.**

One way of avoiding a focus upon pictures only is to fuse words and pictures together in the more general category of *story*. Thus Piehl (1982) and Nikola-Lisa (1993) trace particular themes in a number of different books - variants of the Noah story in the former case, and women and girls as pirates in the latter. What is missing in both of these articles is any sense that the books under discussion are *picture* books.

In a similar vein Higgins (1978) and Butler (1989) conduct appraisals of the oeuvres of William Steig and Dr. Seuss respectively with hardly a mention of the illustrated nature of their work. Higgins tries to establish why Steig's stories work as they do. Butler, on the other hand, is more concerned with Dr. Seuss's recurrent use of folkloric themes. Barone (1993) and Strandburg and Livo (1986) are both concerned with picture book allegories (Dr. Seuss's *The Butter Battle Book* and Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*) and are thus drawn beyond the pictures and the words towards meanings outside the text. In none of these works is there much of a sense that the books under consideration are picture books. In dissolving picture books into the more general category of story we lose sight of precisely what makes them distinct as a form of text, i.e. their composite nature.

## **3. Words and pictures.**

There is, of course, widespread recognition that picture books are more than 'simply stories' or 'stories in pictures' but the composite nature of picture book text is not always dealt with particularly sensitively. McCann and Richard (1973) and Swanton (1971), for example, write explicitly of the picture book as a bifurcated form composed of roughly

equal parts of pictures and words but both, in their discussions, keep the two media strictly separate. McCann and Richard even allocate them separate chapters and employ entirely different vocabularies in discussing them: "...one must recognize that illustrations belong to the realm of visual art and are appropriately judged by criteria derived from the fine arts", whereas the written text may be judged for originality, plot, drama, style, humour and characterisation. In neither of these works is there any attempt to suggest the *inter-relation* of words and pictures.

Nikola-Lisa (1991), Porte (1980) and Tucker (1970) discuss the works of Ezra Jack Keats, M.B. Goffstein, and Edward Ardizzone respectively and do recognise that words and pictures act upon one another in their picture books. In amongst his reflections upon Ardizzone's favourite themes Tucker alludes to his successful 'marriage' of pictures and words. Nikola-Lisa and Porte examine the works of their chosen illustrators in some detail but in neither case is the analysis sustained or far-reaching. Frey's (1987) account of *Peter Rabbit* and *Squirrel Nutkin* is more revealing. In his descriptions the reader has the sense that Potter's words and images might at least have an *echoic* relationship.

Haviland (1971), Lanes (1980), Lorraine (1977), Moss (1972, 1990), and Otten (1992) all report interviews with illustrators. Moss's conversation with Katherine Hale has already been referred to under an earlier subheading but as well as discussing the technicalities of picture reproduction, Hale comments obliquely on the different kinds of things that children and adults find in her work, the words attracting grown ups more than children. (Moss, 1972) Allan Ahlberg, in conversation with Moss, finds some interesting and helpful metaphors for the interaction of word and image in the picture book: "The big thing about picture books... is that they are an interweaving of words and pictures. You don't have to tell the story in the words. You can come out of the words and into the pictures and you get this nice kind of antiphonal fugue effect." (Moss, 1990) Philip Pullman makes a similar point when he argues that the *counterpointing* of picture and word developed in the picture book, the comic and the graphic novel has been one of the most important developments in narrative in the twentieth century (Pullman, 1989, 1993).



Haviland, Lorraine and Otten are relatively unadorned transcriptions of conversations with Maurice Sendak (Lanes sets some of this material, mainly taken from Lorraine, into a biographical context). Haviland prompts Sendak to recall his early experiences of books and images. He recalls his trips as a child to Manhattan and acknowledges the importance to him of the popular imagery of comics, advertising and the movies, especially the films of Walt Disney.

Lorraine encourages Sendak to formulate some of his ideas about the functions of illustration. In Sendak's view a good illustration should expand, elaborate, illuminate the text it accompanies. Writing for picture books should be ambiguous and suggestive and not pedantic and precise, and the combination of words and pictures should be 'seamless' and should work to a rhythm, words and pictures alternately carrying the message. Technique for Sendak is not of primary importance although the more an illustrator possesses the better. What is supremely important in his view is the illustrator's sensitivity to words: "You must never illustrate exactly what is written. You must find a space in the text so that the pictures can do the work..."; "I like to think of myself as setting words to pictures... A true picture book is a visual poem"; "This is what the illustrator's job is all about... to interpret the text as a musical conductor interprets the score."

Lanes (1980) makes room in her expansive account of Sendak's life and work for his observations on children and childhood: "[children will] tolerate ambiguities, peculiarities, and things illogical; they will take them into their unconscious and deal with them as best they can"; "They're fluid creatures - like moving water. You can't stop one of them at any given point and know exactly what's going on." Sendak is famously in touch with his own childhood and the success of many of his picture books seems to rest upon this sensitivity to what it is like to be a child.

The interview with Otten, carried out fifteen years after the conversation with Lorraine, is ostensibly about Sendak's illustrations for Randall Jarrell and Grimm and is thus not

strictly about the making of picture books at all but in Sendak's responses we see him holding fast to his view that good illustration must grow out of a sensitivity to the words. Here he says that he makes a conscious effort to "...find the writer in the text, or to find the subtext - the routes to what the author was trying to achieve." He likes to 'nose' his way into certain books and only when he is comfortable with what he has found can he commit himself to making his illustrations. Taken together these interviews offer us valuable insights into Sendak's own working methods and, more generally, and by implication, how picture books might work for the reader.

What we learn from these interviews and critical papers is, again, that effective ways of describing picture books emerge when close attention is paid to individual books and pages. Neumeyer (1994) for example, writing about Sendak's recent picture book, *We Are All in the Dumps with Jack and Guy*, is exemplary in the patient way that he tracks the reverberations of current affairs, fine art motifs, twentieth century history and Nursery Rhyme lore through the words and the pictures. Attempts to state more generally the nature of the picture book as a form give rise to a variety of metaphors and analogies. We also find that the reflections upon their working methods of picture book makers such as Sendak and Ahlberg show an active awareness that words and pictures can and do interact and that it is at the level of *the message and the meaning* that the interaction takes place (Lorraine, 1977; Moss, 1990; Otten, 1992).

#### **4. Broad perspectives.**

Broad, general statements on the nature of the picture book are not all that common although we found in the interviews discussed above a movement in that direction. Not surprisingly it is illustrators themselves who are frequently asked for, or who volunteer, their observations on the nature of the form in which they work. I considered some of the more personal statements and interviews above and suggested that at best they offer us insights into how picture books work. Here I continue and develop that theme.

Edward Ardizzone has more than once written about the essential nature of illustration and picture book making (Ardizzone, 1970, 1961). The former essay, first published in 1958 and then reprinted by *Signal*, addresses the nature of illustration rather than picture books, but it contains some important observations nonetheless. “The born illustrator”, he claims, “came to the fore with the rise of the novel as a new art form in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries... his proper field of activity, the one in which he is most happy, is the novel or the tale.” He repeats the now familiar observation that good illustrators do more than just make pictorial comments, they produce a visual counterpart to the tale which adds a ‘third dimension’ - a *visual interpretation* of the text.

Writing a few years later, he argues that drawing is at the heart of picture book art. (Ardizzone, 1961) The pictures are as important, if not more important, than the written text which should be short, a mere ‘bare bones’. This text must “read aloud easily and sound well when read” and the writer needs to be attentive to page breaks, ending the text appropriately where there is a natural break, an interrogation or suspense. The pictures of course must do more than simply illustrate the text, they elaborate upon it, creating characters, mood and settings. Significantly, he believes that enjoyment - delight - is the most important quality in the creation of a picture book. As I shall argue in chapter 6, pleasure and play have long been associated with pictures in picture books and are deeply implicated in the historical development of the form.

Roger Duvoisin makes a similar observation, arguing that humour and pleasure are essential to the success of a picture book. (Duvoisin, 1965) He seems more aware of the child as the potential audience for the books that he makes than Ardizzone and argues that telling and drawing for children is like *playing* with them. Of his pictures he says that he works hard to make them both beautiful objects and more easily read by children and yet he can also say, echoing the claim made by Walter Crane over fifty years earlier, that the picture book is an excellent site for experimentation. (Crane, 1913)

Probably the most comprehensive work on the nature of the picture book is Perry Nodelman's *Words About Pictures*. (Nodelman, 1988) In this thoughtful and detailed work he patiently unravels some of the most important aspects of how we read the pictures in picture books and then considers the picture book as a sophisticated, complex and composite form. The earlier chapters on reading pictures I shall refer to later in chapter 5. Here I shall be concerned with his attempt to characterise the picture book as a whole.

In common with all commentators who have reflected upon the picture book form Nodelman is at pains to emphasise its uniquely composite nature, words and pictures being the warp and woof of the textual fabric. "The basic, distinguishing characteristic of picture book storytelling," he says, "is that it tells of the same events by means of two quite different media and therefore in two quite different ways." Nodelman's final chapters are dedicated to unpacking this general proposition.

He cites Walter J. Ong's view that all vision is essentially objective, sight situating the viewer *outside* what he sees. (Ong, 1982) In contrast, so the argument goes, language can more easily take us 'inside the head' and create the illusion of a consciousness at work. Nodelman quotes Susan Sontag too on the differences between theatre and cinema - the picture book picture being more theatre-like in Nodelman's view than cinematic: "We see what happens on the stage with our own eyes. We see on the screen what the camera sees." (Sontag, 1974) Nodelman also sees a contrast and a tension between the way the pictures demand that we stop and look while the words - especially in stories - perpetually tend to move us on.

These attempts to grasp the differences between words and pictures are interesting but not wholly convincing. To begin with, it is important to recognise that such contrasts as these are better thought of as tendencies rather than inflexible rules. The picture book form is extraordinarily flexible and it is never very hard to find counter-examples to any rule or principle. Picture book illustrators, for example, are extremely skillful at using

conventions of expression, posture and gesture to create empathic responses in the viewer (a point that Nodelman takes pains to demonstrate earlier in his book). When we look at the first frames of Briggs' *The Snowman*, for example, we feel the boy's excitement as he hurtles downstairs to get out into the snow and we need no words to take us inside his consciousness. The same set of images also demonstrates clearly that pictures, especially in sequence, do not always demand that we stop and look.

I believe that in seeking to characterise the *differences* between words and pictures Nodelman begins in the wrong place. That there are differences no one could doubt, but there are similarities too and it is significant that when Nodelman comes to characterise the general relationship between words and pictures in picture books he relies upon a formulation that foregrounds the semantic, the level at which meanings are exchanged:

...the relationships between pictures and texts in picture books tend to ironic: *each speaks about matters on which the other is silent.*

(Nodelman, 1988, my emphasis)

This seems to me a very helpful formulation for a number of reasons, some of which will, I hope, become plain later at the end of chapter 7 when I have attempted my own theorising of the picture book. At the moment I am simply interested in drawing attention to the fact that an ironical relationship implies the co-existence of two alternative *meanings*.

Despite the fact that Nodelman's work is concerned with the reading of pictures, and of pictures with words, he makes no attempt to site the picture book within the context of an inexperienced, young readership. Those writers and critics that do contextualise their work in this way often bring a bold sense of the picture book's *difference* to their writing. Butler (1987) and White (1956), for example are both adept at teasing out those features that made picture books special for their child readers, and in so doing help us, as adult readers, to see the books differently. Chambers (1993a), looking back on his work with children, writes of the "greedy astonishment" with which he and his pupils greeted the first appearance of books such as *Where the Wild Things Are*. He has always had a keen

sense of the difference of picture books. In an interview with *The English Magazine* (Hunt & Plackett, 1986) he expresses dismay at the generally mediocre blandness of much prose fiction written for children, many of whom will have spent their early years as readers in the company of innovative picture books. In “Axes for Frozen Seas” he refers to the experience of teachers working with children on books such as Charles Keeping’s *Charley, Charlotte and the Golden Canary*, and *Joseph’s Yard*, and Anthony Browne’s *A Walk in the Park*. (Chambers, 1985) He acknowledges the richness and complexity of these works for children and in the same article offers a reading of Reiner Zimnik’s *The Crane* which treats it as a piece of metafiction. In each of these cases the readings offered are closely tied to the kinds of readings that children can be encouraged to make.

Like Margaret Meek, Chambers has suggested that the experience of reading is always changing, and that books written and illustrated for children reflect this - story is changing and new forms are being found. Significantly, in “The Child’s Changing Story” (Chambers 1985) he illustrates this claim with Burningham’s *Come Away From the Water, Shirley*, Sendak’s *Outside Over There*, and Browne’s *Hansel and Gretel* - three openly metafictional texts.

Meek (1992a), pursuing a similar theme, turns her attention towards children as readers and in so doing casts a reflection back upon the books that are made for them.

She offers a reading of Martin Waddell and Angela Bassett’s *The Hidden House* suggesting on the way two further useful metaphors for the interaction of words and pictures: “...the words seemed to be *pulled through* the pictures...” and “...pictures and words on a page *interanimate* each other...”.

Recognition of the picture book as a ‘new way of telling’ is not restricted to those who work with children and teachers as well as with books, but it is unusual. One critic, who is not as far as I can tell familiar with teaching young children, but who perceives the scope of the picture book is J.D. Stahl. Reviewing Nodelman’s book and Sendak’s *Caldecott and Co.* in *Children’s Literature in Education* in 1990 Stahl writes:

At its best, the picture book is more than the conventionally lauded 'work of art'; it is a new medium, perhaps even a form of Writing or *Ecriture*, to use Derrida's term, the scene of a picto-ideo-phonographic performance that redefines the relation of reader to text, of viewer to picture.

(Stahl, 1990)

I am particularly appreciative of Stahl's desire to unhook picture books from the 'work of art' label, not because I would wish to deny the existence of the artistry involved in their creation but largely for the reasons offered in part B, i.e. that when the picture book is constituted in this fashion interpretation and analysis almost always turn towards art-criticism.

Stahl's claims are sweeping and they are made in a context (an essay review) which does not permit of an extended discussion. I am in sympathy with much that is expressed in the passage quoted above but I rather regret that he has not had the opportunity to argue his case more fully. He is in agreement with Bodmer, Paley and Moss (see part C) in claiming that picture books fit well into a postmodern era where the marginal can attain exemplary status but, as I remarked at the end of part C, I have not yet found the developed argument that supports this view.

Finally, to complete this section, I wish to refer briefly to two papers that do not readily fit under any of the subheadings I have used so far but that have some interest. There is no corpus of research into the *written* text in picture books comparable to the work on pictures discussed above except in the context of the study of the teaching and learning of reading. As I shall be examining works of this kind in the next section I shall refer here only to an unusual piece that stands alone. Stephens (1989) analyses the discourse of three picture books (*The Great Big Enormous Turnip* by Helen Oxenbury; *Meg at Sea* by Helen Nicoll and Jan Pienkowski; and *How Tom Beat Captain Najork and His Hired Sportsmen* by Russell Hoban and Quentin Blake) and shows how the language gets progressively more complex as he moves from book to book and reveals *en passant* some of the more obvious ways in which pictures and words work together (e.g. by bridging

semantic gaps in the written text). It is of interest here for it demonstrates convincingly how wide of the mark is any assumption that picture book language is somehow naive and simple. More analyses of this kind might help in finding ways of describing how pictures and words interact on the page and in the mind of the reader.

A very different kind of analysis is to be found in Johnson (1992). Johnson is interested in the recent proliferation of interactive, 3-dimensional pop-ups and movables. He cites the publication of *The Jolly Postman* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg in 1988 as a landmark in children's publishing, and he is clearly fascinated, as I am, by the *liminal* nature of such books. They exist on the borderline between books and something else, perhaps toys or games. As Johnson puts it, they are *visual* in concept and design, but also a part of the *reading* market.

His analogy of the pop-up picture book as architecture is suggestive and clearly appropriate but is of only limited help in answering some of the important questions that he asks such as, how important is the three dimensional structure of a picture book to its message? And why do we find this phenomenon only in books for children? Part of the answer to these questions I believe can be found in an examination of the history of the picture book where we find almost 200 years of parallel development in picture books, games and toys (see chapter six). The pop-up or movable is far from being a modern invention and has long been a place where invention, experiment, graphic design, children's play and literacy development intersect.



## **E. PICTURE BOOKS AND LEARNING TO READ**

In this section I examine a range of literature concerned with how children might, and do, read picture books. Some of this work is oriented towards *pedagogy* and addresses directly how children and picture books are brought together in classrooms, and some of it reports *research* in various settings into early reading and picture books. Moreover, there are two traditions of research and pedagogy in this field that I wish to concentrate upon. Broadly speaking, picture books are sometimes treated as a branch of *literature* and sometimes as the *medium through which children are taught to read*. This by no means exhausts the ways in which picture books in an educational context may be described but these two quite distinct traditions exercise considerable influence upon how people think about picture books and reading.

My intentions here are, a) to discover how the relationship between reading development and picture books is understood and, b) to disclose how the picture book as a form of text is construed in these writings. In what follows I briefly discuss a range of literature under these headings and then return to points a) and b) at the end of the section.

### **1. The picture book as literature**

We find the picture book as literature *in the classroom* exemplified in works such as Benton and Fox (1985), Benton (1992), and Michaels and Walsh (1990). In *research*, the picture book as literature appears in works like Crago (1979), Crago and Crago (1976,1983), Cianciolo (1980) and Kiefer (1985). All of these works are, to some extent, influenced by Reader Response theory (e.g. Iser,1978) though some are more explicit about their theoretical foundations than others.

#### **a. the classroom**

Michaels and Walsh for example are clear about the influence upon their work of Iser (1978) and they devote a chapter to describing a model of development in response derived from Thomson (1987) but the main body of their work is in the form of suggestions for classroom lessons. Benton and Fox also proffer advice to the classroom

teacher but their development of a rationale based upon response theory is more sophisticated and subtle. Works such as these argue that the most productive way to teach literature to young people is by fostering sensitivity to their own responses to books.

Marriott (1991) and Wallen (1990) also suggest classroom activities with picture books. Marriott justifies his proposals by claiming that work with such books can make a significant contribution to intellectual and emotional development. The papers edited by Wallen (1990) describe an assortment of tried and tested activities with picture books that draw heavily upon classroom lore and teacher expertise.

Marriott (1991), Michaels and Walsh (1990), Benton, (1992), and Benton and Fox (1985) all describe and discuss examples of picture books. Marriott's accounts are slender and almost tangential to his other concerns. Benton, and Michaels and Walsh discuss a number of titles, but where Michaels and Walsh are able to indicate ways in which picture book makers deepen the significance of their work by leaving gap and by adding layers of meaning through the pictures, Benton is unable to move much beyond general statements about the pictures 'filling out' or 'amplifying' the words.

Picture books are rather better described in Benton and Fox (1985). Instead of attempting a general account of the picture book the writers focus upon individual texts. They concentrate upon two books, Burningham's *Come Away From the Water, Shirley* and Arnold Lobel's *Frog and Toad all Year*, and combine a careful and patient description that does justice to both parts of each book with a reading that posits the kinds of semantic moves that a reader might make to link words and pictures together.

#### **b. research**

In addition to works which are concerned to influence directly the teaching of literature there is a corpus of research into children's responses. The distinction between the context of the classroom and the context of research is not entirely watertight so I have grouped together works that spring directly from an interest in how children respond to

picture books. Thus while Benton and Fox, for example, write about the classroom implications of research into reader response, Cianciolo (1980), Crago (1979), Crago and Crago (1976, 1983) and Kiefer (1985) report directly the results of their research endeavours.

Cianciolo (1980) reports the findings of two research projects concerned with the influence of picture book experience on children's perceptions and understandings of different styles of illustration. Individual picture books are mentioned but none is effectively described and it is clear that the emphasis is upon picture books as vehicles for a rather limited range of art styles - expressionistic, representational, surrealistic and so on. Kiefer (1985) gives a more sensitive account of the way a group of articulate, middle class, 1st and 4th grade American children responded to a number of sophisticated picture books and she charts how their readings developed gradually. Interestingly she reports that as they read and re-read the books they were able to accept the indeterminacy involved in developing their responses.

The Crago's observed their daughter's interactions with picture books from eleven months to five years and reported their findings in a number of articles and in the book, *Prelude to Literacy*. Their diary records extend over five years of pre-school experience with picture books and stories and they show Anna developing, amongst other things, a sense of story; the ability to comprehend pictorial representations; the development of her understanding of literary humour and her growing understanding of characterisation. Picture books are, in a sense, central to their enquiry but only insofar as they are reflected in Anna's readings and responses.

## **2. The picture book and learning to read.**

### **a. In the classroom**

Increasingly picture books are discussed in the context of how children might best be taught to read. Two brief, but seminal, works are Jill Bennett's *Learning to Read With Picture Books*, and Liz Waterland's *Read With Me* (Bennett, 1991; Waterland, 1985. See also Waterland, 1989). Both writers see the provision of high quality picture books as a major feature of any reading programme for young children and both are concerned to foster good practice in this field.

The bias of both writers is towards the acquisition and development of reading competences. This leads then both to pay most attention to the quality of the written text in picture books. For Waterland, a good rule of thumb is whether a book "...reads aloud well..." A good book should also have "...natural language rhythms, the flow of a true story and... must interest both the child and the adult." Bennett also stresses the quality of the story and the language. Both writers are well aware that in the best picture books words and pictures work together but in both books the emphasis upon competence in reading, and the overall brevity, means that the composite nature of picture book text is barely touched upon.

### **b. research**

The reading of picture books by adults and children together has for some time been acknowledged as a productive site for early language and literacy development. Important concepts relating to language acquisition have emerged from detailed case studies such as Ninio and Bruner (1978), Ninio (1980), Snow (1983), Snow and Goldfield (1983), Snow and Ninio (1986), but sadly none of these projects has addressed the kinds of text shared by the mother-infant dyads. Even those studies focused closely upon literacy development have yielded little that is useful about picture books (Snow, 1983; Snow and Ninio, 1986).

Tannen (1985) and Cochran-Smith (1984) both have revealing things to say about picture book text but in both cases their observations remain relatively undeveloped. Tannen

observes that the literary discourse found in picture books shares many features basic to spontaneous conversation such as, repetition of sounds, parallel syntactic constructions, compelling rhythms and so on. Cochran-Smith astutely notes the deliberately interactive, dialogic nature of the verbal text in many picture books and observes how it feeds into and encourages conversational discourse . In both cases these are very interesting observations but once again they refer only to the verbal component of the text and leave questions of the inter-relatedness of word and image alone.

Henrietta Dombey's analyses of the dialogic interactions of adults and children as they jointly negotiate picture book text are more revealing (Dombey, 1983, 1988, 1992a, 1992b). In Dombey (1992b), for example, we find an account of mother and child attending to both the words and the pictures in *Rosie's Walk* and speculating on the meanings to be made from the words and pictures together. Although she gives no direct description of the book Dombey helps us to understand how a reading is made from the text on the page - what Robert Scholes calls the "text within text" (Scholes, 1985).

Finally, brief mention should be made here of an altogether different kind of research into the effects of illustrated text. There is a large body of work, most of it carried out under the protocols of behavioural psychology, into the effects of pictures upon children's comprehension of printed text. This work is reviewed by Samuels (1970), Concannon (1975) and Schallert (1980). Much of it has been carried out in controlled, experimental conditions and has concluded that the presence of pictures alongside verbal text interferes with word recognition and comprehension. It is of limited use to us here for it tends to make no distinction between picture books and illustrated reading scheme texts and is mainly concerned with pictures as adjuncts to written text that can be comprehended on its own. Moreover, it tends to equate learning to read with word recognition, a reductive view that has little in common with the view of reading as a complex activity espoused by the writers cited above. Schallert does differentiate between reading words, and comprehension, but she identifies these with learning *to* read, and learning *from* reading respectively.

A similarly iconophobic view may be found in Protheroe (1992a,1992b,1993).

Protheroe's view of reading is much less reductive than that found in Schallert, Concannon etc., but she nevertheless argues that the presence of pictures alongside verbal text is confusing and has a deleterious effect upon young people learning to read. She is specifically critical of picture books (the subtitle of her book, *Vexed Texts*, is, "How Children's Picture Books Promote Illiteracy" [Protheroe,1992b]) but she refers to no actual picture books, uncritically accepts statements about declining standards in literacy, appears to have conducted no empirical work with children, and relies solely upon arguments derived from a range of disciplines, such as neurophysiology, linguistics and psychology, largely tangential to her theme. She is certainly unable to convey any sense of real children learning to read (or failing to learn to read) in real contexts from real texts of any kind.

### **3. Texts that teach.**

So far in this part of chapter 4 I have considered two ways of writing about picture books in the broad context of children reading - picture books as texts to learn to read upon, and as works of literature to explore. It might be argued that this distinction is largely illusory and that learning to read must involve coming to understand literary texts. I would agree with the latter part of such an objection but not with the former as I believe the distinction is quite real and arises out of quite different sets of concerns and, to some extent, different traditions of theory and praxis. However, Benton and Fox (1985) make it clear that there are important *reading* lessons to be had from interactions with picture book literature (see section 1.a., last paragraph). The works reviewed below develop this theme.

Meek (1982) is addressed to parents and as such does not foreground classroom processes. Nonetheless it is written very much with a picture book readership in mind - children and parents together. Moreover, the descriptions of picture books for the young

are embedded within a discourse which assumes adult and child making meaning together. We see this best in Meek's lengthy account of *Rosie's Walk*. As in the descriptions offered by Benton and Fox time is taken to give an account of the book that recognises all its distinctive features, but in suggesting a reading of the book Meek does not give a determinate account of events, a 'meaning', but indicates the space between what the author/illustrator does and what the reader seems to be invited to make of it. Picture book text is thus presented as a sophisticated amalgam of word and image that is only realised when it is read.

Meek has since developed this approach further (e.g. Meek, 1987, 1988, 1992a). In these works she suggests ways of exploring texts written for children - and not just picture books - to discover how they offer children vital lessons in what it takes to become a reader. In her exemplars the orientation is very much towards the text *as a whole*, but the text as a framework within which the child reader (or child with adult) makes meaning.

In a similar, though not identical vein, Judith Graham analyses how the pictures in picture books contribute to the necessary learning of the young reader (Graham, 1990). Her concern is to show how pictures and picture sequences within the context of the book teach important narrative lessons. She examines, for example, what we learn from posture and gesture, from the portrayal of settings, the choice and elaboration of themes and the ways in which narrative conventions are embedded within the pictures. Later, in chapter 6, I shall be drawing upon Graham's work when I consider the ways in which we might be said to read pictures.

## E. SUMMARY

The work of historians in this field suffers from two inter-related problems. In none of the texts examined are picture books satisfactorily distinguished from illustrated books and thus we are offered the history of book illustration rather than the history of the picture book. Even when picture books are dealt with separately, and acknowledged to be different, they are still treated in the same way. The reason for this inadequate differentiation is that all historians of the illustrated book and the picture book rely upon the language of art-criticism for their analyses. This has the inevitable consequence of drawing attention away from the written text, and away from the interaction of pictures and words.

Drawing upon certain aspects of the work of Richard Rorty I argued that historians are at present working with an unhelpful *final vocabulary*, the vocabulary of art-criticism, and that the picture book is in need of *redescription*. I also proposed that a good foundation for such a redescription would be to view both pictures and words as ways to mean, i.e. as different forms of semiotic system.

The same bias towards pictures can be found in many non-historical essays. Some of the most illuminating draw attention precisely to the ways in which readers can read pictures for their meaning rather than appreciate them for their aesthetic value. Unfortunately most of this work makes no attempt to draw together the reading of pictures and the reading of words. The works that do attend to both parts of the picture book are often helpful as far as my own enterprise is concerned and we often see attempts to move beyond the relatively empty terminology of 'balance' and 'unity' towards metaphors of interaction and interanimation, counterpoint and visual interpretation. Some picture book makers, especially illustrators such as Sendak, are especially sensitive to what makes a successful picture book and to how words and pictures work together on the page.

Picture books are also helpfully described when writers make the attempt to see them from the point of view of the child reader. We see the books differently when they are reflected



in children's reading. We also see them differently when they are contextualised as books to use in the classroom. Sometimes they are construed as books to learn to read upon, and sometimes as a form of literature. Research into picture books as literature has very largely grown out of reader response theory and frequently it feeds back straight to the classroom. One of the lessons we learn from such work is the importance of careful and patient attention to the details of individual picture book pages. When viewed as an adjunct to the teaching of reading the written texts of picture books can be privileged over the pictures, but the best work in this field unites the 'literature' and 'reading' traditions to stress the important lessons to be learned from picture book text and once again we very usefully see the book as the child might see it.

Finally, there is little in print at present on picture books and postmodernism but there is clearly a growing acknowledgement that some picture books show distinct postmodern features. Not surprisingly, as yet there is little more than a recognition of the phenomenon and some small attempt to describe individual works and suggest taxonomic categories.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **READING PICTURES**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Chapter five is the first of three chapters that form the theoretical core of the thesis. It is my intention that the theory should:

- i. be a better ground for analysing, discussing and criticising picture books, both in individual cases and, generally, as a specialised text type, than theories that are currently available;
- ii. permit an explanation of the metafictional strain within picture books; and
- iii. provide a secure basis for interpreting and analysing the readings of picture books that I shall consider in chapter nine.

Much of the literature on picture books currently available is still very largely biased towards commentary upon, and analysis of, the pictures only (e.g. Alderson, 1986; Doonan, 1993). Nonetheless there is fairly widespread acknowledgement that the most distinctive feature of the picture book is its composite structure (e.g. Meek, 1992a; Nodelman, 1988; Pullman, 1989, 1993). In these theoretical chapters I take it to be axiomatic that this is so and attempt to describe the picture book in terms of the interaction and interanimation of words and pictures. In as much as I take into account the language-like characteristics of pictorial representations (the present chapter); previously neglected features of the historical development of the picture book (chapter six); and the seminal work of Mikhail Bakhtin on language and the novel (chapter seven), I believe these three chapters constitute an original *re*-description of the picture book.

The first step, taken in this chapter involves an examination of the notion that pictures can not only be appreciated and analysed aesthetically (an approach which effectively dissociates them from any accompanying words) but can also - indeed, must also - be *read*, i.e. that pictorial imagery constitutes a kind of language. In part B of the present chapter I review a number of texts that consider differences and similarities in words and

images and critically discuss the nature of realistic, or illusionistic, representation focussing upon the extent to which it might be considered arbitrary and conventional rather than natural and automatic. Part B concludes with an outline of Nelson Goodman's theory of notation and a brief examination of its relevance to the reading of picture books. In part C I move on to consider the specific topic of reading pictorial representations, and examine how we read and interpret picture book imagery. Part D summarises the arguments of the chapter.

## **B. WORDS AND PICTURES: THE SAME ONLY DIFFERENT?**

### **1. Words and images, space and time, nature and convention**

#### **a. space and time**

There is currently a good deal of interest in the historical development of the relationship between words and images and in the ways in which the differences between the two media have been defined (Mitchell, 1980,1986; Morris,1989; Hillis Miller,1992; see also the journal, *Word and Image*). A recurrent theme in such work is that the verbal and visual arts - literature and painting - have repeatedly been characterised as not just different, but irreconcilable, i.e grounded in wholly discrete, timeless categories.

Literature and painting are held to be what they are, and do what they do, simply because they correspond to bedrock distinctions such as the temporal and the spatial, or the conventional and the natural.

Thus in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's standard work, *Laocoon: an Essay upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting* we find the claim that literature is essentially temporal art and painting essentially spatial. (Mitchell, 1986) Reading is held to take place over time, narrated events taking place in a temporal sequence. In painting, forms are displayed in space and these forms represent the spatial configurations of actual bodies, the perception of both medium and message being virtually instantaneous and thus 'timeless'. Mitchell claims that since its appearance in 1766 there has been no serious challenge to Lessing's basic claims. Critics have objected to his absolute separation of representational kinds but in arguing for, say, 'spatial form' in poetry they tacitly accept the appropriateness of the categories of time and space.

Mitchell argues that it is misleading to ground the distinction between the verbal and visual arts in this way. To begin with, there is no access to the spatial out of time, nor the temporal without bodily form. Artworks inevitably exist in space/time. Indeed, Lessing makes the concession himself. His insistence upon keeping words and images separate in terms of what is appropriate to them comes down in the end not to an argument from necessity but to a desire to respect and maintain borders. Mitchell identifies a slippage in

Lessing from determinations of what painting and poetry *cannot* do to assertions about what they *ought not* to do. We discover that paintings can suggest the passage of time just as poems can suggest the appearance and effects of real bodies, it's just that Lessing does not think they should. Furthermore, Mitchell claims that Lessing's attempts to build a wall between the two artforms originates not in an intuition of their essential difference but in a fear of the mysterious power of painting to bewitch the mind through the creation of illusions. In Mitchell's terms Lessing is one of history's many iconophobes.

We should not be too surprised at this concern over the influence of one medium upon the other for it is characteristic of attempts to establish binary oppositions that one or other pole of the opposition becomes privileged. Thus Leonardo da Vinci, arguing in the tradition of what was known as the *paragone*, the war between painting and poetry, claims the high ground for painting, urging the inherent superiority of 'natural likenesses' that imitate the handiwork of God (Hillis Miller, 1992; Mitchell, 1986; Morris, 1989). Shelley on the other hand assumes the same basic categories of nature and convention to claim the superiority of poetry.

#### **b. nature and convention**

This distinction between natural and conventional signs is another way of accounting for the differences between painting and literature. It is perhaps somewhat more persuasive to a contemporary sensibility than Lessing's time/space distinction. Put simply, words and texts do not resemble the objects and events that they represent whereas pictorial images, and in particular naturalistic ones, plainly do. Words are arbitrary symbols that operate by conventional agreement and that have to be learned; pictures on the other hand are transparent representations, mimetic and natural, and thus do not need to be learned.

In his attempts to demystify this distinction Mitchell singles out for analysis the work of Ernst Gombrich, partly because of Gombrich's immense erudition and rhetorical skill and partly because Gombrich appears to have shifted his ground on the issue. Mitchell claims that Gombrich moved from a view of pictorial art as essentially conventional - i.e. a kind

of language - to a more cautious position that allowed for the "commonsense distinction" between images that are immediate and naturally recognisable, and words which are arbitrary and conventional. Mitchell restricts himself to two of Gombrich's works, *Art and Illusion* published in 1960 and the essay "Image and Code" published in 1982 (Gombrich 1960, 1982b), but the gradual shift in Gombrich's thinking can be detected in many of his writings from the 1970's and '80's.

In *Art and Illusion*, for example, Gombrich is clear that there is no such thing as a neutral naturalism, or realism. Artists must translate their impressions into some kind of medium rather than simply 'transcribe' them. The artist no less than the writer needs a vocabulary, or form of notation, before he or she can attempt to represent reality, there being different forms of notation for different kinds of works. In his contribution to *Illusion in Nature and Art* (Gregory and Gombrich, 1973) Gombrich largely stands by this formulation of the issue but he also suggests that there is a limit to what he terms "perceptual relativism" - i.e. the view that realistic representations are brought about by, and thus relative to, specific kinds of culturally formed notation. He argues that at rock bottom there must be a relationship of resemblance between an image that is a likeness and the object of the likeness. Thus a picture of a leaf, for example, must 'look like' a real leaf to any viewer.

In his attempts to account for the effects of representations in perspective - perhaps the most persuasive kinds of realistic pictures - Gombrich came to rely upon the 'eye-witness principle', the notion that the phenomenon of resemblance is governed by the negative rule that, "...the artist must not include in his image anything the eye-witness could not have seen from a particular point at a particular moment." (Gombrich, 1980). In adopting this principle Gombrich shifts attention away from questions of mimesis - how paint, charcoal, crayon etc., can somehow copy or resemble nature - towards the "...study of aspects, of foreshortening, and of perspective." (Gombrich, 1980) The problem with such a strategy, however, is that it does not so much resolve issues of representation, realism and illusion, as evade them. The problem of how pigment on canvas comes to look like the real world is still not addressed.

By the time Gombrich came to write "Image and Code" in 1982 he was referring to, "the commonsense distinction between images which are naturally recognisable because they are imitations and words which are based on conventions." (Gombrich,1982b) Mitchell's view is that despite his rhetorical wizardry Gombrich is not able to sustain the distinction and that his account of the natural sign comes down to conventionality in the end.

(Mitchell,1986) In a crucial passage from "Image and Code" Gombrich concedes that,

...the traditional opposition between 'nature' and 'convention' turns out to be misleading... What must be learned... is a table of equivalences, some of which strike us as so obvious that they are hardly felt to be conventions..

(Gombrich,1982b)

But even if it is not a matter of convention, the "equivalences" that make the perception of images as images possible "...must be learned" (Gombrich,1982b).

Despite the apparent collapse of Gombrich's distinction he continues to speak of 'natural' signs and trades on our willingness to conceive of pictures in this way. Mitchell, however, points out that the concept of nature is itself a cultural code, a broad nexus of concepts that frame certain aspects of world as untouched by humankind. He points out, for example, that Gombrich's view of 'nature' and the 'natural' is far from universal but is characteristic of the ideology associated with the rise of modern science and the emergence of capitalist economies in Western Europe. Nature has not always been conceived of in this way and is thus, paradoxically, just one more aspect of culture.

### **c. the photographic image: a special case?**

The argument that the lifelike representations achieved by painters are based upon socially constructed systems of notation seems a strong one. Paintings, as well as drawings, sketches, lithographs, etchings etc., are after all manufactured. They are the product of a

combination of mind and hand. The case of photography seems rather different. Here images are created entirely mechanically. There is no artisanal intervention between object and image, no wielding of a paintbrush, no manipulation of a medium. The creation of the photographic image is brought about solely through the operation of the scientific laws of physics and chemistry, and there is no need to invoke an eye-witness principle that the photographer must follow because it all happens automatically and objectively.

Something like this view seems to be widely accepted and generally unchallenged.

Gombrich briefly discusses the photographic image and begins by taking for granted,

"...the objective, non-conventional element in a photograph" (Gombrich, 1982b).

Similarly, Barthes, having asked what it is that the photograph transmits, answers, "By definition, the scene itself, the literal reality" (Barthes, 1986).

There is, however, agreement that in apparently objectively rendering reality the processes of photography do effect some changes. Gombrich indicates the lack of one to one correspondence between the light reflected from the different parts of an object and the relevant parts of a photograph of the object. (Gombrich, 1982b) Barthes identifies further changes: "From the object to its image, there is of course a reduction: in proportion, in perspective, in color." (Barthes, 1986)

In some senses, then, a photographic image can be less lifelike than a painting - it is usually much tinier than the original, is often in black and white rather than in colour, can appear to distort perspective, and yet we cling to the notion that photographs are somehow more 'real' and somehow natural. The explanation for this belief seems to be that photographs do not just represent objects in the world, they are in effect traces left by those objects. Sontag (1977) suggests the power of this relationship by asking whether most people would prefer an accurate portrait of Shakespeare by Holbein the younger (supposing the painter had lived long enough), or a photograph. She assumes there is no question that the photograph would be chosen every time - it would, she says, be like having a nail from the true cross.



Despite the fact that Sontag's book is not expressly about the nature of the photographic image it is able to shed light upon the subject. For example, she argues that,

Although there is a sense in which the camera does indeed capture reality, not just interpret it, photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are.

She argues that despite the apparent transparency of photography we nonetheless need to be taught to see photographs in particular ways. If we have to be taught, then we have to learn, and if we have to learn, then photographs cannot simply make a direct and natural appeal to the understanding.

The surest defence against the suspicion that photographs (and realistic painted representations) gain their lifelikeness from a relatively simple, optical relationship to reality is the acknowledgement that neither 'seeing' nor 'reality' are simple notions. I suggested in chapter two that in our postmodern age it is difficult to accept the real as that which is 'given'. It is forms of mental activity that give us our world. Seeing - perception - is always active and constructive and not a passive reception of objective sense data. Our seeing is informed by our cultural predispositions, experience, knowledge, preceding visual impressions etc. To borrow a formulation from Rudolph Arnheim, perception is a kind of 'visual thinking' (Arnheim, 1980). Gombrich too was fond of reminding his readers that there is no such thing as the 'innocent eye'. Equally, it is impossible to specify what kind of reality is out there to be perceived and copied as any object can be viewed under a myriad of aspects.

The putative objectivity of photographic representations is further undermined by Joel Snyder in his article "Picturing Vision" (Snyder, 1980). Snyder argues that the history of the development of the camera teaches that far from being a natural *corroboration* of the rules and schemata worked out by Renaissance and post-Renaissance painters, it represents,

...the *incorporation* of those schemata into a tool designed and built, with great difficulty and over a long period of

time, to aid painters and draughtsmen in the production of certain kinds of pictures

(Snyder, 1980, my emphasis).

There is nothing natural about the camera, nor about the images it produces. It may not look anything like a paintbrush, but it is a tool for making pictures nonetheless.

For scholars such as Snyder the notion of the naturalness and transparency of photographic and perspectival representations is a kind of myth, a set of delusive beliefs that "...transform(s) history into nature" (Barthes, 1973) and blind us to the fact that, "Pictures in perspective, like any others, have to be read; and the ability to read has to be acquired" (Goodman, 1976).

## **2. Words and pictures as signs**

### **a. pictures as a problem for semiotics.**

If the natural turns out to be cultural after all, and if the realism of imagery is always a case of 'catching a likeness' rather than duplicating a segment of the world, it is hard to see how the distinction between words and images in terms of nature and convention can be sustained. The door would seem to be wide open for an analysis of both domains in terms of the conventional symbol, or sign.

Such reconciliation has, however, proved to be not at all straightforward. Partly this seems to be due to the fact that although the arguments against images being a privileged and natural form of depiction seem to be compelling they are not at all *persuasive*. To call pictorial images conventional seems to run directly counter to the evidence of our senses. This dithering between the two ways of picturing pictures - discussing them as conventional but experiencing them as natural - is reflected in the literature on the subject (indeed, as we have seen, Mitchell identifies it in the work of Gombrich).

Another reason why a substantial measure of agreement has failed to materialise on this issue would seem to be the difficulties that semiotics has with the visual sign. As examples of the uncertainty of semiotics on this matter one might cite Eco: "iconic signs are partially ruled by convention but are at the same time motivated..." (*A Theory of Semiotics*, quoted in Mitchell, 1986); Barthes (1969): "Semiology, as a science of signs, has not managed to make inroads into art", and again, his belief that the photographic image is "a message without a code" (Barthes, 1977); and Hodge and Kress (1988):

Looking at the full range of sign types it seems incontrovertible that there is a continuum in signs, from more to less 'arbitrary' or 'motivated'. A dogmatic assertion that signs are all and equally 'arbitrary' is unjustifiable and unhelpful for general semiotics.

This unwillingness, or inability, on the part of semiotics and semioticians to accept the conventional nature of all sign types is traceable, at least in part, to their broad acceptance of C.S. Peirce's distinction between symbol and icon and between icon and index. For Peirce all signs are either indexical (i.e. 'causally' related to what they signify - a pointing finger, a footstep in the sand, a photograph); iconic (i.e. related by resemblance - the painted picture, the diagram, the caricature) or symbolic (i.e. related by convention, arbitrarily - words, mathematical symbols). The problem with 'resemblance', 'analogy' and 'similarity' as criteria for iconicity is that they are extremely capacious relationships: "Everything in the world is similar to everything else in some respects, if we look hard enough" (Mitchell, 1986).

**b. an outline of Nelson Goodman's theory of notation.**

One of the most rigorous analyses of different sign or symbol systems - the one that I shall rely upon here - is provided by the philosopher Nelson Goodman (Goodman, 1976, 1978). Significantly, Goodman does not seem to be in thrall to Peirce. Indeed, in one of the most significant passages from *Languages of Art* he argues that 'resemblance' is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for representation. In essence, he argues that there are many cases of resemblance where there is no question of representation, and conversely,

wholly commonplace examples of representation where there is no question of resemblance. The key relationship, is not resemblance, but *reference*: "The plain fact is that a picture, to represent an object, must be a symbol for it, stand for it, refer to it." (Goodman, 1976). Goodman does not deny the existence of resemblance in pictorial representations - how could he? - he simply denies that it is the feature of representations, of pictures, that make them representations.

The problem for semioticians such as Barthes is that they are unwilling to accept that 'continuous' images can be signs or symbols. Barthes' conviction that the photographic image and other forms of realistic representation such as painting are not susceptible of semiotic analysis is traceable to his inability to identify and codify "...painting's lexicon or its general grammar" (Barthes, 1986). For Goodman, however, working within a different tradition but upon similar territory, the continuous nature of the pictorial message is no problem at all. The lack of disjunct signifiers in the realist image is simply the signature feature of paintings, illustrations and photographs.

Paintings do not work by means of discontinuous, articulate symbols as language does, they are dense systems - each mark, each difference within the system makes a difference. We read a touch of white paint as a highlight on a glass in a still life by Chardin, say. If the touch were longer, narrower, smaller, a different shade or in a different position we would read it slightly differently within the overall system of the painting as a whole. It would have a slightly different meaning and thus change the meaning, the representational sense, of the whole. In another painting by Chardin, or by someone working within the same 'genre', we would know to read similar marks in similar ways. However, in a painting by another artist, within another system (Impressionism, say) we would read a similar white mark in a different way.

In contrast, in a disjunct, articulate system such as language only certain marks are imbued with meaning within the system. Within the English system 'mouse' is a meaningful unit and so is 'house' but there is nothing intermediate between the two units. There is no such

unit as 'nouse' for example despite the fact that 'n' seems to be about halfway in shape and form between 'm' and 'h'. Indeed, it makes no sense to speak in such a way about verbal language. Language simply does not operate according to the 'sliding scales', the dense visual fields, of the visual arts. Thus verbal language is a relatively *low-density* symbol system in contrast to painting which is *high-density*. In Goodman's terminology, a realistic or illusionistic painting is not only high density, but *replete*.

Goodman's analysis, which involves further distinctions - such as those between analog and digital, and allographic and autographic, systems - enables us to account for the ways in which we read different kinds of representational systems: maps, diagrams, seismographic charts, botanical drawings, computer screens and printouts, cartoons, caricatures, paintings and photographs, as well as novels and poems. The features which are crucial to one system are less important to another but that in no way undermines the fact that all representations are inherently symbolic.

A further, and extremely important, feature of Goodman's argument is that what distinguishes representations is never something locatable within the representation itself, what matters is the system in operation at the time. Thus, "Nothing is intrinsically a representation; status as representation is relative to symbol system." (Goodman, 1976) Goodman illustrates this point in his comparison of an electrocardiograph and a Hokusai drawing of Mount Fujiyama,

The black wiggly lines on white backgrounds may be exactly the same in the two cases. Yet the one is a diagram the other a picture. What makes the difference?

The difference, he says, arises out of what is relevant within the particular symbol system in operation. Thus all that is relevant to the diagram are the points through which the line trace passes, the thickness and colour of the line, the overall size of the image, all these things are irrelevant. In the case of the Hokusai drawing, however - an art image - all of these features matter in addition to others, such as the quality of the paper.

Goodman's analysis, developed in his theory of notation, has been put to use elsewhere in the work of Project Zero which Goodman founded in 1967 at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (Gardner, Howard and Perkins, 1974; Gardner, 1983; Gardner and Perkins, 1988). This interdisciplinary project was established to explore symbolic functioning in human life and in particular, the development of symbol systems - language, music, picturing etc. - in the young. For the researchers of Project Zero at least the conception of pictures as a form of language has long been accepted as a given.

**c. the relevance of Goodman's theory to the study of picture books**

Goodman's views of the differences between words and pictures, descriptions and representations, have immense implications for the study of picture books in general and for the present work in particular. His analysis makes it possible to envisage the reading of a composite, hybrid text such as a picture book without having to resort to ways of looking at pictures that draw upon art-critical and aesthetic traditions. If pictures are not always and essentially works of art then we may explore other means of describing them that are appropriate to their other functions. In *Ways of Worldmaking*, Goodman (1978) argues that we have created many problems for ourselves by asking the question, 'What is art?'. If we resist essentialist views it becomes possible to replace the 'What' with a 'When'. When, and in what circumstances, and with what effects might we call an object - a representation, say - a work of art? And when might the same object perform other functions, in different circumstances and with different effects?

It is clearly not illicit to describe the picture book as if it were a book of pictures - an art book - but it is certainly not the only way. It is in fact a very restricted way, and singularly inappropriate in many circumstances. For example, many children learn to read with picture books and share the experience with their teachers, parents and other care-givers. The protagonists in this commonplace event negotiate and discuss the meanings of words and pictures, speculate on the significance of represented events, refer to comparable events within their own lives and similar represented events in other texts they have read, and not once is there any need for them to consider the pictures as works of art.

If we can accept Goodman's analysis of pictures and words as more or less dense symbol systems then we can come to see the pictures and words in picture books as different ways to mean, as alternative forms of social semiotic. We might then also begin to see how the words and the pictures might *interfere* with one another. The metaphor comes from Hillis Miller (1992). By interference Hillis Miller means the transformation that comes about when different wavelengths of light interact to produce a new pattern. The metaphor leads us to see pictures and words acting upon one another to produce meanings that neither has the ability to generate on their own. I shall return to this metaphor, and others like it, later in chapter seven, but in the meantime I wish to return to the notion of reading pictures and consider it in a completely different light. In the next part of Chapter 5, part C, I consider what it means to read a representation, i.e. to gain significance from colour, light and shade; different kinds of framing; different kinds of line drawing and so on.

## **D. READING THE REPRESENTATION**

### **1. Connotation, iconology, iconography.**

Before we move on to consider the historical development of the picture book (chapter six) and the theoretical work of Mikhail Bakhtin (chapter seven) we must consider a second, and very important sense in which pictures might be said to be read. In his early essay, "The Photographic Message" Barthes identifies a level at which press photographs - and by implication other images too - are 'coded' and thus need to be read, i.e. the level of connotation (Barthes, 1961). I have argued that his concept of the photograph as a 'message without a code' is suspect and possibly grounded in his verbocentrism. His view of the connotative features of the photographic image, however, I find more persuasive and helpful.

For Barthes, the press photograph is "...not only perceived, received, it is read, attached... to a traditional stock of signs". Every sign, he says, supposes a code, "...and it is this code (of connotation) which we must try to establish". His attempts to establish the codes of connotation for the press photograph need not concern us here, they are of interest because they are an early attempt at reading the significance of pictorial representations in a language-like way.

A few years later, in 1964, Barthes returned to this theme and this time took the advertising image as his object of analysis Barthes (1964). In this essay he attempted to "skim off" three different types of message; the linguistic, the denotative and the connotative. The denotative aspect of the image, he continues to maintain, is analogue-like, continuous and uncoded. It is the aspect of the image that delivers up a collection of nameable and describable objects and not just colours and shapes. The linguistic message arises out of the caption in the margins of the advertisement and the product names displayed on the cartons depicted in the image. The connotative aspect emerges from treating the depicted objects as discontinuous signs each of which can be linked to codes that readers, in general, are familiar with. Thus the yellow, red and green of the produce displayed in the analysed advertisement (for an Italian product called Panzani) evokes,



through its congruence with the colours of the Italian tricolour, what Barthes calls the code of 'Italianicity'. Similarly, the arrangement of items in the picture, in deliberate reference to traditions of alimentary painting, calls up for us the aesthetic code of 'still life'.

In his subsequent discussion of the rhetoric of the image Barthes makes a number of interesting observations. First, he points out that in our contemporary Western culture images are rarely confronted alone and almost always are accompanied by a linguistic message. The linguistic message, he argues, generally carries out one of two functions in relation to the accompanying imagery - it acts either as *anchor* or *relay*. As anchor it helps the reader/viewer to select the appropriate level of perception; it operates to orient attention to significant parts of the representation; and it fixes meanings within the image. It is clear that captions to photographs and advertisements operate in this way. Viewed as relay words work in complementary relation to the images they accompany, taking a share, more or less equally, in the generation of meaning. Here,

...the words are... fragments of a more general syntagm,  
as are the images, and the message's unity occurs on a  
higher level: that of the story, the anecdote, the diegesis.

(Barthes, 1964).

Barthes comments that language-as-relay is rare in the fixed image but is highly significant in forms such as the cinema. We might also say it is a highly significant feature of meaning-making in picture books. Indeed, both of these functions - relay and anchor - have a role to play in the picture book though they are, of course, very general notions.

A further useful observation is that certain figures from classical rhetoric might be adapted to describe the relations and behaviour of the image at the level of connotation (this finds its justification, according to Barthes, in the discontinuous, and thus language-like, nature of the image at the level of connotation). The two figures Barthes singles out as possibly the most useful are the figure of substitution, *metonymy* (as in a tomato signifying 'Italianicity') and the figure of juxtaposition or parataxis, *asyndeton* (as in a sequence of images revealing a significant relation between actors or bodies). Once again, it is not

difficult to see how such descriptions of the operations of connotation might have some use in the analysis of picture book images.

Prior to the advent of semiotics and cultural studies little attention was paid to the images of mass culture and the work of Roland Barthes has been pioneering in that respect. In the realm of Fine Art, however, there is a long tradition of interpretative study though we are unlikely to come across use of the term 'connotation' (a verbocentrist's borrowing from literature). Within the Fine Arts the study of images and their operations fall within the realms of 'iconography' and 'iconology'.

Erwin Panofsky (1970) distinguishes three levels of interpretation in operation when we look closely at a picture. Firstly there is the simple identification involved in seeing a man as a man, a landscape as a landscape and a bowl of fruit as a bowl of fruit. We don't see just shapes and colours but objects and figures that we recognise. Secondly, there is the level at which we are able to identify and classify certain depicted figures or objects within a representation as being of a particular kind - saints, Madonnas, crucifixions. Finally, there is the level at which individual images, identified and classified as Saints, Madonnas, Crucifixions etc., can be studied in terms of the way in which the 'type' has been mediated through cultural factors such as historical period, nationality, class, philosophical persuasion and so on

Questions of this latter kind, Panofsky says, fall within the realm of *Iconology*, whereas questions of attribution ('is this a St. Bartholomew or not?') belong to *Iconography*. Iconography is, "...a description and classification of images..." whereas Iconology, "...is a method of interpretation" (Panofsky, 1970). Iconography is thus antecedent to Iconology, a condition of its successful proceeding.

None of this sounds particularly close to Barthes' approach save that the first level corresponds roughly to the idea of reading the image as an image. Barthes might say that at this level we grasp the image as a continuous *analogon* of reality. The iconographic

and the iconologic, however, do not seem to be congruent with the concept of connotation, despite the fact that in both cases the viewer makes use of prior cultural knowledge. The difference is largely due to the fact that the body of works scrutinised by Panofsky - paintings from the Renaissance, and the Fine Art canon - are highly codified and constrained in terms of their subject matter, whereas the photographs and advertising posters examined by Barthes belong to a much more fluid context of all-pervasive and rapidly changing popular, visual imagery. In such a context, something like *connotation* seems the more appropriate term.

Picture books are neither gallery-bound Fine Art nor are they quite as ephemeral as the advertising image and the press photograph - they seem to fall somewhere between these two cases. Picture books feed off both realms and, as we saw in Chapter four, the pictures in picture books can be made to submit to an art-critical, iconographical or iconological reading Doonan (1986a). The problem, as we saw then, is that in attaching picture book study to art-critical tradition we effectively amputate half of the body of the patient. The attraction of a broadly semiotic approach for the student of the picture book is that it permits a freer kind of reading and acknowledges that contemporary images are never far from words.

## **2. Reading the pictures in picture books.**

When we come to look at the reading of the pictures in picture books we find an extraordinary variety of features capable of influencing our interpretation. We have seen that Barthes suggests that metonymy and asyndeton may account for most, if not all, processes of connotation within pictures. He may well be right but the ways in which such figures of substitution and subsequence operate are legion.

In the same essay Barthes remarks that the apprehension of the connotations of an image depends upon the different kinds of knowledge possessed by readers; the more one knows

of the codes in operation, the richer will be one's reading. It also depends, to a very large extent, upon a reader's general attitude towards what may be found in and taken from an image. Nodelman (1988) argues that if we come to picture books with the conviction that pictures do no more than confirm the information in the accompanying text then we might not give much weight to the details. Indeed, we may barely even notice them, being content with a glancing apprehension of the denotative content of the pictures. However, if we come with the conviction that illustration reveals character then we might be more inclined to pay attention to the facial features of depicted characters. A further conviction that pictures use all aspects of visual imagery to convey narrative information about characters will guide us to look attentively, with varying degrees of weight, at all of the details within the pictures. In what follows I review some of the many ways in which the features of the pictorial imagery of picture books are able to convey information to the interested and attentive reader.

#### **a. frames**

The ways pictures are framed within picture books affect their significance. Nodelman points out that, "...a frame around a picture makes it seem tidier, less energetic". When characters wish to assert their freedom, or become active after a period of inactivity, their limbs, or other parts of the scene break through the frame. On the first page of Shirley Hughes' *Up and Up*, for example, the bird which is the focus of the little girl's aspirations appears to fly in and out of the picture frame at will. Frames, according to Nodelman, are also characteristic of books which take an objective, unemotional view of events. "Not surprisingly", he says, "books that focus more centrally on action and emotion rarely have frames of white space".

Moebius (1986) points out that frames create the sense of looking into a world whereas unframed pictures can create a sense of the view from within and are altogether more involving to the viewer. Almost all commentators remark upon how *Where the Wild Things Are* ingeniously exploits the effects of framing to move from a heavily constrained and controlled series of images to the huge, unframed and riotously energetic scenes at the

heart of the book. Finally, Nodelman observes how pictures that isolate characters against a white background, thereby creating a frame in the shape of the figure's outline, can provide a sharp focus upon the character's actions and fortunes. Part of our interest in, and concern for, Peter Rabbit is created in this way.

#### **b. colour**

Illustrators also use colour to generate meaning. Nodelman distinguishes between the conventional, culture-specific meanings of colour - such as the red light of the stop sign - and the more universal connotations that link colours to certain moods. The former codes, he argues are more useful in giving weight and meaning to objects within pictures. Thus we notice more readily, and pay more attention to, those features of a picture picked out by strong and culturally significant colours. In the latter case, the overall mood or tone of a book or picture sequence can be established by the use of dominant colours: shades of blue can create a sense of serenity, melancholy or etherealness; reds can connote warmth and intensity or anger. Green is the colour of growth and fertility, grey the colour of 'colourlessness', bleakness and detachment, and so on. Nodelman's discussion extends into the effects of qualities of colour such as hue, shade and saturation. He points out that there is some evidence that it is the saturation - the relative intensity - of colours that is the most powerful agent of connotation.

Nodelman argues that those picture book makers who work in black and white often exploit our expectations created by the *absence* of colour. He singles out as exemplars David Macaulay - whose meticulously detailed pictures of castles, cities and cathedrals recall the precision and 'truth' of architects drawings - and Chris Van Allsburg, whose disturbingly paradoxical pictures in such books as *Jumanji* and *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* are made all the more disturbing by their resemblance to black and white photographs.

### c. line

Many black and white illustrations are, of course, line drawings and the nature and quality of the artist's line can have a surprising influence upon our understanding of a picture. If line is a dominant feature then the artist has a means to convey energy or stasis, tension and action, feeling and thought. (Moebius, 1986) The line drawing is, of course, the stock in trade of the caricaturist and cartoonist and, as we shall see in chapter six, the discovery in the nineteenth century that a spare line drawing could better represent action and feeling than a detailed painting was a momentous one and it is not a lesson that has been lost on picture book makers.

### d. size, shape and position of objects

The size, shape and positioning of objects in a picture is significant too. The relative size of objects and characters is a good indicator of their status and position. It is not so much their absolute size that is important, for large objects in the background are not only diminished in size but also in significance, and small, normally insignificant figures can be given prominence by either moving them closer to the picture plane or by bringing them closer than another larger, but more distant, object. The bee that stings Ferdinand the bull in *The Story of Ferdinand* by Munro Leaf and Robert Lawson is drawn by Lawson in detailed close-up in the centre of the frame.

Moebius suggests a number of related ways that an object's position within the picture might influence meaning. High and low, right and left are all positions that can have significance. Height may be an indicator of an ecstatic or dream-like state, a mark of social status or of a positive self-image. In contrast, a low position might suggest low status or low spirits. Important figures are usually 'centred' but can, in another picture, be both literally and metaphorically marginalised. The left-hand side of a picture, Moebius suggests, is a position of relative security while figures on the right are likely to be "... moving into a situation of risk or adventure". I suspect that overlapping this binary code of security/risk is what we might call a *bibliographic* code of 'reading directionality'. Characters who are on the move in picture books appear to be moving from left to right in

the same direction that we read. Those apparently moving, facing, or attempting to move the other way are deliberately reversing the general movement of characters in the story, are blocked in some way or have taken a sinister road. A good example is the scientist/balloonist of *Up and Up* who turns about face when he has failed to catch the flying girl in his net and strides back to his house to launch his balloon, the image neatly caught inside a circular frame.

Moebius also suggests what he calls a code of *diminishing returns*. We would expect to find this in operation in those images where a character is presented in more than one scene on the same page:

The more frequently the same character is depicted on the same page, the less likely that character is to be in control of a situation, even if in the centre.

I shall be describing an excellent example of this code in operation in section 3.

#### **e. shape**

For Nodelman, shape, too, is a significant feature of depicted objects. He suggests that we associate certain emotions with certain shapes so that we tend to perceive squares and rectangles as stable, fixed and rigid whereas rounded shapes appear to be more comfortable and accomodating. Thus, "Sendak places Max inside a bedroom of harsh rectangular shapes..." but then gives the Wild Things a comfortably rounded outline. Shapes, can of course be created by enclosing space within a bounding line and the completion of an outline by joining the ends of a line seems to automatically create a sense of solidity and stability. In contrast, lines that do not connect, outlines that are incomplete "...create no solidity and seem to have more energy - to be disordered". We see this latter effect at work in the illustrations of Quentin Blake, a picture book maker whose trademark is his fizzy, giddy and rather insouciant looking line.

#### **f. action and movement**

Both Nodelman and Graham (1990) give excellent accounts of how features of narrative are evoked by illustrators - action, the passing of time, causes, effects and intentions.

Nodelman draws our attention to the prevalence of cartooning and caricature in picture books and shows how the reduction of detail characteristic of such pictorial styles facilitates the typifications that signify movement. Comparative study of the styles of picture book illustrators reveals the extent to which this is true. Illustrations that tend towards the illusionistic depiction of objects and figures - what Hodge and Kress (1988) would call pictures with *high modality* - tend to be far more static and immobile than illustrations that eschew realism and tend towards simplicity - those with *low modality*. Thus individual pictures can depict not only objects and people but can convey motion - running, jumping, skipping and so on. Appropriate arrangements of arms and legs, along with the comic-strip conventions of speed marks and direction lines can even suggest such an unnatural motion, for a human, as flight (see *Up and Up*).

A sense of motion is also suggested, according to Nodelman, by pictures that arrest an action immediately prior to its completion or climax. Pat Hutchins' *Rosie's Walk*, for example, very cleverly uses this convention both to suggest the fox's various leaps and to urge the reader to turn the page. Such moments are common in wordless picture books too where the narrative must be carried by the pictures alone. Both *Up and Up* and Raymond Briggs' *The Snowman*, for example, make careful use of arrested, pre-climactic motion (the little girl leaping from the top of a pair of step-ladders; the balloons bursting prior to her fall over the page; the boy and the snowman running prior to their flight) but, interestingly, such texts have no great need of this convention as movement can more effectively be conveyed through the sequence of pictures - Barthes' asyndeton - as we shall see in the example in section three.

**g. facial expression, gesture and posture**

Curiously, Nodelman argues that although wordless picture books can easily depict action they are typically less successful at communicating feelings. Furthermore, he claims that this is what most distinguishes them from the conventional picture book. He argues that 'cartooning' is popular in picture books precisely because the pared down language of gesture and facial expression characteristic of the style is well-suited to the depiction of



action and motion yet strangely ignores the fact that the same gestural, expressive language is strongly evocative of feeling.

Graham (1990) gives a persuasive account of this language of gesture and expression showing how even the relatively undifferentiated figure of the Snowman is made, by Briggs, to reveal curiosity, wonder - even ecstasy - through inclinations of the head, movements of the arms and a manipulation of the simple line of the mouth. Gesture, even posture is, of course, important in the conventional picture book too. Ardizzone claimed, "One shouldn't tell the reader too much. The best view of a hero, I always feel, is a back view" (in Tucker, 1970; quoted in Graham, 1990). The back view in question is the eighth illustration of *Little Tim and the Brave Sea Captain* where Tim stands alone on the beach facing the sea, slightly stooped, hands clasped behind his back, feet together and eyes, presumably, cast down. Though the verbal text speaks of his sadness it is the pictorial text that bespeaks his total dejection

#### **h. cinematic effects**

Finally, I want to note Nodelman's analysis of how *cinematic* techniques are used in the picture book. He refers to the *establishing shot*, the view at the beginning of a story that sets the scene. The end papers, or title-pages of picture books are quite frequently used for this purpose, books such as *Rosie's Walk* and *Each Peach Pear Plum* allowing the reader to see the whole farmyard or landscape before it gets chopped up, by the succeeding pages. Occasionally picture book illustrators employ the technique of the *form cut* to link two pictures in a sequence together. This requires that a dominant shape from the first picture in the sequence should be reflected in the picture immediately following. Nodelman cites an example from Chris van Allsburg's *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi* where the round back of a sofa in one picture is echoed by the curvature of a bridge in the next one. More common is the technique of *dynamic framing*. Nodelman claims that it is even more common in picture books than in the movies where it has somewhat gone out of fashion. In essence it involves controlling the shape and size of the image by altering

the shape and size of the enclosing frame, something that picture book illustrators do freely.

In contrast, Nodelman claims that the wide variety of 'shots' characteristic of the cinema are largely absent from picture book imagery, though Doonan finds considerable variety in the work of Tony Ross (Doonan, 1985). He finds the most common shots in the picture book are middle distance or long-shots, usually at eye-level, showing full figures in settings. There are exceptions, of course, but there are few books as cinematic as *The Story of Ferdinand*,

...which includes very low shots (the castle on the first page), long high shots (the little bulls butting their heads together), reverse shots (we first see Ferdinand in the foreground under his tree, then on the next page we see his mother in the foreground looking at Ferdinand in the background, a change that matches the changing focus of the story), close-ups (the five men from Madrid), even detail shots (the bee that Ferdinand is about to sit on).

(Nodelman, 1988)

One reason suggested for the general lack of cinematic fluidity in picture books is that such books resemble the theatre rather more than they do the cinema. In the traditional theatre scenes are framed by the proscenium arch and the audience watches the unwindings of the plot as a kind of spectacle. Similarly, we look into the picture book, contemplating the actions of the characters, from the outside. In contrast, the movie camera is able to simulate a restless and moving eye and thus very readily creates in an audience the sense of being a participant, looking on the scene from the inside.

In the next section I complete this chapter on reading pictures by analysing one sequence of images from the wordless picture book *Sunshine*, by Jan Ormerod to illustrate how some of the codes of connotation described above come together and interact to generate meanings for the reader who is prepared to look closely and engage both eye and brain in the adventure of pictorial storytelling. I have chosen a wordless sequence so that I may

concentrate for the moment on the visual images alone. Later, and specifically at the end of chapter 7, we shall return to the interaction of words and pictures in the picture book.

### 3. A reading of several pages of *Sunshine* by Jan Ormerod

*Sunshine* is the domestic tale of a little girl and her family who wake up, have breakfast, get dressed and set off for work and for school. It is a story devoid of high drama which relies for its effects upon a close and sensitive observation of family life. As a pictorial text it is interesting because of the way in which it deploys a range of pictorial conventions and connotative codes in ingenious ways. Broadly speaking it alternates sequences of small pictures with large, full-page spreads. The sequences tend to focus upon relatively complex physical activities, such as getting dressed, and they look almost as if they were a selection of still frames taken from a film. The spreads in contrast suggest stillness and quiet or depict moments just before some gentle activity is about to take place such as the little girl poised to climb on her parents' bed and then kissing her father to wake him up. In between these two extremes are short sequences delineating simple moments of activity such as carrying a breakfast bowl to the bedroom or climbing off the bed.

There is, however, one moment that is particularly revealing and that is the page opening where the parents realise with a start that they are late. The verso conveys agitation and panic through the startled gestures and expressions of the parents and through the contrast between the shocked parents in bed and the same scene with the bed and room empty. This dramatic contrast follows directly upon a sequence of pictures on the previous two pages showing the little girl going through the stages of getting dressed, packing her bag, reaching for a clock and calling to her parents. The last image of this sequence shows the girl fully dressed facing out towards the reader, clock in hands, its face fully visible. She seems to be looking out beyond, or to the side of, the reader, holding the clock up for inspection. In fact, of course, she is showing the clock to her parents and over the page we see the immediate results of this last frame (a cinematic *reverse shot*). This time we, as

readers, are positioned behind the girl (still standing holding the clock) and in a position to register the effect that the sight of the clock has upon the parents.

The facing page depicts a scene of busy confusion (see fig.2 overleaf) The framing is relatively complex. The little girl stands still in the foreground and at the centre confronting the viewer, her eyes engaging ours, a small smile on her lips. This direct line of gaze is significant for it seems to imply an acknowledgement on the part of the depicted figure that she is being watched. The reader no longer has the sense of eavesdropping on events in the book. We are invited to watch. What we see is the figure of the little girl painted in relatively saturated colours - blues, reds, and greys - and this causes her to stand out from the scene, or rather, scenes, behind her. Against two vacant, white, framed spaces her parents hurry to get dressed. The colours are largely pale save for the patches of the deep red towel around the father's trunk and his one red sock. Although there is only one child depicted on this page there are four parents, for two stages of getting dressed are shown (we recall the code of *diminishing returns*). To the left of the girl, father moves to the left draped in a towel while mother moves to the right in her nightdress. To the right, time has moved on for now father moves to the right, partially dressed in shirt and sock while mother moves to the left, wrapped in a towel, turbaned and clutching a hairdryer. In both the left and right scenes the figures break the frame that strives to enclose them and this in itself suggests energy and motion. In both scenes their legs cross and this has the effect of tying them together as they apparently strain to move off in different directions. The conflicting directions are, in themselves, a powerful source of confusion for, as we saw in the previous section, a persuasive signifier in picture books is that which follows the convention of left to right reading - at least in the West.

On this one page Jan Ormerod marshals an number of pictorial signifiers to create a scene of chaos and tension - the contrary directions of movement, the broken frames, the figures held back by their overlapping limbs, the double reading of the representation (one child, four parents) - and yet the effect is curiously static and frozen. This climactic scene is almost sabotaged by Ormerod's careful drawing. Each figure is enclosed by a clear,



unbroken black line and this has the effect of freezing each individual into a statue-like pose. Ormerod's drawing has none of the energy and movement created by a looser, more flowing, or broken line, and so, if we wish to see the full significance of the page in terms of the developing story, we must override one particular convention (that which tells us unbroken lines freeze action) and read the rest in the light of what has gone before in the story.

What we find when we look closely at pictures and picture sequences such as these is a weaving together of pictorial and narrative conventions to create a text of considerable richness and depth. Take, for example, point of view. It matters greatly, both in pictures and in prose, from what angle, perspective and direction a scene has been constructed. Ormerod is extremely skilful at manipulating the reader's viewpoint in the few pages that we have just been considering. We move from an external point of view as we observe the little girl getting dressed to the viewpoint of the parents when we see the clock face held up for inspection (this is quite a subtle move for we are only likely to notice this shift in viewpoint on a second or third reading). Over the page we shift again to a rear view of the girl and look over her shoulders - we can now see what she can see, her parents' shock and surprise, and then finally, we are once more external to the family group, though this time drawn by the girl's gaze into a relationship of complicity - we are led to see the parents not just from the outside but as the little girl sees them.

## D SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have examined two different senses of the notion that pictorial representations need to be read to be understood. In part B. I tried to show that distinctions between verbal language and pictorial imagery based upon ideal categories such as time and space, or nature and convention were not sustainable and that their differences (e.g. the *continuous* nature of paintings and photographs, and the *discontinuous* nature of verbal text) could be subsumed within the more global category of *symbol system* or *form of notation*. Thus, following Goodman, paintings might be said to belong to high density, continuous symbol systems, each mark making a difference to overall sense, whereas verbal text is an example of a discontinuous, low density system where only certain specific features of the marks on the page relate to meaning. Even the most realistic paintings and photographs are explicable in these terms.

Thus pictures are language-like in certain important ways. In order for them to mean - i.e. for them to be perceived as pictures of something - the viewer needs to be familiar with the symbol system in operation. Some systems are clearly learned very early but nonetheless they do need to be learned and, moreover, will only be capable of generating sense and meaning when applied in appropriate circumstances. Writers, artists and reader/viewers collectively, and intersubjectively generate systems, so that we might describe pictorial representations as forms of social semiotic in much the same way as we may so describe written language.

In part C. I considered the reading of pictures at the level above that of simply making sense of an image as an image, i.e. at the level of what Barthes calls *connotation*. At this level of reading the objects and persons depicted acquire meaning and significance beyond the merely denotative. Almost any and all features of an image may have a role to play: colour, light and shade; framing; the directionality of movement; size, shape and position within the frame; the expressions, gestures and posture of depicted characters, and so on. The most successful picture book makers orchestrate such features to lift the function of the pictorial component of the text beyond the denotative, and thus increase the potential

complexity and richness of the interanimation of word and image. To complete part D I analysed a picture sequence taken from *Sunshine* by Jan Ormerod to show how some of the features previously discussed work, both in sequence, and within individual pictures.

In the next chapter, chapter six, I turn away temporarily from the picture book as we know it today and address its historical development to try and ascertain where its origins lie and what influences have shaped its development. Such an analysis is necessary for, as we shall see, current histories have tended to marginalise important features of the picture book's development, suppressing such features as its popular origins. Only when such features are restored to their proper place will I be able to theorise the contemporary picture book in such a way that I can attempt to do justice to both its contemporary form - including the metafictional - and its historical origins.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PICTURE BOOKS IN ENGLAND**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Chapter six occupies a pivotal position in the middle of the three theoretical chapters and in the middle of the thesis as a whole. It is pivotal in as much as it looks both backwards and forwards - it looks back to the review of the historical literature and attempts to make good some of the omissions and distortions produced by history's one-sided outlook, and forwards to chapter 7 and beyond where I attempt a re-description of the picture book.

There are two important consequences of the way the history of the picture book has been framed so far. First, the near total inability of history to do anything more than chart the development of illustration means that the picture *book* has not yet had its history written. Second, the emphasis upon establishing and/or discussing a canon of exemplary works of illustration has led to some significant distortions, in particular, the near total exclusion of any book phenomena that are not amenable to analysis in terms of art-critical and aesthetic terminology - i.e. the popular, the vulgar, the hybrid and the crude. All such phenomena are either totally ignored, heavily disparaged or swept to the margins as being insignificant.

In the parts of the chapter that follow I have not attempted to rewrite the history as I believe it should be written, rather I have taken five important features of the development of the picture book and treated each one separately. Each topic cuts across the historical development of the form so the parts that follow do not comprise a linear chronicle. The history is embedded within these five parts.

Part B explores the close relationship that has always existed between picture books, games and toys. Books and games for children proliferated after the shift in the conception of childhood that took place during the latter years of the eighteenth century, and both were nourished by changes within the culture towards the role of pleasure in children's lives. The relationship between books and games was close enough during the

nineteenth century for a kind of interbreeding to take place with the result that all manner of hybrid book-toys were spawned. These book-toys - movables, pop-ups, panoramas, flap-books and the like are generally ignored by historians despite the fact that they were clearly a major part of the book industry.

In part C I examine the important contribution made to the development of the picture book by the chapbook. If the picture book has a tap root into the past then that root is the chapbook. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it passed on to the picture book a host of popular, transgressive themes and the twin formal features of brevity and flexibility. The chapbook's extraordinary flexibility stems in part from the condensation of the written texts and the high ratio of pictures to words - a principle I have termed *pictorialisation*. Both of these principles, condensation and pictorialisation, have been inherited by the picture book. The chapbook's lowly origins are also of immense importance.

Part D argues that the picture book could not emerge as a distinct form until satisfactory means could be found of placing words and pictures together on the same page. The work of William Blake is considered and the contribution of Bewick's wood engraving to the development of nineteenth century book illustration emphasised. Tenniel's work on the *Alice* books, and Caldecott's, Crane's and Greenaway's transformations of the toy book at the end of the century are all considered important landmarks.

The contribution of narrative art and caricature to picture books is the subject of part E. Hogarth, Rowlandson and Cruikshank set the scene by helping to create a visually literate public but caricature only really entered the bloodstream of the picture book in the mid-nineteenth century through the work of illustrators such as Doyle, Leech and Bennett. I argue that the features of caricature most influential in the development of the picture book were a) the wit and humour characteristic of political satire, b) the simplification of line that enabled illustrators to depict action and emotion effectively, and c) the exaggeration and distortion used for humorous and parodic effects. These last two also

nourished the development of the comic which in turn eventually fed back into the picture book.

The final part is concerned to rebut the view, largely promulgated in the work of Brian Alderson (Alderson, 1986), that the art of the picture book is essentially *sober*. I argue in contrast that picture books have always provided artists and writers with a site for innovation and experiment. It is not so much that the *pictures* are experimental or unorthodox, but that the books in which they appear have often resisted the received view of what constitutes acceptable reading matter for children. I suggest in this chapter three oppositional traditions that makers of pictures books have frequently drawn upon - the popular; the recurrent association of pictures and pleasure; and the heterogeneous and anti-canonical inheritance of the chapbook.

## **B. CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, PICTURE BOOKS, PLAY, AND TOYS**

In part B I begin by reviewing the origins of children's literature in Puritanism and the gradual undermining of Puritan severity from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. I then consider the growing abundance of games and toys produced during the nineteenth century and explore the connections between the production and marketing of such artefacts and the trade in children's books during the same period. Finally, I consider some of the reasons why the close connection between games and books is ignored by many critics and commentators and suggest that there is an alternative view that places the development of the picture book more centrally within the development of a range of pictorialised entertainments

### **1. Puritanism, play and pleasure**

#### **a. The beginnings of pleasure in reading.**

It is widely acknowledged that the middle years of the eighteenth century saw the beginnings of a dramatic change in the tenor and the tone of books written and published for children (Darton, 1982; Townsend, 1983; Leeson, 1985). The publication of *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* by John Newbery in 1744 is generally held to be the event which inaugurated the new age although there is acknowledgement that Newbery was simply perhaps the most enterprising figure in an age when the entrepreneurial bookseller was commonplace.

Throughout the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth juvenile literature had been characterised almost entirely by religious, moral and instructional themes. The influence of Puritanism had been all-pervasive and numerous writers have alluded to the extraordinary ferocity with which these themes were sometimes developed in texts deemed appropriate - indeed, necessary - for young readers (Darton, 1982, Leeson, 1985, Townsend, 1983). Even when writers such as James Janeway, Abraham Chear and John Bunyan were not trying to terrorise children into goodness they never relinquished their central themes of the dangers of idle pleasure, and the importance of true piety.

It was not until John Newbery and his contemporaries began to produce and market books for children that we find any general acceptance of the fact that at least one purpose of reading is to gain pleasure and enjoyment. The 1744 advertisement for *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* claims that it is "...intended for the Instruction and Amusement of little Master Tommy and pretty Miss Polly". Instruction is still necessary but amusement is allowed equal importance. This change was a reflection of more general shifts in attitude towards children and their education. John Locke had published his influential *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in 1693 in which he had argued that the education of the young should be informed by the view that children are born innocent as well as ignorant. He advocated an approach to teaching that respected the young child's propensity to play and saw means by which children could be "cozened into a knowledge of their letters". The enjoyment he saw as attendant upon the reading of interesting books he took to be not only natural but appropriate.

Despite the fact that the Puritan view of reading was to prove extraordinarily persistent, lingering on throughout the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth century, the Lockean view of the innocence of the child, along with its corollary that childhood could and should be a time for pleasurable activities, was to gain increasing acceptance - at least among certain social groups. These groups included the expanding middle classes who, with their improving education, their relative wealth and leisure proved a ready market for the products of Newbery and his contemporaries

#### **b. the development of toys and games**

A further reflection of the new spirit can be found in the burgeoning of the market for toys. Plumb, in Gottlieb (1975), remarks that whereas there were no toyshops at all in London in 1730, by 1780 they were everywhere and by 1820 toys and toyshops were big business. Moreover, it is clear that from the middle of the mid eighteenth century toys and books for children were closely allied. They were allied not only through the growing belief that play was a legitimate and valuable form of activity for children, but they were linked commercially in as much as they were frequently manufactured by the same

companies and retailed to the public through the same outlets. Furthermore, the dividing line between book and toy was constantly being blurred. In the following section I review the products of this activity and show the link between books and toys.

## **2. Picture books, games and toys**

### **a. table games, juvenile drama and peep-shows**

Juvenile *table games*, where counters are moved around a board according to the shake of a dice, first appeared in about 1760. Maloney (1981) and Plumb in Gottlieb (1975) point to their originators being cartographers and map publishers. Darton (1982) refers to the Moral Game - a form of instructional gambling - being imported into Britain by the Abbe Gaultier. Plumb also attributes the invention of the *jig-saw puzzle* to one John Spilsbury, a "printer-bookseller and young entrepreneur". In 1762 he began producing dissected maps for the teaching of geography and by the mid-seventeen-sixties he had thirty different map jigsaw puzzles for sale. Muir (1954) credits the map-making firm of J.& E. Wallis, with the same invention around 1780.

*Juvenile Drama* - the enacting of plays at home in miniature toy theatres - first emerged towards the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century (Muir, 1954). Printed model theatres had appeared in Germany and Austria from 1730 (Scarfe, 1975/8) but the English Juvenile Drama sprang from the Regency love of theatre. Scarfe points out that "the initial impetus seems to have been the frank obsession for popular stars" and thus theatrical themes, personages and plots were woven into this particular strand of children's publishing from the start. The juvenile drama rapidly became very popular and quickly came to influence other early nineteenth century publications. Smith (1948) mentions a *Jack the Giant Killer* with a huge folding frontispiece which opens out like a toy theatre proscenium (See also Dean's *Cinderella* referred to below).

A related phenomenon was the *Peep Show* or *Vista Book* (Scarfe, 1975/8; Haining, 1979). Peepshows, or gallantry shows, consisting of large boxes on wheels which were pushed around the streets and which the curious might look into through a peep hole for a small charge were popular during the eighteenth century. In the 1820's miniature versions constructed from printed and cut card which could be folded flat or extended began to appear. These perspective views developed into elaborate, telescopic vistas where the illusion of immense distance was created through diminishing theatrical-style flats and the decreasing scale of figures and objects. Popular themes included the Great Exhibition, the proposed Channel Tunnel, scenes in parks and palaces, and versions of court masques.

**b. paper dolls, panoramas and flapbooks**

The firm of Wallis referred to above apparently made a brief foray into the market for *Paper Dolls*. According to Muir (1954) these were books which "instead of pictures... had a series of loosely inserted cut-out figures, coloured by hand". These figures represented the hero or heroine of the story in a series of different costumes with slots or spaces provided for the heads which were supplied separately. Haining (1979) reminds us that these apparently frivolous creations were, in fact, always supplied with a highly moralistic text.

The technique of zigzag folding, not unlike that employed by the manufacturers of extendible peep-shows, went into the creation of *panoramas*. These zigzag books could be opened out so that all phases and stages of the material within could be viewed at the same time. Haining (1979), and Alderson (1986) both mention a *John Gilpin* illustrated by Percy Cruikshank and published in the 1850's as a memorable example. Percy's more famous uncle, George, was himself responsible for several works of this kind. Alderson refers to a *Comic Alphabet* and a *Comic Multiplication* as examples

More recognisable as books in the conventional sense were, perhaps, those works where flaps were used to conceal words or where the pages were cut to different sizes to reveal or conceal different parts of a picture. William Grimaldi's *Toilet Books* were early,

decorous and moral applications of the flap principle (Muir, 1954; Haining, 1979).

Grimaldi was a miniature painter who in 1821 produced a set of drawings of articles found on his daughter's dressing table. Each was hinged and attached to a page to produce a flap underneath which was a suitable moral observation. Thus beneath a delicate engraving of a mirror was the word 'humility'. The drawings were eventually published as Toilet Books and were successful enough to be imitated by others.

Maloney (1981) describes a *Cinderella With Five Set Scenes and Nine Trick Changes* produced by Dean and Son in 1880. The first page opening mimics the proscenium arch, boxes and pit of a theatre. Subsequent pages - smaller than the book as a whole - effect a series of scene changes on the stage as they are turned. This central part of the book is purely pictorial with different page sizes producing greater or lesser degrees of change to each scene. The story is told both in verse and in prose at the beginning and end of the book.

A number of persistent and important themes in publishing for children in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries converge in these pantomime toy books. They demonstrate not only the ingenuity and playfulness of book design but also the centrality and popularity of fairy tale themes in juvenile publishing during this period. Moreover, these particular examples show Cinderella, Aladdin, Sleeping Beauty etc. mediated through the theatrical conventions of pantomime - they are a natural extension of the delight in the toy theatre mentioned above. Furthermore, Maloney reminds us that the story of Cinderella had been a perennial favourite of the chapbook trade and had been condemned by rationalists and moralists alike. The story was an affront to the social order, depicting a downtrodden heroine "magically rising above her station" (Maloney, 1981). In short, it had been considered a subversive text and not at all suitable for the eyes and minds of the young.



**c. harlequinades, movables and pop-ups**

An early antecedent of the *movable* was the *Harlequinade* or *Turn-up* (Alderson, 1986; Muir, 1954; Scarfe, 1975/8). Scarfe claims they began as a children's invention in the 1760's, "as games played with folded paper on the table at home". However, Alderson argues for their origin in moral works of the mid seventeenth century which displayed, for example, *The Beginning, Progress and End of Man* (1650), this being the title of a woodcut Turn-up reproduced by Alderson from a sheet held by the British Library. The closest modern equivalent to the Harlequinade would be the heads, bodies and legs books that allow creatures or human figures to be transformed by turning over part pages.

If Harlequinades were not originally intended for young readers, when Robert Sayer began to produce them in 1760 themes and figures from the popular pantomimes, or harlequinades, performed at London theatres soon began to appear. Eventually, recognisably juvenile themes and stories began to be employed. Harlequinades were popular until the end of the eighteenth century by which time many of the games and toy books described above were being developed. The Pop-up and the Movable, however, were not fully developed until the latter years of the nineteenth century although very early examples are known.

By the 1840's Dean's were publishing a range of flap and movable books (Muir, 1954). An early piece was *Dame Wonder's Transformations*, a cut-away book where different costumes could be made to fit over the figure of a girl pictured at the end (Haining, 1979). In the 1850's they were producing *Fairy Tale Scenic Books* where three layers of card on the page could be raised and animated by pulling a ribbon from behind. In the 1860's their *Little Folks Living Nursery Rhymes in Moving Pictures* came with a warning to handle with care.

By the 1870's Dean's British monopoly in this field was being challenged by the German-born, naturalised Briton, Raphael Tuck. German colour printing techniques were somewhat in advance of those in Britain and many imaginative and cunningly crafted

movables originated there. The German firm of Ernest Nister marketed their products in Britain through a London office as did Lothar Meggendorfer, the designer and creator of perhaps the most ingenious and remarkable movables produced in the nineteenth century.

Meggendorfer excelled at flat, articulated figures which were animated by pulling a tab. Dissolving pictures, or transformations, where scenes or figures could be changed at the pull of a tab into completely different images, were a Nister speciality. In addition, Tuck, Dean and Nister all produced versions of what we would recognise today as the pop-up and all showed tremendous ingenuity in the extension and elaboration of basic movable techniques. This bewildering - and bewitching - cascade of inventiveness was not to be equalled until the 1970's and 80's.

### **3. Attitudes towards book-toys**

#### **a. Book-toys as gimmicks**

Most standard works on the history of children's literature neglect or marginalise this consistent and close alliance between toys, books and games. Darton (1982) refers briefly to the moral games of the Abbe Gaultier mentioned above and alludes in passing to the "gimmickry" of Dean and Son. There is nothing in Townsend (1983) other than the advertisement for *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* cited above and nothing in Leeson (1985). Alderson (1986) discusses Harlequinades but considers them to be precursors of the pop-up *rather than* the picture book, a distinction I find most unhelpful. He also refers to rebus books and emblem books as being of some historical interest but sweeps them aside because they are too much like games.

More helpful are Whalley and Chester (1988) who discuss at some length the twentieth century revivals of the pop-up and refer to the "superb productions" of Meggendorfer and the development of the industry in the nineteenth century by the firms of Dean, Tuck and Nister. There is also a brief discussion of what makes *Peepo* by the Ahlbergs admirable

but the tone is more often disparaging, the books under discussion being considered as "gimmickry" and "transitory". There is even the suggestion that the efflorescence of ingenious play-books at the end of the nineteenth century was an aberration rather than a continuing and central concern of juvenile publishing:

More helpful still is Muir (1954) who devotes an entire chapter to "Nick Nacks". Despite the echoes of triviality in his title he discusses at length - and takes seriously - Harlequinades, the Juvenile Drama, Paper Dolls, the Toilet Books and, briefly, Movables. Muir considers the period during which these Nick Nacks were produced to be, "one of the most remarkable chapters in the development of children's books", and contrary to the views of many other commentators he believes that, "they show a considerable superiority over the generality of children's books of their period."

I consider it to be no accident that Muir writes as a bibliophile and book-collector rather than as an historian concerned to establish, describe and justify a canon of works. Indeed, Muir states in his introduction his conviction that "all such matters as this should be approached from a bibliographical angle." His book has a taxonomic air about it which helps to keep it relatively free of the prescriptions and disparagements to be found in some other works.

#### **b. reasons for the neglect of the association between books and toys**

In this section so far I have tried to argue that publishing for children; the development of what we have come to term children's literature and in particular the development of the picture book, have always been closely associated with the manufacture and sale of games and toys. Moreover, there has always been a blurring or indistinctness over where the borderline lies between what constitutes a book and what constitutes a game or toy. There are far too many examples of books-as-toys or toys-in-the-guise-of-books for this phenomenon to be dismissed as historically localised, an aberration, or merely marginal to the real business of book publishing. Why then should so many writers either ignore such artefacts altogether or attempt to keep them on the periphery?

One reason clearly has to do with the need to define and delimit subject matter. It is not unreasonable for historians of children's literature to wish to chart as clear a course as possible through the last 250 years, concentrating upon clear and unambiguous examples of the developing genre and excluding all matter seen to be peripheral or of dubious status. Thwaite (1972), for example, mentions Muir and his chapter on Nick Nacks but says they do not fall within the scope of her study. I maintain, however, that such a procedure oversimplifies and distorts the nature of the development.

A further reason, I believe, stems from the fact that few of the histories are straightforward chronicles of events. They are persuasive - even didactic - works concerned with establishing and describing a canon. Townsend, for example, explicitly states in the Foreword written for the 1976 edition of *Written for Children* that, "for better or worse, this is a study of children's literature, not of children's reading matter. It seeks to discriminate." In other words, this is not a matter of separating books from non-books but of separating the wheat from the chaff, the sheep from the goats.

Similarly Alderson (1986) sweeps aside whole categories of illustrated text in his attempts to establish the authentic lineage of the English Picture Book. Whalley and Chester, though more tolerant of the popular and more generally inclusive than Alderson, have a tendency to resort to epithets which suggest that such phenomena are essentially ephemeral and insignificant. The term 'gimmick' and its cognate forms occurs time and again in the works referred to above, the implication being that books with movable parts, flaps or curious shapes are cynically designed to attract the attention of the uneducated and indiscriminating consumer.

The emphasis of many writers upon fine discrimination has led to wholesale condemnations of the popular and the successful. As Townsend recognises an authentic social history cannot be written in such terms. The tendency to denigrate has a long history. Muir (1954) cites the example of a German schoolmaster, L.F. Gedike, who

wrote, following a visit to the Leipzig Book Fair that, "there are few pearls and little amber, but much mud, and, at the best, painted snail shells"

Smith (1948) touches upon what she calls 'toy books' but claims that although they were jolly, gay and entertaining they "lacked the touch of poetry to lift them out of the ruck of children's publications into the select company of the immortals." Slythe (1970) is concerned with beautiful, well-designed books of fine quality and thus finds a "deplorable decline in standards" in the nineteenth century. More recently still, Moss (1980a) evinces great disquiet over the apparent dominance of the children's book market by pop-ups, game books and puzzle books.

Not all commentators, however, take this approach. Feaver (1977) points to the fact that children's book illustration has always been part of a wider popular culture. He claims that many of the characters and themes to be found in illustrated works found their way in via theatre, pantomime and side-show. Plumb in Gottlieb (1975) similarly asserts the proximity and the cross-fertilisation between popular forms of entertainment and the growing book trade. Finally, Maurice Sendak, who has always been a devotee of popular entertainments, writes enthusiastically and perceptively on Lothar Meggendorfer as well as on other aspects of popular culture such as the comic strips of Winsor McCay and the animated films of Walt Disney (Sendak, 1988). These are crucial insights and of the greatest importance for the current study for they point towards a way of re-orienting the history of picture books and of rescuing the picture book from approaches that treat it always and only as a work of art.

#### **4. Summary and conclusion**

In part B I have given some indication of the range of toys and games that developed from the end of the eighteenth century, through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. I have also tried to show how they were closely allied to the trade in children's books during the same period. I have emphasised the way in which books frequently borrowed features of games and toys - and vice versa - so that hybrid creations, or book-toys were quite common. I have explored some of the reasons why I believe historians of children's literature are reluctant to include such book-toys in their surveys and have very briefly indicated a way in which book-toys might be integrated back into the mainstream - by shifting attention away from picture books as art objects towards a history of popular forms. In part C I examine in detail one particular popular form - the chapbook - that had an enormous influence upon the shaping of the picture book.

### **C. THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHAPBOOK**

Chapbooks occupy a central role in the history of the picture book and many writers testify to the persistent and vigorous influence of the chapbook tradition upon the form as it developed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (Alderson, 1988; Feaver, 1977; Muir, 1954; Maloney, 1981; Neuberg, 1968; Ashton, 1882) In what follows I begin by examining the nature of chapbooks and the chapbook trade and then move on to consider the reasons why chapbooks were disapproved of by moralists and rationalists alike. The most important section of this part of chapter six deals with the influence of the chapbook upon the structure and content of picture books as these developed in the early years of the nineteenth century.

#### **1. Chapbooks, children, morals and politics**

##### **a. chapmen and chapbooks**

Chapbooks were sold by chapmen or pedlars, travelling from village to village carrying with them a wide range of artefacts which village folk would find useful or attractive. Darton refers to them as “the peripatetic village shop”. They were a common sight in seventeenth and eighteenth century Britain though their origins go much further back than the 1600s and their wares were still being peddled in the nineteenth century. Amongst their stock they carried a range of printed material including broadsides and ballads, prints of street cries, and the flimsy little paper booklets - usually no more than six by ten centimetres - that came to be known as chapbooks. Chapbooks were generally crudely produced with relatively short texts and simple woodcut illustrations. They were most often 16 pages in length since this was the most convenient number of pages that could be obtained by folding a single printed sheet. More substantial productions ran to 32 or 64 pages. Subject matter was astonishingly varied and included romances, folk-tales, books of recipes, religious works, household manuals, jokebooks, books of prophecy, adaptations of early novels such as *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe*, the final speeches of condemned criminals and much more material of a robust, not to say sensational and scurrilous nature.

## **b. chapbooks and children**

The brevity and relative simplicity of chapbook texts meant that they could be read and understood by a very wide range of the populace. Thus the scantily educated rural poor - both adults and children - would have read them and there is ample evidence to suggest that chapbooks also found their way into the hands of the children of the burgeoning middle classes. Dr. Johnson and Wordsworth knew them, Sterne made chapbooks a part of the childhood of Uncle Toby in *Tristram Shandy*, Mrs. Trimmer read and enjoyed *The Babes in the Wood* as a child and Steele's godson was very familiar with the exploits of chapbook heroes such as Don Bellianis of Greece, Guy of Warwick, and the Seven Champions of Christendom (Darton, 1982; Muir, 1954).

Much of this material was deemed to be highly unsuitable for children (Darton; Muir; Maloney, 1981). It failed the tests of the puritans and their heirs on a number of counts. It was not just that chapbooks could be coarse and ribald, the greater sin was that they offered amusement and excitement rather than instruction. Moreover, many of the tales were drawn from the oral tradition and dealt with the fanciful themes of romance, folklore and legend. Puritans and later moralists, as well as the followers of Locke and of Rousseau were united in their condemnation of Tom Thumb, Jack the Giant Killer and Tom Hickathrift. For Bunyan this was all "fingle fangle" which ensnared one's soul (*A Book for Boys and Girls: or, Country Rhymes for Children*, 1686) whereas Locke, writing seven years later, it was "perfectly useless trumpery" (*Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 1693).

Chapbooks expressly designed for children did not begin to appear until the middle years of the eighteenth century at exactly the same time that an embryonic children's literature was emerging from Newbery and his competitors. (Neuberg, 1968) Printers and suppliers recognised the potential of a new and flourishing market and adapted their wares accordingly. Thus the chapmen continued, throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, to be something of an irritant to those who felt a concern for the education and welfare of the young.



**c. chapbooks, morals and politics**

A further reason for concern related to the political turmoil in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century. The French Revolution led many people to be concerned for the stability of the state. The fear was that a too rapid spread of literacy would make the populace susceptible to malign political and moral influences through the medium of cheap tracts and material of the chapbook kind. Sarah Trimmer established *The Family Magazine* in 1778 to “counteract the pernicious tendency of immoral books”. (Quoted in Darton)

Hannah More founded her *Cheap Repository Tracts* in 1795 with a similar aim in mind. She deliberately employed the format, style and business methods of the chapbook trade to distribute improving, religious works. Her tracts were written, published and distributed for only three years but it is claimed that circulation reached two million copies in the first year (Muir, 1954). Leeson (1985) makes clear that Sarah Trimmer, Hannah More and others like them were as concerned about political stability as they were about the moral and religious health of the nation - “Far, far worse than Tom Thumb, was Tom Paine.”

**d. the end of the chapbook trade - ‘catnachery’**

The trade in chapbooks declined throughout the nineteenth century though there was a revival around 1813 when James (Jemmy) Catnach opened his business in Seven Dials. He had the true chapbook printer’s lack of respect for decorum both in the presentation of his wares and in their contents. Muir (1971) lists some of his typical products and makes it clear that one line of descent from ‘catnachery’ led to what we now term the tabloid press. He also maintained the tradition of children’s stories, rhymes, ABC’s, and fairy-stories, but Catnachery, and with it the chapbook tradition, effectively died out in the 1890’s when the last heir to the Catnach firm died. With hindsight, Darton was able to write in 1932 that chapbooks “were read and re-read and loved, and were the romance of life. They were the books of the people of England.”

## 2. The influence of the chapbook on the development of picture books

### a. chapbook themes

Darton gives three reasons why chapbooks are important to a consideration of the development of books for children. First, they were read very widely; second, they preserved much in the way of folk-narrative that would otherwise have been lost and third, they were actually *read* by children rather than simply being recommended and/or bought *for* children. Here I want to add to and develop the second of these points, specifically in relation to the picture book, whilst keeping as a context - in the background so to speak - the first and third.

Throughout the nineteenth century, as the picture book began to develop as a distinct type of juvenile or nursery literature, chapbook themes were freely used and adapted to the emergent form. Staples such as *Tom Thumb*, *The Babes in the Wood*, *Cock Robin*, *Cinderella*, *The Fables of Aesop*, and *Jack the Giant Killer* were all reinterpreted as early picture books. *Jack the Giant Killer*, for example, was illustrated by Richard Doyle in 1842, by John Leech in 1844 and by Alfred Crowquill (Alfred Henry Forrester) in 1856. Randolph Caldecott crafted a number of his toy books from material that had long been favourites with the chapmen and their customers, *The House that Jack Built* and *The Babes in the Wood* being perhaps the two best known. Not all chapbook material was suitable, of course, and many of the old tales fell by the wayside. No one now, for example, reads of the exploits of *Guy of Warwick* or *Bevis of Southampton*, either in picture books or out of them (though Walter Crane produced a *Valentine and Orson* which was issued in 1897 along with *Puss in Boots* and *Cinderella*).

Another legacy of the chapbook came in the form of various kinds of nonsense. Topsy turvies, jests and all manner of narrative curiosities were part of the pedlar's pack (Muir, 1954; Smith, 1948) and this ludic and irreverent spirit frequently found its way into more substantial nineteenth century illustrated texts. The most famous examples are, perhaps, Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense* (1846) and Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865/6, and *Through the Looking-Glass and What*

*Alice Found There* 1872). But the trend towards nonsense began before Lear and Carroll. Smith (1948) refers to a chapbook in which the image of John Bull could be inverted to produce a spaniard and, in *The World Turned Upside Down* - a popular chapbook theme which influenced Carroll (Muir, 1954) - the ox turns farmer, the soldier turns nurse and horses engage in tournaments on the backs of knights. (Ashton, 1882)

There was much in the chapbook tradition that either openly attacked or comically subverted the status quo. Whether it was the political polemics of Tom Paine, or the comic inversions of Tom Thumb, disorder and misrule were commonplace. Something of this spirit entered into the formation of the picture book. Overt political satire or polemic has generally been considered inappropriate picture book material but *symbolic* forms of inversion, where the weak regularly overcome the strong, or conventional forms of discourse are undermined in various forms of nonsense, have long been part of the picture book world.

#### **b. the brevity and flexibility of the chapbook**

Mention has already been made of the fact that the chapbook was a clear precursor of the picture book. (Muir, 1971; Alderson, 1986) One important feature of the chapbook in this respect was its brevity:

The brevity of such books [chapbooks], and of the early alphabet books (so easily fitted into a standard sixteen or thirty-two page format), make them the forerunners of the picture book as we know it.

(Alderson, 1986)

Chapbook text was printed on both sides of a single sheet in such a way that with three folds a tiny booklet of eight leaves, sixteen pages, was formed. The text was never very long and from about 1700 was always interspersed with woodcuts. These were often crude and sometimes bore little relation to the written text but although the *illustrative* capacity of these cuts was often limited, the fact that chapbook text was pictorialised is significant in a number of ways, not least in that it allowed various points of entry into the text - you could look at the pictures, read the words or alternate between the two.

Chapbooks would often be shared, sometimes read aloud to family and community members who could not read, and they did not require that sustained immersion in a developed secondary world that became the hallmark of Realism in the nineteenth century. The brevity and open-textured nature of the chapbook, along with its fitness for sharing made it the ideal kind of text for those whose literacy was limited or emergent. With some care and skill applied to both text and illustration the chapbook is readily transformed into the kind of nursery entertainment described in Opie and Opie (1980). Indeed, it was the very crudity of the chapbook which drove their critics to provide something better. The Opies point out that when Harris published *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard* in 1805 he inaugurated something of a craze. He had unintentionally produced something that could be shared by adults and children and found it to be inordinately popular. Ten thousand copies sold in the first few months and the book had gone through twenty editions by the end of the following year.

There was apparently no end to the variety of subject matter that the chapbook was able to ingest. Darton remarks that,

...the chapbook, from 1700 to 1840 or thereabouts, contained all the popular literature of four centuries in a reduced and degenerate form; most of it in a form rudely adapted for use by children and poorly educated country folk.

Traditional themes, folk-tales and the rest have already been mentioned but in addition almost any new work - fiction or non-fiction - could be adapted to chapbook format.

Haining (1979) remarks that *Gulliver's Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Pilgrim's Progress*, once published, very rapidly made their appearance between chapbook covers and he repeats Darton's interesting claim that, "the novel-reading habit reached the nursery almost before grown-ups had acquired it." (Darton, 1982)

This extraordinary flexibility and versatility Darton puts down to the high commercial pressure of the chapbook business but I want to argue that there were two formal principles at work in the chapbook that go a long way towards explaining its ability to

absorb almost any other generic type of text. These two principles I shall call *condensation* and *pictorialisation*.

i. condensation

The chapbook demanded brevity. Some texts were just the right length to fit the standard format - alphabets and the like - others needed a little padding out. More often than not new work would have to be adapted to fit the strict constraints of the form and this would often require a radical rewrite, usually done anonymously by hacks, to produce a suitable version. By boiling everything down to a similar size the chapbook brought the entire world of letters within its compass. The resultant text was often crude but with the addition of pictures almost any text could be enlivened

ii. pictorialisation

Much has been made of the careless way in which chapbook printers scattered images throughout their products. (Darton,1982; Muir,1971) Often, it is claimed the pictures bore little relation to the texts they were supposedly illustrating and they were frequently crude and schematic. To some extent this is true, but Darton points out that the figures represented in the woodcuts - George, Guy, giants, dragons etc. - were essentially iconically schematic and as such were usable and relevant in a range of contexts. Furthermore, as Neuberg (1968) points out, to the unsophisticated eighteenth century purchaser, chapbooks would appear very appealing, the woodcut illustrations often possessing great energy and vitality. Besides, it is clear that chapbooks were quite often carefully produced, especially by provincial printers such as Kendrew and Saint. (Muir,1954)

Irrespective of whether the woodcuts were crude or not the resultant composite text made for what Bruner has termed a cultural prosthetic device of some power (Bruner,1986) which enabled the inexperienced reader to hold onto an image whilst negotiating written text. Just about any textual matter could be subjected to this treatment and thus we find in the chapbook an almost infinite flexibility.

This flexibility was handed on to the early picture book. Building upon the success of *Old Mother Hubbard* Harris soon discovered that adult pieces such as Cowper's *Diverting History of John Gilpin* and Goldsmith's *Elegy on Mrs. Mary Blaize* could be treated successfully in the same way. (Opie and Opie, 1980) As techniques of illustration became more refined and greater talents exercised their skills upon the new form the overall quality of the books improved. The contemporary picture book has inherited the elasticity of the chapbook and is itself very much a rag-bag form able to accommodate almost any development in written text or illustration.

**c. the influence of the chapbook format**

The earliest picture books were strikingly similar in appearance to chapbooks. They were both small - no more than 12 or so centimetres by eight or ten - they had very few pages and they were heavily illustrated, the picture books rather more so than the chapbooks. What we see when we look at such proto-picture books now are elegant and sophisticated chapbooks. The fact that the illustrations were engraved rather than printed from woodcuts helps to create the sense of refinement, and considerable care was given to the relevance and placing of the pictures, but otherwise it is a small step from *Jack and Jill and Old Dame Gill* (chapbook version) to *The Moving Adventures of Old Dame Trot and Her Comical Cat*, published in 1807 by Darton.

The authors and illustrators of such works were simply drawing upon the material they themselves had read. Other forms of juvenile fiction current at the time were not much help in the crafting of these entertainments. Looking both forward to the mid century, and back to the turn of the century, Feaver (1977) points out that both *Struwwelpeter* and *The Book of Nonsense*, as well as Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, were overwhelmingly influenced by the chapbook form.

**d. the chapbook and the picture book in the twentieth century**

The impact of the chapbook upon the development of the picture book is most clearly seen at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The format, thematic content and sense of irreverent fun (with a corresponding lack of serious intent) found in the earliest picture books were all taken more or less directly from the chapbook. As picture books developed during the later years of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth the sense of humour and fun was retained, often combined with various types of nonsense, and benefitting immeasurably from the influence of narrative art and caricature. Similarly many of the original chapbook themes have been retained through to the present day - folk-tales, alphabets, cumulative tales and the like.

The chapbook's brevity has been retained, as has its flexibility, but some aspects of the chapbook format - notably the tiny size - have long been jettisoned. Developments in reproductive techniques in the later nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth have meant that size is rarely a problem, the situation now being such that picture books mean for most people fairly large format productions. Indeed, tiny books are now published only at certain times and for certain purposes. Stylistically too, chapbook illustration has long been superseded.

The picture book carries many of the genes of the old form but once the social and cultural context which sustained the chapbook trade had been swept away - the widely dispersed and poorly educated rural poor who needed their "peripatetic village shop" - there was no more use for the chapbook in its original form.

### **3. Summary and conclusion**

I have tried to suggest in this section the powerful influence of the chapbook upon the emergent form of the picture book in the nineteenth century. I have emphasised, a) the chapbook's popular, vernacular origins; b) its transgressive, subversive nature in the realms of taste, morals, politics and rationality; and c) its extraordinary flexibility. I have

introduced two terms - 'condensation' and 'pictorialisation' - to try to account for this flexibility. I maintain that the most important features of the chapbook retained by the picture book are thematic (nonsense, folk-narrative, themes of disorder, misrule, laughter) and formal (brevity and flexibility). I now move on to a more detailed examination of the effects of pictures upon written text.



## D. PUTTING WORDS AND PICTURES TOGETHER

For the majority of scholars working in this field the 'unity' and 'balance' of word and image is the defining characteristic of the picture book. (e.g. Whalley and Chester, 1988; Alderson, 1973, 1986; Hodnett, 1982) However, a necessary condition for achieving this unity is the bringing together of word and image in the same place, i.e. on the same page. We now take this physical proximity for granted but, for picture books to emerge as a distinct form, ways had to be found of closely integrating pictorial images with written text - an important part of the process of pictorialisation. In what follows I trace the development of this process of integration as techniques, methods and approaches changed over time.

### 1. Early attempts at putting words and pictures together

#### a. pictures in early instructional books

According to Bland (1958) book illustration did not get off to a very good start in Britain. Some early printed books, such as Caxton's *Aesop's Fables*, incorporated simple woodcuts but illustration of this kind was neither sophisticated nor commonplace. Even the earliest texts intended for the use of the young, such as primers and alphabets, were "plain and unadorned" (Thwaite, 1963). Thwaite dates the first picture alphabet at 1570 (John Hart, *A Method or comfortable beginning for all unlearned, whereby they may be taught to read English, in a very short time with Pleasure...*) A key word in this title is 'pleasure', for at least two reasons. The first is that, as we have seen, learning to read *with* pleasure, and reading *for* pleasure, were notions that were unfamiliar to the literate Puritan. The second is that it indicates an early acknowledgement of the link between *pictures* and pleasure.

For a long time pictures were only acceptable when firmly anchored to generally instructional, virtuous or religious purposes. Bibles and Bible stories had always been 'illustrated' through the familiar imagery of the stained glass window, and the woodcut *Biblia Pauperum*, or poor man's Bible, had been popular in France and Germany in the fifteenth century (Garrett, 1986). By the seventeenth century however, simplified and

illustrated Bibles were being published for the young. Indeed an early form of rebus text - the *Hieroglyphick Bible* - made its first appearance at around this time.

In addition to the Bible, fables and the primer or ABC other kinds of illustrated text produced during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries included religious and improving works such as John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, better known as the *Book of Martyrs*, Emblem books and, of course the *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* of Johann Amos Comenius. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* had a long life. New editions were launched throughout the late sixteenth, seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries, most versions being dramatically illustrated (Whalley and Chester, 1988). Emblem books were not initially expressly written for children although they must have found them fascinating texts to peruse. Words and pictures were particularly closely tied together in these works for the illustrations depicted allegorical scenes and characters that were explicated by the written text. The fashion for emblem books was drawing to a close when John Bunyan first published his *Divine Emblems: or Temporal Things Spiritualized* in 1686 (originally entitled *A Book for Boys and Girls: or, Country Rhimes for Children*). This first children's emblem book was, strangely, not illustrated until after 1707 but subsequent editions of the *Divine Emblems* were copiously illustrated.

#### b. Orbis Pictus

Another work which was copiously illustrated was Comenius' *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*. It shared with the emblem book the close, symbiotic relationship between word and image that was later to become the hallmark of the picture book - indeed, it is often referred to as the first picture book specially written for children. Hurlimann (1967) maintains that "... the relationship between text and picture is so close that it is quite unthinkable that they were produced separately" and it seems likely that Comenius had a hand in designing the illustrations. The *Orbis Pictus* is sometimes considered as a Latin primer, Gottlieb (1975), for example, placing it amongst the "Grammars and Schoolbooks" in his survey of the Pierpoint Morgan Library's collection of children's books. It certainly conforms to that type, translations always placing the simple and elegant Latin text over against the child's

own mother tongue, but it is also considerably more than just another primer. Comenius considered it to be an instrument of social reform (Sadler, 1968) grounded in a theory of learning. In order to understand the workings of the universe aright it was necessary that the universe be present to the senses - hence the need for detailed illustration. Hence also, the indissoluble bonds between word and picture.

In terms of unity and physical proximity *Orbis Pictus* certainly qualifies as a picture book, but a picture book of a special particular kind. Its encyclopaedic scope and its busy, detailed pictures make it something of a tour de force and there can be no doubt that it was immensely popular, but it provides neither the attractions of narrative nor the subversive delights of chapbook levity. Comenius' world is well-ordered with everything in its place, even the "sleights" of the tumbler and juggler, and the "boyes sports" of stilts and swinging upon a "merry-totter" (swing).

### **c. technical problems**

Despite the immediate popularity and subsequent longevity of the *Orbis Pictus* Comenius was not widely followed and it was not until the eighteenth century that pictures were general in books for the young (Thwaite, 1972). Sadler (1968) recounts the difficulties that Comenius and his mentor, a German scholar named Lubinus, had in realising their ambitions to put pictures with words.

However, a further reason for the slow development of illustration lies in the fact that there was a limit, at least in Britain, to the extent to which the woodcut could be made to realise the designer's or artist's intentions. Wood engraving and the woodcut thrived on mainland Europe where artists such as Durer, Altdorfer and Holbein the younger demonstrated the sophisticated heights to which the medium could be elevated (Garrett, 1986), but in Britain the woodcut remained a relatively crude form. Greater fineness and precision could be achieved through engraving on copper, and later on steel, but the two techniques - woodcut and copper engraving - needed quite different technologies to allow prints to be drawn from the block or plate.

Woodcuts were perfectly fitted to the newly developed movable type for both were inked upon the raised surface of the image or the letter whereas the engraving, in common with other intaglio methods such as etching, retained the ink within the fine grooves of the plate and thus required a much heavier press to lift the ink on to the paper. In terms of book production this meant that in order to have an engraving next to the letter press a page needed to be put through two different printing presses - a costly business. The alternatives were either to engrave text and illustration upon the same plate (a simple enough process but one which loses the revolutionary flexibility of movable type) or to reserve illustrations for separate pages which could be bound in to the final product anywhere.

A similar situation developed towards the end of the nineteenth century when photomechanical processes made it possible to reproduce accurate gradations of tone and colour. Initially this 'half-tone process' led to a separation of word and image because the tiny dots into which images were broken down could only be printed upon specially treated, glossy paper which was then 'tipped in' to the text either at the back or at various points throughout. Thus at exactly the time when wood engravers like Edmund Evans and the Dalziel brothers had brought the art of wood engraving to the point where sophisticated and subtle combinations of word and image could be readily produced in both black and white and colour, 'process' work broke up this unity. The lavish volumes to which artists such as Edmund Dulac and Arthur Rackham contributed were beautiful to look at but they were not picture books. Beatrix Potter's work, though printed by the half-tone process, brought words and pictures back together again but by the time *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* was published by Warne's in 1902 process work had put the Dalziel company out of business.

## 2. Blake and Bewick

### a. William Blake

William Blake's original works, in particular the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1789/1794), form a nodal point in the development of picture books despite the fact that the Songs were "a children's book for adults" (Leader, 1981). They are important for a number of reasons. First, although Blake is often described as being outside the mainstream of artistic and intellectual debate and thus a marginal figure, in fact, as Leader (1981) convincingly demonstrates, he was well aware of, and highly critical of, the diverse received educational wisdoms of his time. It is likely that he met Mrs. Barbauld and Hannah More. He certainly found their views on education unacceptable. He was no less antipathetic to the writings of Locke and Rousseau. In the case of the former, it was the view that impulse, intuition, desire and imagination should be made to submit to the dictates of reason that he could not accept, and in Rousseau he found a "wholly traditional distrust of the imagination." (Leader) Thus in the Songs we find a kind of 'summation-by-opposition' of much that came before.

The second reason for Blake's importance lies in the fact that the illuminated poems are paradigmatic instances of the kind of integration and unity that I am claiming as necessary conditions for the successful picture book. The integration of word and image in the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* is justly celebrated (see, for example, Alderson, 1986; Hodnett, 1982; Bland, 1958). For Bland, there is "no closer unity than that of text and illustration in these books."

A further reason why the wholeness of Blake's work seems so compelling lies in the fact that his illustrative work is so dense with significance. His tiny images seem to possess not only decorative functions but narrative, interpretative, and symbolic functions too. In part this would seem to be due to a rendering down of a complex cosmology into a tiny frame but it also has to do with the 'summation-by-opposition' of past and current trends mentioned above.

### **b. Bewick and the development of wood-engraving**

If Blake's role within the history of picture books is complex and subtle, Bewick's is more direct and straightforward. Thomas Bewick was almost an exact contemporary of Blake and in some respects their careers are similar. Both were 'jobbing engravers' and both experimented with engraving and printing techniques for their own satisfaction. Both also transformed our view of what illustrated books - and ultimately picture books - might look like. Bewick revolutionised the production of images from wooden blocks by demonstrating over a long working career just what it was possible to do by working upon the end grain surface of the wood rather than the plank side. Woodcuts were traditionally carved with a knife out of the lateral, plank face of the wood and this often led to a certain crudity of both design and execution. By using extremely hard and dense boxwood blocks, and by working with a burin (an engraving tool) rather than a knife upon the end face Bewick was able to achieve imagery of great delicacy and accuracy. (The term 'engraving' is misleading for this technique is not an intaglio process at all like engraving upon steel or copper, but is a relief process like the woodcut. Thus Bewick's blocks could be comfortably and easily accommodated alongside letterpress).

A further development of Bewick's came to be known as 'white line' engraving. The traditional woodcut block produced images that were simply blank white spaces bounded by black lines. By the sixteenth century, as I have noted above, artists in Germany and elsewhere were producing woodcut images of remarkable sophistication, achieving subtle chiaroscuro effects that could define form without the cruder black line technique. In Britain, however, woodblock printing had to wait for Bewick to demonstrate a way forward. White line engraving meant that the image was coaxed from the void of the uncut block not by creating bounding lines but by producing shades and textures through a myriad of tiny white lines incised in the block. A direct result of this refinement was that it became possible for wood- engravers to depict, relatively cheaply and easily, accurate renderings of gesture, posture, expression etc. In fact, as Doonan (1989) points out, by the middle of the nineteenth century wood-engraving had developed to great heights of realistic representation.

One further aspect of Bewick's art needs to be mentioned briefly here and that is his distinctly *narrative* sensibility (Alderson, 1986). It is seen most clearly in his tail-pieces, or 'tale-pieces' - the little vignettes that he created for chapter- and book-endings. In these little scenes he drew upon the landscape and figures of his native Newcastle to create little snapshots of life in action that seem to beg for explication in the form of a story.

### **3. Toy books and *Alice***

#### **a. the toy book**

The advent of the coloured 'toy book' in the 1840's marked another important stage in the development of picture books. A number of texts make reference to the toy book as it developed in the hands of Walter Crane, Randolph Caldecott and Kate Greenaway towards the end of the century, but almost without exception they fail to trace the origins of the form and thus miss much of its significance (Muir, 1954, 1971; Thwaite, 1963). Thwaite is typical in that in her concentration upon exemplary texts her relative scorn for the popular she misses much of historical importance. (N.B. toy books are early forms of picture books and not the same as the artefacts I have termed 'book-toys')

Toy books were successful not only because they were coloured but also because of their adoption of the principles of condensation and pictorialisation. In almost every case the written text was minimal, folk- and fairy-tales, for example, being reduced to a few paragraphs (Whalley and Chester, 1988). In contrast the pictures began to take up more and more space and have more and more significance in terms of the text as a whole. As a result the toy book developed a flexibility comparable to the older chapbooks. Not only were traditional tales popular but alphabets of every kind proliferated, even grammar, punctuation, counting and geographical themes were transformed into colourful little booklets. As Whalley and Chester put it: "every possible subject was considered suitable for toy book treatment"

Toy books were essentially a publisher's invention, Dean & Son, Routledge and Warne being the main houses involved. They were printed on one side of a single sheet which was then folded into a booklet of six or eight pages bound with decorated paper covers. They were resolutely populist productions and were usually issued in series - the crucial factors were that they should be colourful and cheap. The illustrative techniques employed were often mixed but were largely based upon developments in colour wood-block printing. George Baxter was an early innovator in this field, his wood-block method being somewhat more popular than lithography which had been invented at the end of the eighteenth century by Alois Senefelder.

Elsewhere than in the toy book much of the finest illustration was still carried out in black and white, white line engraving having achieved an ascendancy that was virtually unassailable, both in the realms of caricature and in more realistic modes. Forrest Reid's celebrated study, *Illustrators of the Eighteen Sixties*, is as much a testimony to the range and flexibility of this medium as it is "the chronicle of a hobby" (Reid, 1975).

**b. wood-engraving and *Alice*,**

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* are not, strictly speaking, picture books but there is widespread recognition that the combination of words and images in these two books is superb (see, for example, Hodnett, 1982). Hodnett cites the opinion that Tenniel's drawings "come close to illustrating [the books] perfectly". In Hodnett's view not all the designs are equally good, but they all pictorialise the story superbly, offering up just the right image at just the right moment. Doonan (1989) points out that Carroll, Tenniel and the publishers MacMillan worked hard to place the illustrations next to the relevant parts of the text so that the visual realisation of the story was absolutely where it was needed most. This proximity of incident and picture contributes to the apparently seamless quality of the books.



Doonan also makes reference to the high levels of realism attainable through wood-engraving. As such the technique is perfect for rendering the *unreal* and the *surreal* - thus Carroll's fantasies are given solidity and depth through Tenniel's careful draughtsmanship and the Dalziel's sensitivity and skill in preparing the blocks. Tenniel's manner of handling the medium too fitted him to the task for "he was essentially a humorous draughtsman" (Reid, 1975). He excelled at the grotesque, being relatively unsuccessful whenever he applied himself to more straightforward subjects.

Despite the fact that the Alice books are not usually thought of as picture books they nonetheless share many features with the picture book form. It is interesting to contrast the originals with the picture book version of *Alice in Wonderland* that was published in 1889. Carroll records in his diary that he wished to produce a version of Alice that was accessible to younger children, "from Nought to Five" so he got up a version of the original entitled *The Nursery 'Alice'*. Twenty of the forty two original illustrations were coloured by Tenniel, enlarged, and set within a new text, presumably deemed by Carroll to be suitable for the under fives. The result is nowhere near as successful as the original. Indeed, "*The Nursery 'Alice'* was neither the literary nor financial success that Dodgson had anticipated" (Maloney, 1981). The pictures are, amazingly, not positioned next to the relevant parts of the written text and that text itself is embarrassingly coy and arch, the voice of the narrator being oppressively foregrounded:

Wasn't that a funny thing? Did you ever see a rabbit  
that had a watch, and a pocket to put it in? Of course,  
when a rabbit has a watch, it must have a pocket to  
put it in.

The narrating voice is essentially a commentary upon the pictures ("Hasn't it got pretty pink eyes [I think all White Rabbits have pink eyes]...") and in this welter of comment the original story and the voices of the characters barely reach the surface.

In my view, *The Nursery 'Alice'* does not work well as a picture book for at least two reasons. One is that the pictures, though enlarged, are poorly dispersed throughout the

book and thus the text is inadequately pictorialised. The other is that, in mimicking a storyteller's manner he simply becomes prolix. There are exceptions, but in general, the art of picture book writing is in writing small and leaving out.

#### **4. Summary and conclusion**

The aim of this section has not been to provide a definitive account of 'illustration' in the history of picture books, nor yet the role of 'pictorialisation'. I have attempted to show how, historically, picture books required for their emergence physical proximity of words and pictures as well as some kind of thematic balance and unity. The significance of early proto-picture books such as *Orbis Pictus* and Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* were considered. Technical developments such as Bewick's white line wood-engraving were examined as well as the technical problems involved in bringing words and pictures together on the same page. The example of the careful integration of pictures and text in *Alice* were mentioned, along with the breakdown of that integration in *The Nursery 'Alice'*. As far as this section of the present chapter is concerned I consider the importance of such works as *Orbis Pictus*, *Songs of Innocence*, toy books and *Alice* lies in the fact that they signal the diverse *possibilities* for the creation of pictorialised, composite text latent in the physical and thematic juxtaposition of words and pictures. In part C I move on to a consideration of how the interconnected traditions of narrative print-making and caricature shaped the emergent form of the picture book.

## **E. PICTURE BOOKS, NARRATIVE AND CARICATURE**

In parts B, C, and D I examined a number of major influences upon the development of picture books. I argued that, in its development throughout the nineteenth century, the picture book was closely allied to a burgeoning trade in toys and games, often to the extent that book and toy became one and the same thing; that the roots of the picture book form go deep into the transgressive traditions of the chapbook; and that the main reason for the success of the earliest picture books was the development of a distinctive, composite form of text through the principles of condensation and pictorialisation.

Historical analysis can go no further without some consideration of the narrative art of the illustrator. Almost without exception picture books are narrative in form. In what follows I wish to consider those figures who are generally taken to be the founding fathers of English narrative art and caricature - William Hogarth, Thomas Rowlandson, George Cruikshank - and to trace their influence through the magazine illustrators, cartoonists and picture book makers of the mid- and late-nineteenth century. In addition, I wish to trace the important influence of the cartoon and comic strip - and through them, the cinema - upon the picture books of the twentieth century.

### **1. Early caricaturists and picture book makers**

#### **a. Hogarth, Rowlandson and Cruikshank**

William Hogarth had no direct influence upon the blossoming trade in juvenile literature during the eighteenth century and thus it would be easy to overlook his important influence upon our theme. He is rescued for us largely through his acknowledged position as the "founding-father of English narrative painting" (Alderson, 1986).

Alderson, however, considers that Hogarth's influence upon the illustrators who came after him extends beyond his position as primogenitor of a school of painting. He argues that, "for Hogarth, the making of prints was a direct means of rendering the vitality of life around him" and it is the sinuousness and vigour of his drawing that captures this sense of life in the act of being lived.

Hogarth's most famous series of prints were distributed and sold in huge quantities so that, although they were not technically book illustrations, they were seen and read by large numbers of people. They thus helped to create a pictorially educated audience willing and able to interpret all manner of visual material.

Most of Thomas Rowlandson's book illustration dates from the nineteenth century and there is some evidence that he had a hand in one or two juvenile productions (Alderson, 1986). Like Hogarth, however, his significance here is more to do with the development of an approach to illustration than to any direct contribution to children's books. That approach leans towards caricature and combines - at least in Rowlandson's case - "a sunny, but... penetrating wit" (Alderson) with great technical skill and fluency. Significantly, Alderson goes on to claim that the qualities to be found in that early caricature can be found in the best examples of picture books through to the present day.

The book that Alderson has in mind as the first successful example of the new mode is *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog*. I have already referred to this book and the host of imitations spawned by its success in part C in the light of chapbook influences, but Alderson sees in its popularity the coming together of a number of other factors.

First, there is the growing taste for, and appreciation of, popular prints first fostered by Hogarth and his contemporaries. Second is the matter of style. Rowlandson's affectionate wit and liveliness, in combination with his sharp observation is seen as informing early picture books of the *Mother Hubbard* type. Finally, there is the fact that engraved copper plate was increasingly being used by illustrators allowing them greater expressiveness and finesse.

Despite the fact that Alderson is no doubt correct in his estimation of the importance of these factors, *Mother Hubbard* stubbornly remains very much a prototype picture book.

The illustrations have little of the gaiety and wit of a Rowlandson print and have virtually none of the flair of the true narrative artist. To see how narrative art and caricature could combine in work for children we have to look at the work of an illustrator such as George Cruikshank.

Feaver, (1977) considers that Cruikshank's illustrations have "no narrative structure", and that they are "equivalent to a page of dialogue, a paragraph of description or a single limerick". This seems an overly pedantic usage of the term 'narrative' since Cruikshank's best known works - whether for the Grimms' *German Popular Stories* or for *Oliver Twist* - clearly reflect narrative moments and the interaction of assorted characters.

He was recognised early as a supremely gifted illustrator, in particular by John Ruskin (e.g. Slythe, 1970; Bland, 1958; Feaver, 1977). More recently, Cruikshank's work has been described as displaying a "liveliness and movement" not seen since Rowlandson (Bland, 1958). Not everyone, however is entirely happy about Cruikshank's qualities as an illustrator for children. Muir, for instance, (1954) finds a disquieting "leeriness" about his hobgoblins and witches.

This ability to disturb might well have something to do with the fact that Cruikshank was "cradled in caricature" (his own words, quoted in Alderson, 1986). He frequently came into contact with the ferocious satirist Gillray when the latter was old and infirm and even completed unfinished plates for him. From an early age he performed many of the tasks of the 'jobbing' illustrator turning out "juvenile theatre sheets, tinsel prints, and twelfth night characters" (Muir, 1971) but he rapidly made a name for himself with his satirical prints and illustrations to political pamphlets such as *The Political House that Jack Built* and the *Bank Restriction Barometer*

Cruikshank was never an illustrator of toy books and his work for children, such as it was, was comparatively slight but his significance as a precursor is nonetheless considerable. Most of the famous names in children's book illustration during the nineteenth century

were, like Cruikshank, general, all-purpose illustrators, many of them making a sizeable proportion of their living from contributing cartoons and satirical prints to the growing number of magazines that flourished during the middle and later years of the century. (Feaver, 1977) It is the combination of the satirist's irreverent wit and humour with great skill in draughtsmanship that makes Cruikshank, and those who followed after, so important in the development of the picture book.

**b. "Alfred Crowquill", Richard Doyle, John Leech and Charles Bennett**

Alderson (1986) considers the magazines of the mid-nineteenth century to have been an excellent school for encouraging narrative art. He identifies "Crowquill" (the pseudonym of A.H. Forrester), Doyle, Leech and Bennett as the most significant figures in children's book illustration to emerge from the hothouses of *Punch* (founded 1841), *The Illustrated London News* (founded 1842) and similar magazines.

Crowquill began his career under Cruikshank's guidance and was producing prints and illustrating books - mostly for adults - from the 1820's (Alderson, 1986). It was only later, in the mid-century, that he turned his attention to producing books for children. Alderson finds in his work a "precarious balance between moral earnestness and levity" and Whalley and Chester write of his - and Leech's - "facetiousness". The tone of these remarks is slightly disapproving but we should not be surprised to discover a range of shades of humour in the work of artists who, like Cruikshank, were "cradled in caricature". More significantly, it is simply the very presence of humour that needs marking in these early attempts at forging what was a new form.

Richard ('Dicky') Doyle was, like Cruikshank, a precocious artist creating his first picture books by hand for the consumption of family members. He joined *Punch* at the age of nineteen in 1843 and is perhaps best known for his instantly recognisable design for the magazine's front cover. Despite the fact that he was possessed of great facility and skill - particularly in rendering fairy- and folk-tale matter - Doyle never became the renowned illustrator and picture book maker that he could possibly have become. Alderson

considers this to be partly due to the lack of a clear market during the mid years of the century for the kind of book that he could have produced, and partly due to a lack of confidence in, or neglect of, his own ability

John Leech was the first principal *Punch* artist and the figure who, according to Muir (1971), made the public look at the illustrations first. With Doyle he was the leading caricaturist in the early years of *Punch* and rarely turned his attention to children's books but when he did, it was clear that he could be an illustrator of "charm and wit" (Alderson) though Whalley and Chester point to what they consider an alarming tendency towards the grotesque. Charles Bennett was a staff artist on *Punch* too but, unlike Leech, he seems to have diverted considerable energy into creating picture books which he often wrote as well as illustrated following the traditional route of trying them out on the family first. He published five books in 1848, an *Aesop's Fables*, *The Faithless Parrot*, *The Frog Who Would A-Wooing Go*, *The Old Nurse's Book of Rhymes* and *Greedy Jem*. Each one is full of lively invention and each one shows how the developing picture book form could be varied and adapted to suit different purposes. Bennett died in 1867 aged 38. Cruikshank, who was something of a father figure to Bennett and his generation, outlived him by 11 years, dying a respected figure in the year that Caldecott's first picture book - *The Diverting History of John Gilpin and The House the Jack Built* - was published.

## **2. The nature of caricature and its influence on picture books**

### **a. simplification and exaggeration**

So far in this section the word 'caricature' has been used to describe the work of those artists whose job it was to satirise known figures (Napoleon, the Prince Regent, Castlereagh) or known types (the Dandy, the Fop) in journals and newspapers. According to Lucie-Smith (1981) the term derives from the Italian 'caricatura' - a likeness that has been deliberately exaggerated. Harthan (1981) traces the etymology back to 'caricare',

the Italian for 'to load'. Caricatures *exaggerate*, and in so doing they tend to *simplify*, suppressing unimportant features and overdeveloping important ones.

Paradoxically, this distortion can create striking likenesses. Gombrich (1960) argues that caricature is possible because of our willingness to see things that are objectively unlike as very similar - a good example of a learned pictorial code. Thus he maintains that caricatures work by means of 'minimum clues', the interpreter constructing a likeness on the basis of the perceived equivalence between drawing and subject.

**b. *A Book of Nonsense and Struwwelpeter***

Apart from their application and development in the realms of social and political satire the twin principles of *simplification* and *exaggeration* were occasionally used for other purposes. Neither Edward Lear nor Heinrich Hoffman, the creator of *Struwwelpeter*, were caricaturists in the sense that I have been using the term so far, nor are they usually considered to be narrative artists, but both deserve a place in the present section because both employed the simplification and exaggeration characteristic of the caricature artist in their work for children. Moreover, in both cases, that work proved to be highly influential.

There is perhaps some vestige of the original intent of the satirical caricaturist in Lear and Hoffman in that the former was arguably, and the latter most definitely, parodying and satirising established forms. *Struwwelpeter* was intended as a jolly satire upon the excessively moral works that Hoffman found when he set out to buy books for his son. In Lear's case the established landscape artist and painter of exotic fauna appeared to be making fun of his own meticulously naturalistic style.

As with the popular toy book Lear's pictures took up rather more space upon the page than the words and the same is largely true of *Struwwelpeter* although Hoffman inventively varied the layout and format of his pages thus avoiding the tendency towards repetitiveness evident in Lear. *Struwwelpeter* first appeared in Frankfurt in 1845, the year



before Lear's *A Book of Nonsense* was published in Britain, and was immediately successful. Hoffman supervised the lithographic reproduction of his original drawings to ensure that they were not tampered with and that their original naivety should be preserved. The first English edition was prepared in this way too but for subsequent editions the pictures were redrawn, sometimes rather poorly.

Outside the work of Lear and Hoffman there was not much evidence that the simplification of line was attractive to illustrators, at least, not until Caldecott and then it was deployed to a very different end. Of the two dynamic forces in operation within caricature - simplification and exaggeration - it is the latter that more frequently found its way into children's book illustration, along with the wit and humour that Alderson traces back through Cruikshank to Rowlandson.

### c. Caldecott and pictorial narrative

Caldecott employed simplified line drawing to create immensely expressive images but his technique was far from casual. Hardie (1990), for example, notes that Caldecott's famous sketch of a mad dog dancing contains over 250 separate strokes of the pen, each playing a part and none wasted. Blackburn (1886) records that he studied, "the art of leaving out as a science"; doing nothing hastily but thinking long and seriously before putting pen to paper,". Caldecott's tongue-in-cheek maxim was, "the fewer the lines, the less error committed".

Moreover, Caldecott was also particularly adept at taking very slender written texts such as *Hey Diddle Diddle* and *Baby Bunting*, and using them as the thread upon which to hang his own witty, pictorial narratives. His exuberant and robust version of *The Milkmaid* is a very good example. In Caldecott's version the rhyme consists of six short couplets plus a brief, concluding chorus. Out of twenty two pages with pictures - including endpapers - the words appear on only ten. Of the twelve pages that bear no print four are to be found on facing sides of page openings. The title page bears the opening lines, "a lady said to her son - a poor young squire: 'You must seek a wife with a fortune!'" but the first lines of

the rhyme do not appear until page seven by which time the reader has been treated to scenes of the young man riding out with his dog; a pretty young girl opening her garden gate - the milkmaid we suppose; and a colour plate of squire meeting maid in a country lane. It is the pictures which guide our reading, the individual scenes being sewn together by the spare rhyming dialogue of squire and milkmaid.

Another field where discoveries were being made about how line drawing could facilitate storytelling in pictures was the picture sheet - the German *Bilderbogen* or comic strip - and it is to this area that we now turn.

### **3. Picture sheets, comics, the cinema and the wordless picture book**

#### **a. Rodolphe Topffer, Wilhelm Busch and the strip cartoon**

Picture sheets were common from the seventeenth century onwards (Whalley and Chester, 1988). These were large, single-sided broadsheets with sixteen panels to a page that relied upon traditional tales and well-known stories. The pictures were generally accompanied by short, verbal texts but with the work of the Swiss, Rodolphe Topffer, there came a greater emphasis upon the role of the pictorial image. Topffer is generally credited with the invention of the visual strip cartoon. In his *Album de Caricatures* published in the 1830's and 1840's the pictures tell the story while the simple one-line texts are superfluous. According to Gombrich (1960) Topffer discovered that the simplified pictorial language of caricature was perfectly fitted to render both *emotion* and *action*, both of which are central to narrative. He also notes that, significantly for the picture book, it was in humorous art that the development of the knowledge of 'physiognomies' was tested out.

Topffer himself recognised the appeal of cartooning or caricature to children, putting this appeal down to the fact that line drawing is "purely conventional symbolism" (Gombrich, 1960, reporting Topffer) and as such is immediately accessible to children.

The literal immediacy of this accessibility is perhaps questionable for, as I argued in chapter five, the propensity to read configurations of signifiers in art works in particular ways is *acquired*. An alternative explanation for the appeal that caricature has for children is its combination of simplification and exaggeration noted earlier. The former makes for easier 'reading', while the latter tends towards the grotesque and the absurd.

Feaver (1977) points out that this makes caricature a medium admirably suited to storytelling. Writing of Topffer, who drew his first picture stories for the pupils of the school he ran in Geneva, he comments that too much detail and finesse would have confused his child readers and impeded the narrative. Topffer himself was of the opinion that:

The picture story, to which the criticism of art pays no attention and which rarely worries the learned has always exercised a great appeal. More indeed than literature itself, for besides the fact that there are more people who look than can read, it appeals particularly to children and the masses

(from a pamphlet on physiognomies,  
quoted in Gombrich)

Topffer's influence was felt in Britain largely through the work of the German illustrator Wilhelm Busch. He was a prolific draughtsman producing many picture sheet drawings between 1849 and 1898. The illustrations to his *Schnurrdibur, oder die Bien* (*Buzz-a-Buzz, or the Bees* in the English edition of 1872) show clearly how Topffer's 'minimal clues' could be perfectly adapted to the animal and insect kingdoms to produce an anthropomorphism that is ingenious, witty and highly comical.

Interestingly, Tenniel complained to Carroll, when preparing designs for *Through the Looking Glass*, that he was unable to illustrate an episode where Alice meets a wasp wearing a wig, "A wasp in a wig is altogether beyond the appliances of art," (quoted by Hodnett, 1982) and Carroll obligingly dropped the scene. This refusal on Tenniel's part seems to indicate the limitations of his meticulously realistic style. A sparer, more linear

style, oriented towards caricature could, on the evidence of Busch's *Buzz-a-Buzz*, readily have dealt with a wasp in a wig.

#### **b. comics and the cinema**

The picture sheets and comic strips produced by illustrators such as Busch have much in common with the fully fledged comics which began to develop in the latter years of the nineteenth century. Comic strips had appeared in newspapers such as *The Graphic* from the late 1860's and *Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday* - a forerunner of the comic proper - first appeared in 1884. *Comic Cuts* and *Chips* were published in 1890 and *Funny Pips*, the first comic specially written and drawn for children, was first published in 1903. *The Gem* appeared in 1907 and *The Magnet* in 1908. By the turn of the century there was a tradition of storytelling through sequences of pictures that was already 40 to 50 years old.

The comic continued to develop throughout the early decades of the twentieth century with more and more titles appearing on the market. The paper shortage during and after the First World War does not seem to have inhibited the growth of this particular form, its popularity and success amply bearing out Topffer's belief that caricature storytelling appeals powerfully to children and the masses. The comic also proved to be fertile ground for experimentation, both in the kinds of stories that could be portrayed in pictures and in the formal means by which the stories could be realised.

Innovation was stimulated by a process of cross-fertilisation with the cinema in the early years of the century. While the makers of animated films learned much from the caricaturists of the nineteenth century, publishers and illustrators readily saw how the cinema could supply an endless stream of comic characters and slapstick situations for their publications.

A far more important influence that the cinema had was upon the means by which narrative significance could be given to sequences of still pictures in terms of both exterior action and inner states of feeling and thought. Whalley and Chester (1988) claim that

early attempts at presenting adventure stories in comic strip form were not particularly successful. It was, they claim, the Hollywood adventure film that encouraged artists to experiment with cinematic techniques and thus to move beyond the limited range of the traditional comic. However, Herdeg and Pascal (1972) argue that comics have, from the very beginning, innovated in ways that owe nothing to the cinema. They claim that "...new angles of observation, unusual perspectives, artificial lighting, new relationships between successive pictures" have all been developed from within the comic itself, or from other graphic modes. For example, comics borrowed ground-level perspectives from fashion drawings and extremely deep fields of vision from posters. Comics, Herdeg and Pascal maintain:

produce a loom of image-language upon which they weave pictographic novels. They play with time, space and narrative progression in a way that no other art ever has, not even film.

These innovations in pictorial composition and visual storytelling produce effects which are, broadly speaking, *cinematic* in character irrespective of whether comics learned from the cinema or vice versa. In children's comics the full fruits of this experimentation can be seen clearly in the strips of *Dan Dare* drawn by Frank Hampson in the 1950's. Hampson uses the picture frame - varied in size and shape - like the viewfinder of a camera and is thus able to move amongst his characters and scenes as the cinematographer does, suggesting interior states such as thoughtfulness, worry, exhilaration through facial close-ups and varied points of view, guiding the reader through the narrative action by moving from broad establishing shots to details of significant gestures and key events.

### c. comics and picture books

The comic and the comic strip only began to have an influence upon the development of picture books in the middle years of the century when illustrators like Edward Ardizzone began to appreciate the narrative potential of comic strip techniques and when the comic itself began to achieve a modicum of respectability. Ardizzone began to use speech balloons in his *Little Tim* books in the 1950's. The first of these, *Little Tim and The*

*Brave Sea-Captain*, had been first published in 1936 but it was redrawn and reissued in the 1950's in a smaller format and with the addition of a few speech balloons. These became something of an Ardizzone trademark in his picture book work. The general respectability of the comic strip was further enhanced by the gradual acceptance by the book-reading public of strips such as Herge's *Tintin* and Goscinny and Uderzo's *Asterix*.

Its full potential was only realised, however, when picture book makers of skill and flair began to deploy the full range of techniques developed within the comic strip form for their own ends. Maurice Sendak in America and Raymond Briggs, for example, have at various times since the sixties shown how the comic strip can be used to powerful and varied effect. Briggs has perhaps explored more thoroughly than anyone else the emotional and dramatic range of the comic strip, transforming the picture sequence into a flexible narrative form. He has demonstrated this flexibility and range in books as different in temper and tone as *Father Christmas*, *Fungus the Bogeyman*, *The Snowman*, *Gentleman Jim*, *When the Wind Blows*, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General* and *the Old Iron Woman* and *Unlucky Wally*. More recently he has embedded picture sequences into a much longer, complex narrative in *The Man*.

Maurice Sendak, with *In the Night Kitchen* and *Some Swell Pup* achieved an extraordinary and highly personal fusion of influences amongst the most important of which are the bold comic-strip drawing derived from Winsor McCay (Sendak 1988) whose highly original *Little Nemo in Slumberland* strip first appeared in the New York Herald in 1905; his incorporation of characters drawn from the popular cinema of the thirties; his use of picture sequences to show development over short spaces of narrative time (e.g. Mickey falling, flying and sinking, and his kneading of the bread-dough aeroplane) and his use of the ubiquitous speech balloon.

Many illustrators now employ features of the comic strip and picture sequence in a highly self-conscious way with particular ends in mind. Shirley Hughes, for example, has wrestled at various times with the problem of importing a significant form of illustration

into books for older children. Her most successful attempt to date is probably *Chips and Jessie* (1985). In this book, and in its sequel published the following year, *Another Helping of Chips*, Hughes attempts to combine the short story with a wide range of comic strip devices, including entirely wordless picture sequences. Her ability to design picture book pages and her visual and narrative intelligence have contributed to an idiosyncratic but highly successful exploration of what it is possible to achieve with the tools of the comic strip illustrator. Indeed, Philip Pullman, a writer for children who has written perceptively about the relationship between pictures and words (Pullman, 1989, 1993) has acknowledged Shirley Hughes' influence upon two of his recent works, *Count Karlstein, or the Ride of the Demon Huntsman* and *Spring-Heeled Jack* (Fox, 1992).

#### **d. the wordless picture book**

The completely wordless picture book is a comparatively recent development, the first entirely wordless book for children having been published in 1969, and as such is an excellent example of the flexibility of the picture book form. In part C I suggested that, historically, the abbreviation of text, along with its pictorialisation, resulted in a particularly adaptable and flexible form of *composite* text. We see this especially in chapbooks and mid-nineteenth century toy books. In wordless picture books verbal text is dispensed with altogether and illustrators take upon themselves all of the responsibilities of the storyteller.

The emergence of the wordless book may be seen as evidence of picture book makers exploiting the pictorial/narrative language developed by several generations of caricaturists, cartoonists and comic strip designers to create what is in effect a *quasi-literary* form, the pictographic story or novel

To some extent, however, we can see that the emergence of such a quasi-literary form is not simply the result of internal formal changes. As with other shifts and developments in the form over the last two hundred years specific social and historical factors might be identified as having a crucial shaping role. It is possible that changes in the expectations of

those adults who buy picture books for their children, along with developments in the competences of the children themselves - specifically, their visual literacy - as well as gradual changes within primary education, will all have played a part.

#### **4. Summary and conclusion**

In this section I have traced the ways in which the traditions of narrative and caricature have helped to shape the development of the picture book. Early caricaturists such as Hogarth and Rowlandson helped create a visually literate public with a taste for witty, comical prints and illustrations. We see in the work of Cruikshank, Leech, Doyle and Bennett the absorption into children's illustration of some of the irreverent wit and humour - along with the distortion and exaggeration - typical of the caricaturist. Lear and Hoffman employed another feature of caricature - radically simplified drawing - to illustrate their different kinds of nonsense and towards the end of the century Caldecott demonstrated the rich narrative power of the simplified line. The two dynamic principles of caricature: simplification and exaggeration, were exploited by the artists and designers who transformed the picture sequences of Topffer and Busch into the explosively innovative form of the comic. Some of the vigour and ingenuity of the comic has found its way into picture books and has led to the emergence of a wholly new form - the wordless picture book.

In the final part of the chapter I develop this theme of innovation and experiment and consider the extent to which picture books are as sober and restrained as they are sometimes made out to be.



## **E. PICTURE BOOKS AND EXPERIMENTATION**

In the previous section I demonstrated how the craft of storytelling in pictures developed within and around the picture book. In what follows I argue that a view prevalent amongst historians of illustration and of the picture book, namely that English picture books are essentially sober and conservative, is at best a half-truth. I take as an exemplar of this view Brian Alderson's catalogue/essay, *Sing a Song for Sixpence: the English Picture Book Tradition and Randolph Caldecott*. I examine some of the reasons suggested by other writers to account for the conservatism and sobriety identified in putatively typical works. I then offer an alternative view, drawing upon sections of the current chapter, with the aim of stressing the picture book's unorthodox, heterogeneous and transgressive origins. I consider once again the example of *Alice* and try to show how picture books - along with other types of children's literature - have frequently served as sites for experimentation and a playful disregard for social and cultural certainties

### **1. Conservatism in English illustration**

#### **a. Brian Alderson and the English picture book tradition**

In Chapter 3 I took a critical look at Brian Alderson's *Sing a Song for Sixpence* and drew attention to his exclusive focus upon pictures. In the first section of this part of the present chapter I want to take as my starting point Alderson's observation that the "art of the picture book is essentially one of sobriety and coherence" and I want to focus upon the confusions that arise from his inability to keep the two concepts - sobriety and coherence - distinct.

Alderson never makes it entirely clear why we should view the picture book as a fundamentally sober and conservative form but that this is indeed his view there can be no doubt. The paragraph from which the above quotation is taken reads as follows:

As seen here, [the art of the picture book] is essentially one of sobriety and coherence. It does not preclude linguistic or pictorial high jinks, but it does ask that the two modes of expression work alongside and enhance each other. Technical or graphic wizardry will always appeal to the journalist instinct, ever on

the look-out for eye-catching experiments, but the artistry celebrated on the following pages - whether by Caldecott, or Cruikshank, Bennett or Burningham - achieves its status through simple drawing and by underplaying rather than emphasising pictorial effects.

According to Alderson then, sobriety and coherence lie at the core of picture book art but some degree of high spirits is acceptable. The objection, however, seems to be to "technical or graphic wizardry" i.e. characteristics of certain kinds of pictures. Once again Alderson is unable to keep separate *picture books* and the pictures *in* picture books. Coherence of word and image we need have no quarrel with but what is it that is intended to be sober - picture books, or the pictures within them? Alderson seems to wish it to be the former but his criticism is only ever targetted at the latter. His comments in the above quotation for example are about Caldecott's, Cruikshank's, Bennett's and Burningham's *drawing*. There is some support for Alderson's view that English illustration is sober (see below) but I believe his argument that the picture *book* is also sober is far from adequately demonstrated.

#### **b. conservatism in English illustration**

The strategy of pitting the linear and the narrative over against the sensuous, painterly and abstract as Alderson does is in fact a recurrent feature of art-critical discourse, a binary opposition within the final vocabulary of art-criticism. In her discussion of different approaches to the visual sign Iversen (1990) argues that "...critical writing on the visual arts displays... a deep ambivalence". If purely painterly features are foregrounded then literary, narrative, and discursive qualities are suppressed. Similarly, "If art's discursive character is dominant, then its painterly, sensuous qualities are regarded as superfluous if not actually dangerous". I believe it is not hard to see the application of this opposition and this distrust of the sensuous to the position Alderson adopts.

Alderson's distrust of the painterly and sensuous gains some support from other historian's such as Hurlimann (1968). Writing from a international, comparative perspective, Hurlimann identifies in English picture books a certain conservatism. She offers no

explanation for this state of affairs but obliquely lends support to Alderson's view that a command of line lies at the heart of the success of English illustrators by pointing out that Brian Wildsmith, Charles Keeping, Raymond Briggs and Victor Ambrus (all emerging as picture book illustrators at the time of the publication of Hurlimann's book in the sixties) began their careers as line illustrators.

Bland (1958) identifies a lack of responsiveness on the part of British illustration to developments elsewhere in the visual arts. He argues that in the twentieth century inspiration for British illustrators - and not just picture book makers - has tended to come from literature whereas in France, for example, it has tended to flow from painting. He also makes the interesting observation that illustration generally got off to a poor start in England, a number of factors militating against the development of a strong tradition in fine illustrative work.

It would perhaps be unwise to make too much of these arguments as they refer to the wider sphere of illustration in general but it might be reasonable to suppose that the 'sobriety' that Alderson finds and admires in English picture book art is not only consistent with an art-critical practice that exalts the discursive over the sensuous but also has roots that tap a deep, historical antipathy towards illustration as fine art and that draw sustenance from similarly deep reserves of a sensitivity towards verbal and narrative forms.

## **2. Picture books and innovation**

### **a. pictures and experimentation**

Despite the possible existence of a conservative strain within English *illustration* I believe there is powerful evidence, historical and otherwise, that supports the view that picture *books* have frequently been experimental and innovative. Walter Crane, for example, reflecting upon what children might find in pictures, argued that,

Children, like the ancient Egyptians, appear to see most things in profile, and like definite statements in design. They prefer well-defined forms and bright, frank colour. They don't want to bother about three dimensions. They can accept symbolic representations. They themselves employ drawing, like the ancient races, as a kind of picture-writing and eagerly follow a pictured story. When they can count they will check your quantities, so that the artist must be careful to deliver in... 'The Song of Sixpence', his tale of twenty-four blackbirds".

(Crane, 1913)

Allowing for the fact that at least some of this might be read as a defence of Crane's own approach to illustration and book design, and allowing also for some reservations on the matter of his view of child perception (seeing things in profile), there is, nonetheless, enough in this that we may reasonably assent to that suggests children may not be as impressed with sobriety and naturalism as Alderson is. It comes as something of a shock, after reading works such as Alderson's where children and their reading are barely mentioned at all, to find a view that places the child reader at the heart of things and allows a sympathetic interpretation of that reader's preferences to inform the writer's judgements. Alderson's is a view from the connoisseur's drawing room and not from behind the child reader's head.

In his discussion of Crane's work, Barr (1986) points out that Crane "...regarded the illustration of books for children as a suitable task for those who wished to challenge accepted taste". He quotes a further passage from *The Imprint* article quoted above that makes plain Crane's view that picture book maker and illustrator work within an historical and social context:

[Picture Books] are attractive to designers of an imaginative tendency, for in a sober and matter-of-fact age they afford perhaps the only outlet for unrestrained flights of fancy open to the modern illustrator who likes to revolt against the despotism of facts.

(This view has been held against Crane [Muir, 1971; Whalley and Chester, 1988] in as much as it purportedly damns him as a 'mere decorator' rather than a 'true illustrator' but Dolvers [1991] suggests that a reappraisal of this position might be in order, pointing, as it does, to the ingenious and innovative polysemy of Crane's *Baby's Own Aesop*)

Crane might have added to the despotism of facts, the despotism of *morality*, for picture books, and the proto-picture books of the early nineteenth century, were in the vanguard of the assault upon the excesses of the moral tale. Lear's *A Book of Nonsense* is generally considered to be a landmark text in this respect but even in the early years of the century, when Mrs. Sherwood, Mrs. Trimmer and Hannah More were at the height of their influence, it was *pictorialised* texts that demonstrated the possibility of a different kind of climate in children's books. *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard*, *The Butterfly's Ball and The Grasshopper's Feast*, *Anecdotes and Adventures of Fifteen Gentlemen* and *The Remarkable Adventures of an Old Woman and Her Pig*, along with many more such entertainments, were all published between the years 1805 and 1827. Opie and Opie (1980) point out that these elegant Regency entertainments were popular within a certain sector of the reading public and somewhat fell out of favour at the end of the 1820's but nonetheless they contrast sharply with the didactic works available at that time.

#### **b. the example of *Alice***

It is not so much the case that the illustrations to such works were graphically innovative (though later, Crane's were quite self-consciously so) but that the temper and the tone - the stance towards the reader was radically different. Dusiemberre (1987) argues persuasively that, "The first real rebels against Victorian stuffiness were children, and the first rebels in print wrote books for them". Despite the fact that she is not especially concerned with illustrated books or with picture books her arguments are germane here for she identifies the way in which certain Victorian children's books - most notably the *Alice* books - effected a radical shift in the way staple Victorian themes such as death,

authority, morality and religion could be written about in books for children. Alice, says Dusiaberre, was "the first fictional child to escape from the moral-finder"

In the case of Alice, the main engine of this transfiguration was *parody*, the trope of inversion that brings the lofty down low and punctures the intimidating aura of authority with laughter. The moral-finder in Alice is, of course, the Duchess;

‘The game’s going on rather better now,’ [Alice] said, by way of keeping up the conversation a little.

‘Tis so,’ said the Duchess: ‘and the moral of that is - “Oh, ’tis love, ’tis love, that makes the world go round.”’

‘Somebody said,’ Alice whispered, ‘that it’s done by everybody minding their own business!’

Carroll’s mind, according to Dusiaberre, “ran to parody like iron filings to a magnet” and his work is replete with parodic versions of Tennyson, Longfellow, Swinburne and many other poets that “provided an escape from revered texts”. The problem for the contemporary reader is that the subversive power of many of these parodies is lost for the originals are no longer part of every child’s repertoire. It is fun for us to compare Carroll’s “How doth the little crocodile” with the original Isaac Watts hymn, “How doth the little busy bee” (“Against Idleness and Mischief” from *Divine Songs for Children* [1715]), but what we may suppose was the sharp thrill of recognition for a child of the 1860’s or ’70’s is now irrecoverable.

Perhaps the most extraordinary parodic feature of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* is the way it mimics structural features of Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* - a truly canonical work. Dusiaberre points to the fact that the opening of *Alice* bears a close resemblance to the opening of Bunyan’s work. “Both are prefaced with a poem about the work and its origins. Both begin with a tired person...” and in both a ‘vision’ appears to the protagonist who is ready for sleep. Alice’s wanderings parody Christian’s and both “...meet a lot of dictatorial people”. Humpty Dumpty’s attempts to explain and interpret ‘Jabberwocky’, for example, “...read like burlesques of the dialogue between Christian and the Interpreter”.

Whether or not Carroll intended all of these parallels is unimportant. Dusiinberre cites Carroll's view that, since "words mean more than we mean to express when we use them, so a whole book ought to mean a great deal more than the writer means" (from Phillips [Ed] [1972] *Aspects of Alice*). Carroll appeared to be happy for his books to mean whatever the reader found them to mean. In our heteroclytic age such a view might possibly be considered the norm - at least amongst literary folk - but in mid-Victorian England it was unprecedented and revolutionary.

**c. against sobriety**

It would be foolish to try and claim that all and every picture book shares this spirit of Carrollian disrespect but there are certain features of the picture book form as it emerged and took shape in the nineteenth century that bind it closely to the parodic, topsy-turvy world of the Alice books.

We might begin by recognising and acknowledging the strong resemblance between Crane's and Dusiinberre's views. Both assume the importance of setting the creation of books for the young in the appropriate social and historical context. For both this was a context wherein powerful orthodoxies obtained. The shadow of *Hard Times* and the ghost of Thomas Gradgrind hover behind Crane who sets Fancy against Fact. For Dusiinberre the Moral-finder was ubiquitous but she also sees the spectre of Authority as a shape-shifter who took different forms in children's lives. Both see Children's Literature as a site where the creative artist could work against convention and orthodoxy.

This is not to suggest that writers for children and picture book makers were randomly or willfully experimental. They were, in fact, closely in touch with alternative traditions and conventions that were simply oppositional. New and ground-breaking works such as Carroll's change the rules, especially if they are popular, because it is no longer possible to read earlier works in the same way once you have read and enjoyed the new (when you have read *Alice* you cannot read Watts and Bunyan as you did before) but it needs to be

stressed that Carroll's innovations, as much as Lear's, or even Crane's, drew upon traditions that were quite ancient by the mid-nineteenth century. Three of these strands or traditions need emphasising here.

i. the popular

I have argued throughout this history that picture books are not simply a subcategory of illustrated texts in general, nor are they an off-shoot of the development of narrative art in England. They have roots that go deep into the subterranean world of the chapbook. From the chapbook picture books inherited a pictorialised format and a relative simplicity and brevity tailored to the emergent reader, but they also inherited themes that ultimately derived from folk tradition. The chapbook was always a rag-bag form but it was by definition a resolutely populist form and a high proportion of the subject matter that found its way between chapbook covers was irreverent, amoral, disrespectful, fantastic, anarchic and quite frequently subversive

ii. pictorialisation

The effects of pictorialisation in terms of the development of a flexible picture book form have already been discussed but I wish to recall here the association between pictures and pleasure. Pictures, whether as illustrations or not can clearly have a wide range of effects, from the sensual and seductive to the terrifying. As illustrations, pictures are used both to body forth in iconic form the varied imaginings of writers and also to add lustre to the text but in picture books, and in their early manifestations, the illuminating effect is central. In picture books pictures almost always have the effect of lightening, or leavening, the written text. This is not to suggest a purely *decorative* role for such pictures, indeed it is not to decoration that I am alluding at all, but to the virtual ubiquity of comedy, humour, gaiety, wit. Almost without exception the picture book makers cited in the foregoing history have relied upon a kind of pleasure principle in their work such that the images they supply have attempted - if not always succeeded - to bring a smile to the face of the reader. This is not a trivial point, for it makes the solemnity essential to the puritan project of moral improvement impossible to sustain - you have to take the fate of your immortal



soul, *seriously* and it is hard to take your lessons to heart when you can't keep a straight face.

I take it to be significant that illustrators excelled themselves in this respect when they turned their hands to dressing up instructional books. When the subject was *Punctuation* (*Punctuation Personified*, 1824), History (*The Chapter of Kings*, 1818), Grammar (*The Paths of Learning Strewed with Flowers*, 1820) or Music (*The Gamut and Timetable in Verse*, c1822), illustrators bent over backwards to make learning a pleasure. Muir (1954) remarks upon the paradox that until the later years of the nineteenth century many books created for entertainment rather than instruction were far less interesting and amusing than their educational counterparts.

I have already observed that pictorialised texts such as *The Butterfly's Ball* were very much the advanced guard of pleasure in reading at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but it is worth recording too that the toys and games discussed at the beginning of this chapter exploited the techniques of illustration to the full. The book-toys of the nineteenth century were very much a pictorialised form and as such are closely allied to picture books. By definition such artefacts are dedicated to play, to amusement, diversion and excitement and the pictures play a central part in bringing these effects about. Any kind of playfulness in words alone had to wait for the likes of Lewis Carroll.

### iii. heterogeneity and the anti-canonical

The third ancient tradition I wish to refer to takes us back once more to the chapbook. The pictorialised, composite text inherited from the chapbook has ensured that the picture book is an extraordinarily flexible form. It has proved itself over a period of two centuries to be very versatile and accomodating. It is almost wholly indiscriminating in terms of the visual matter and textual material it can ingest and is entirely comfortable with this condition of heterogeneity. For this reason I believe that picture books are fundamentally anti-canonical. By this I mean that they resist shaping into a body of works that form a core which can in turn act as a touchstone for the appraisal and evaluation of new works.

Such an enterprise can only be pursued, as I have already remarked, at the risk of sweeping to the periphery whole tranches of work that are of great significance.

It may be the case that a vigorous, dancing line is the hallmark of the fine English illustration. Indeed, it is something of a commonplace of art criticism that the best English artists are first and foremost superb draughtsmen. However, I consider that picture books do not readily submit to an analysis that constitutes them as simply a sub-category of the fine illustrated book. Aesthetics, art history and art criticism cannot render up a wholly convincing picture of the genesis and development of picture books.

## F. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In chapter 6 I have identified a number of features of the historical development of picture books that have hitherto been marginalised, and have discussed some of the implications of this distortion. Current histories are, *de facto*, not histories of the *picture book* at all.

(Chapter 4, part B) The endemic bias towards picture book pictures as illustrations (and thus as a minor form of visual art) has tended to move historical accounts towards the examination of exemplary works of illustration, and thus the role of more commonplace, popular phenomena in the formation of the modern picture book has been underestimated.

In particular, the close connection between picture books and games and toys in terms of their conception, production and consumption is almost universally neglected. By shifting attention away from early picture books as art objects towards considering them as artefacts within a popular culture of recreation and *pleasure* we can begin to see how central to the development of the form were those hybrid book-toys, the movable and the pop-up.

Another popular form that powerfully influenced the development of the picture book, both thematically and structurally, was the chapbook. Most authorities acknowledge the chapbook as a kind of Ur-text in the history of the picture book but the implications of this role are almost never followed through. Being vulgar, cheap and only crudely illustrated the chapbook has stood no chance of being incorporated into the canon of fine works that has constituted picture book history so far. Far from being a negligible phenomenon, however, the chapbook is seminal. Structurally it has passed on to the picture book the twin principles of condensation and pictorialisation - brevity in the written text and a high ratio of pictures to words. These twin principles are, I believe, partly responsible for the immense flexibility and omnivorousness both of the chapbook and the picture book. Thematically the picture book took from the chapbook folk-narratives, nonsense and themes of disorder and subversion.

The sophisticated, effective pictorialisation of text had to wait until developments in the technology of printing enabled picture book makers to place pictures in the text wherever they were wanted or needed. White line engraving made it possible for a wide variety of different kinds of texts to be effectively pictorialised. The rise of caricature in the nineteenth century contributed to the shaping of the picture book too. Many early picture books gained an important transfusion of wit and irreverence from the caricaturists who worked on them, and the simplified line and tendency towards exaggeration characteristic of caricature led to the formation of the comic strip, a vigorous narrative form that has made its own special contribution to the modern picture book.

Finally, I have argued that far from being a form rooted in 'sobriety', the picture book is now, and has always been, heterogeneous, flexible, irreverent, responsive to popular taste, fundamentally anti-canonical, and a perfect site for experimentation.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **BAKHTIN, THE NOVEL AND THE PICTURE BOOK**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

In chapter 5 I argued that pictorial representations can, and in the case of picture books should, be construed as a form of social semiotic, i.e. a form of language. Thinking of pictures in this way we can begin to see how the metaphors of picture/word interaction that are commonplace in writing about picture books might be given some substance. As such it is a productive and generative alternative to an art-critical perspective.

In chapter 6 I examined in some detail and at some length various aspects of the history of the picture book that have been unduly neglected or distorted. In particular I stressed the popular origins of the picture book; its early, close relationship with games and toys; its flexibility, apparent at all stages of its development; its early reliance upon folk-narratives, nonsense and themes of disorder; its inheritance from the nineteenth century caricaturists; its more recent debt to comics; and its proneness to heterogeneity.

At present there seems to be little connecting these two chapters together but in what follows I aim to synthesise the most important elements of both. My argument is that the picture book is more akin to the novel than it is to other kinds of illustrated text. In the pages that follow I argue that not only are the picture book and novel structurally similar, but that the mechanisms underlying their development are largely the same.

My view of the novel is here shaped by the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and it is through his work on language and art that I aim to carry out my synthesis. Bakhtin's writings on the novel can appear idiosyncratic when viewed from a conventional literary critical position but as I show in the next two parts of the chapter this apparently unorthodox stance has its roots in a highly developed philosophy of language and communication. The novel, for Bakhtin, was more than just one literary form among many.

In part B I outline in a necessarily summary form Bakhtin's arguments about the nature of language and communication, and his notion of a 'translinguistics'. In part C I show how his conception of the novel grows out of this work and go on to outline the main features of the novel, both as a literary form, and as a literary historical process.

In part D I show how Bakhtin's arguments can be made to apply in the case of the picture book. In particular I examine key structural homologies between the novel and the picture book and important originary similarities. I conclude the chapter with a second look at the concept of the metafictional picture book and show how it can be incorporated within the redescription of the picture book as a whole.

## B. BAKHTIN'S TRANSLINGUISTICS

### 1. Signs, language, consciousness and self.

Mikhail Bakhtin first came to prominence in the West as a thinker in the 1970's and 1980's although much of his most influential work was first published in his native Russia in the 1920's and 1930's. The range of his scholarship is formidable extending across linguistics, philosophy, psychoanalysis, literary theory and much else besides. There are problems in referring to this work, however, as several of his books were published under the names of colleagues and friends. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, for example, is credited to V. N. Volosinov, and *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* to P. N. Medvedev along with Bakhtin himself (Volosinov, 1973 and Medvedev & Bakhtin, 1978). Other texts of a Bakhtinian nature are, *Freudianism: a Marxist Critique* and *Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art* (Volosinov, 1976a, 1976b). Although the true authorship of these works continues to be disputed there is little disagreement that the ideas expressed in those works not bearing his name are unmistakably Bakhtinian. For the purposes of the present study I shall refer to the disputed texts as they appear in English translation but shall assume that the arguments they contain are largely Bakhtin's.

For Bakhtin, language is constitutive of identity and consciousness, and thus of experience. In Volosinov (1973) we find the view that the 'contents' of the mind - ideas, or *ideologija* in the Russian - cannot be located in some shadowy, quasi-spatial mental realm. If this were the case then ideas would, strictly speaking, be inaccessible to others and would enter the public world of social life only when 'expressed' in words. Such a view creates many intractable problems, most notably, how ideas and words relate, how the former acts upon the latter.

Volosinov argues that ideology's proper location is to be found in its material embodiment in *signs*. Any material object may become a sign and thus acquire ideological meaning (e.g. bread and wine, or a hammer and sickle), but it is *words* that are the "ideological phenomenon *par excellence*." (Volosinov, 1973) Three reasons are given for this. First,

the material reality of the word is entirely exhausted in its function as a sign. It belongs to the material world as much as any other semiotic matter but it has no other function than to mean. Second, words are, in the main, ideologically neutral. They can be made to mean within any ideological field (i.e. within any idea-system) unlike, say, bread and wine, which only has religious significance. Third, and perhaps most important, words are produced by the organism's own means. Though they are resolutely material (sound shapes) their materiality does not require the co-option of any part of the environment beyond the individual. Words are thus the ideal signs for the building blocks of – consciousness as only words can go *inwards* - they are, “the semiotic material of inner life.” (Volosinov, 1973)

Bakhtin and Volosinov argue that when we understand something - when we grasp a meaning in other words - we are able to do so only because we have already acquired, or internalised, a structure of signs. In effect, understanding consists in sign meeting sign. To speak of an ‘I’ or a ‘we’ that *acquires* signs, however, is misleading since it suggests a figure, a consciousness, that does the acquiring and is antecedent to the acquisition. Volosinov's view is that since meaning and understanding are both cardinal features of consciousness we are compelled to conclude that, “consciousness itself can arise and become a viable fact only in the material embodiment of signs”. Individual consciousnesses are thus constituted in and through language - there is no ‘I’ prior to the signs that constitute it. Moreover, since consciousness can only arise in and through language, our *experience* of the world as ordered and meaningful is also dependent upon semiosis. Todorov, commenting upon Bakhtin, remarks, “There is no experience outside its embodiment in signs”. (Todorov, 1984)

A further, most important feature of this argument is that all signs, including language, are *social* in origin. Sign systems, languages, only emerge in socially organised human groups. For Bakhtin, as for Wittgenstein, the concept of a ‘private language’ is self-contradictory (Wittgenstein, 1968). In effect this means that “...what I call my ‘self’ is



essentially social.” (Booth,1982) In coming to consciousness in language the individual is formed out of the social.

## 2. Heteroglossia

Concepts of diversity and heterogeneity are central to Bakhtin’s thinking about language and communication. In his writings on language and literature Bakhtin acknowledges not only the commonplace distinctions between national languages (German and French, Russian and English) and within national languages (dialects, creoles etc.) he also takes great pains to stress that all ideological realms - all idea-systems - have their own distinctive discourse flavour, their own genres. In “Discourse and the Novel” \* for example he distinguishes between languages “of the day”, literary genres, languages pertaining to profession, social stratum, age, region, religion. “At any given moment in its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom” (DIN).

In other words, language is always ‘languages’. What appears to be singular is in fact, always and everywhere, plural. Consequently, the selves that are shaped in and through language are plural too - we are all “...constituted in polyphony”. (Booth,1982)

*Heteroglossia* is the term Bakhtin uses for this jostling bazaar of disparate languages that both surrounds and constitutes us. At the point of utterance however, at the point where our language(s) re-emerge(s) into the social realm, we speak with a single voice, the languages of heteroglossia intersecting and interacting. Our utterances take their characteristic nuances, vocabulary, inflexions etc., from the diversity within and around us. Thus other people's voices, other people's words eventually become our own. Idiolect is the product of heteroglossia.

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\* “Discourse In the Novel”, hereafter referred to as DIN, is one of four essays by Bakhtin collected in *The Dialogic Imagination*, (Bakhtin,1981) The others I shall refer to are, “Epic and Novel” (EN), and “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse” (FPND)

The words we use, however, do not simply possess a neutral significance, they come to us freighted with values. Indeed it is this feature of ideology that provides the justification for juxtaposing disparate languages on a common plane,

...all languages of heteroglossia, whatever the principle underlying them and making each unique, are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meaning and values.

(DIN)

However, we are not to suppose that the world views we adopt, the points of view and values that come to us through the languages we speak, think and feel in are necessarily blindly and uncritically absorbed - though indeed they may well be. Bakhtin distinguishes between “authoritative discourse” and “internally persuasive discourse”.(DIN) Employing a metaphor from teaching and learning he likens the former to that which is learned by rote and recited by heart, the latter he likens to “retelling in one's own words”. Authoritative discourse is akin to sacred writ, untouchable, impermeable and - so long as it remains in power over us - unchallengeable. In contrast, internally persuasive discourse is discourse that we have made our own.

### **3. Utterance, theme and meaning**

#### **a. utterances**

Bakhtin's interest in language was part of a broader concern with human communication. In Bakhtin's view, to understand communication, one has to accept that the strictly verbal features of an utterance are only one constituent part of the utterance as a whole.

(Volosinov, 1976b) In commonplace conversational situations, for example, the student of communication must pay attention to extra-linguistic matters such as what can be jointly seen by participants, their common knowledge, their evaluations of the subject of the exchange and so on. Prosodic, paralinguistic and kinesic features of the utterance may be

important too. In short, verbal language is always contextualised in one way or another. Thus we can never get to the heart of the utterance by studying language alone.

It would be a mistake, however, to see the context as somehow separate from the utterance as a whole, as if the utterance took place 'within' a context or situation. Far from being the external cause of an utterance, or its enclosing context, "the situation enters into the utterance as an essential constitutive part of the structure of its import." (Volosinov, 1976b) It is for this reason that Bakhtin felt linguistics was inadequate to the task of explicating the nature of communication as a living feature of people's lives. He aspired to develop a *translinguistics* that would take discourse as its material and the utterance as its unit of study.

Several consequences flow from these arguments. First, whereas sentences are repeatable (just as texts are reproducible), utterances are unique. You can say the words again as many times as you like but you cannot recoup the context as it was the first time around. There is no escaping the fact that, "The utterance is a non-reiterative whole, historically unique and individual." (Volosinov, 1973) By extension we can readily see that works of verbal art - novels, poems - must be subject to the same constraints. The words may be mechanically reproduced endlessly but once a reader opens a book and begins to read then the text enters into a particular living context - a form of utterance - where no two readings can ever be the same. There is no text itself and, when we read, just as much as when we speak, we create what Robert Scholes calls "text within text." (Scholes, 1985)

#### **b. theme and meaning**

A further consequence of Bakhtin's arguments is that a clear distinction needs to be made between the meaning of an utterance and the meaning of the words spoken. For Bakhtin, "A definite and unitary meaning, a unitary significance, is a property belonging to any utterance as a whole" (Volosinov, 1973). Bakhtin's term for this kind of non-reiterative meaning is translated in Volosinov (1973) as *theme*: "The theme of an utterance itself is

individual and unreproducible”. In contrast, *meaning* is the consensual, dictionary sense of the words.

Theme and meaning are related in as much as meaning is the ground upon which the edifice of theme is built anew with every separate utterance. Meaning is potentiality, the “lower limit of linguistic significance” (Volosinov, 1973) whereas only theme means something particular and definite, it is the “upper, actual limit of linguistic significance”.

To understand an utterance, then, means to apprehend its theme, to grasp its particular significance. But this significance, as we have already seen, does not reside in the words themselves; nor does it issue from the psyche of the speaker. Meaning, in active communication (i.e. theme), belongs to the words as they exist between speaker and listener, or between text and reader, it is produced in the interaction of participants. As far as Bakhtin is concerned, the only element of the utterance for which the speaker has sole responsibility is the physiological production of the speech sounds. In all other respects ‘the word’ is a joint creation.

Thus it is that speakers are not entirely free to say what they like. In addition to the constraints integral to the dialogic nature of the utterance, there are further constraints stemming from the social construction of language and communication. By far the most important of these latter constraints is that of *genre*. We are never entirely free to say what we wish in the way that we wish for utterances are characteristically shaped by the genres we learn as we learn how to speak. Exchanges in pubs, railway ticket offices, classrooms, playgrounds, lecture theatres, doctors’ consulting rooms, bus queues, and dining rooms take particular forms, and are filled with particular kinds of content. Some genres are more permeable and flexible than others but, according to Bakhtin, when we speak, the languages of heteroglossia emerge as utterances, shaped by conventions of one speech genre or another. (Bakhtin, 1986)

#### **4. Summary**

For Bakhtin and his associates, verbal language is the medium in which humans come to consciousness, acquire a sense of self, and are enabled to experience the world as ordered and meaningful. It is thus of cardinal importance to human being. Languages, however, are never wholly homogeneous and unified. Diversity and heterogeneity are always present in language despite appearances to the contrary. Bakhtin considers the range of this diversity to be extensive and writes of the 'heteroglossia' that surrounds and constitutes each and every person, our individual voices emerging from a matrix of languages.

Despite this central focus upon language, however, Bakhtin is more broadly concerned with communication. Thus utterances only have a specific meaning when language is used and understood within a context, i.e. when communication takes place. Words can be reproduced but utterances cannot as the context of enunciation will always be different. Meaning is thus a joint, dialogic creation. It is not 'expressed' by the speaker, nor is it a property of the words. It is, to use Volosinov's memorable phrase, "...a bridge thrown between myself and another." (Volosinov, 1973)

## C. BAKHTIN AND THE NOVEL

### 1 From translinguistics to poetics

In his discussions of the utterance as speech communication Bakhtin, as we have seen, is insistent that “The immediate social situation and the broader social milieu wholly determine - and determine from within, so to speak - the structure of an utterance” (Volosinov, 1973). In the case of the reader's interaction with text, however, he is less concerned with the immediate effects of social context upon structure and meaning. This is because Bakhtin sees the written text as less dependent upon the social context for the creation of meaning. Texts are not *wholly* independent of context, they are simply more or less dependent.

Despite the fact that Bakhtin sees no essential difference between ‘art speech’ and everyday speech in as much as they are both kinds of utterance, he does draw attention to a distinction between *primary and secondary speech genres*. This distinction he considers to be “very great and fundamental” (Bakhtin, 1986). Primary (simple) speech genres are those that develop within social interactions as people go about their everyday lives, whereas secondary (complex) genres emerge out of more complex cultural interactions and involve the co-option of primary genres. Thus dialogues and exchanges of letters, for example, when embedded in novels, cease to operate as they normally would in their primary context and only have significance within the context of the novel's content.

However, in grounding both what he calls art speech and everyday speech, as well as primary and secondary genres in the common soil of the utterance Bakhtin seems to blur, if not eradicate altogether, the commonplace distinction between the art text (novel, poem, play etc.) and the non-art text (scientific paper, critical commentary, journalistic article etc.). For Bakhtin they are all forms of secondary speech genre. The question quite naturally arises as to how the aesthetic genres are to be distinguished from the non-aesthetic. Once again, for Bakhtin, the difference is more one of degree than of kind. At every turn he resists the notion of an artistic essence. In this respect Bakhtin is at one with Goodman (1976, 1978). Art works do not exist in a realm wholly distinct from all other

forms of creation and interpretation, nor do the features that make them aesthetic somehow inhere within the objects themselves.

The object - the text - only reveals its artistic qualities in its consumption and interpretation by readers, and readers can read aesthetically only in so far as the text invites, at least minimally, such an aesthetic reading. If art inheres anywhere it is in the 'eventness' of certain kinds of utterance - remembering as we must that utterances are not things that individual speakers say but are joint, dialogic creations. The differences between art texts, such as novels, and non-art texts, such as research reports, are therefore to be found neither in objective features, nor in readerly positions, but in the extent to which certain features of utterance that we deem to be aesthetic (e.g. style) are manifested in the text-as-read (the utterance) and are a part of the *raison d'être* of the text.

## **2      The novel as transhistorical process: *novelisation*.**

The novel is, for Bakhtin, a very special form of text, but his view of the nature and origins of the novel are somewhat idiosyncratic. The idiosyncrasy arises from his refusal to take the novel as simply one literary genre among many and a form with a particular historical life-span. Bakhtin prefers to see the novel as the outcome of a process, or literary impulse, emergent in certain epochs in the history of verbal art and closely linked with the linguistic and cultural formations predominant at the time. His writings on this topic can be confusing as he sometimes writes about the novel as it has existed since the eighteenth century (e.g. DIN) and sometimes writes of the process of novelisation (e.g. EN). These, however, seem to be simply the two aspects of novelness as a whole - the process and the historically located outcome of that process. The kind of writing that we have come to consider as the novel pure and simple is, for Bakhtin, the latest, and most complete realisation of a tendency immanent in the literature of all periods, the tendency to represent diverse forms of language in one text. He argues that indirect discourse, the

representation of another's language, was known and exploited in the ancient world and has irrupted into literary culture at numerous points throughout history (FPND)

Unlike the lyric poet or classical tragedian who are constrained by inherited and relatively inflexible generic conventions, the novelist is free to employ language in all its forms. Bakhtin finds in the novel freedom and flexibility, a tendency to ingest and incorporate other, extra-literary forms, investing them with irony, humour, parody and a "certain semantic open-endedness a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the open-ended present)" (EN).

This tendency is thus a condition of openness and plurality, a condition of continual becoming. Bakhtin argues that it arises at times of great social change when cultural and linguistic diversity overwhelm the status quo. At such times linguistic and cultural norms become eroded through the related phenomena of *polyglossia* (an influx of different, competing languages) and *heteroglossia* (the interanimation of different dialects, registers, genres, and vocabularies). In contrast to other major genres, novel-like forms emerge only when the effects of polyglossia and heteroglossia are at their peak within a society.

Language and culture are never entirely homogeneous and monolithic but there are times when stasis and unity become the norm. Bakhtin writes of twin forces permanently at work in social/ideological life - the *centripetal* and the *centrifugal* - and it is the former that moves towards unity and stasis as it closes boundaries and urges the pre-eminent value of one culture, one language, one system of values (DIN). The latter, centrifugal force, is the force at work when boundaries dissolve, and language and culture return to their more natural state of plurality with a free mixing of languages and value-systems. For Bakhtin, both centripetal and centrifugal forces are not only at work in the macro-sphere of large-scale linguistic and cultural change but also in the micro-sphere of the individual utterance and the individual text, every utterance being a nodal point, a synthesis of interanimating, heteroglot language, "Every concrete utterance of a speaking



subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear” (DIN).

### 3 Polyphony in the novel

Bakhtin's lifelong concern with the novel arises out of his view that it is the only form capable of re-presenting the diversity at the heart of language and culture. For Bakhtin, the *polyphony* of the novel means the weaving together of different language forms, different voices, to produce a kind of text that can never be constrained by, or reduced to, any one of its constituents parts and is thus permanently open, flexible and forever developing - a kind of text that is ever-becoming, like life itself.

Initially Bakhtin perceived this quality in the work of Dostoevsky (Bakhtin, 1984a). In his novels Dostoevsky seemed to be able to allow his characters to speak for themselves without any totalising narratorial voice directing the reader along any particular interpretative path. Later, he came to believe that polyphony was always implicit in the form and that it was simply manifested in a particularly pure form in Dostoevsky (Bakhtin, 1981). We have already seen how, in his late essays (Bakhtin, 1986), he began to distinguish between primary and secondary genres which suggests that he began to see a phenomenon somewhat akin to polyphony existing in complex genres other than the novel. He even goes so far as to suggest that “Irony has penetrated all languages of modern times...” (Bakhtin, 1986). However he continued to argue that the novel, in its capacity to plunder and exploit other genres, was specially placed to render the multifariousness of contemporary life, “The novel,... is essentially *not a genre*; it must imitate (rehearse) some extraartistic genre: the everyday story, letters, diaries, and so on” (Bakhtin, 1986, my emphasis). Moreover, as we have seen, he argued that this principle of genre imitation, this chameleon-like quality was evident in literary works other than those we normally consider to be novels, works that could be found in other ages, other cultures.

In the novel as we commonly understand it - i.e. the novel as it has existed since about the middle of the eighteenth century - polyphony meant for Bakhtin a number of different things. In his earlier work (Bakhtin, 1984a) it was the revolutionary discovery of a single author - Dostoevsky. Elsewhere, in his later writings, the concept is extended and broadened so that, as we have seen, all novels become, by definition, polyphonic. In "Discourse in the Novel", for example, it becomes clear that polyphony may mean not only genre incorporation (the inclusion of any and all kinds of primary genres) but also an array of *hybrid constructions* where single utterances are oriented in more than one direction at the same time. Bakhtin argues that hybrid constructions are highly characteristic of novelistic prose giving it its doubly-voiced or doubly-oriented quality.

*Parodic stylisations* are good examples of this double-voicing. Bakhtin analyses some examples from Dickens' *Little Dorrit*, to show how the language of the ceremonial speech, of general opinion, of high epic style, of the law etc., are absorbed within the authorial discourse, and are used to expose the villainy or hypocrisy of the protagonists (DIN).

In a similar manner he analyses what he terms *character zones* within Turgenev. Character zones are created when the narration - the authorial discourse - is invaded by elements of the speech patterns of characters within the novel, hybridising it and giving it a double aspect. The result is an ironic, frequently comical, refraction of the narrator's point of view (DIN).

Bakhtin argues that it is a hallmark of novelistic prose that it is able to look in two directions at the same time - *parody*, *stylisation*, *skaz* (the Russian critical term for narration that mimics the oral vernacular), *genre incorporation*, all re-present already existing discourse forms, put them to new ends, and in so doing make them new, i.e. *novel*.

These later manifestations of the novelistic impulse - the novel as we normally recognise it - emerged only after the Renaissance had eroded the Gothic certainties of the Middle Ages. In Bakhtin's view, the work of Francois Rabelais was instrumental in this work of renewal in the field of literature. In the following section I examine Bakhtin's work on Rabelais and his development of the concept of *carnival*.

#### **4 Rabelais, carnival and parody**

For Bakhtin then, the concept of polyphony lies at the heart of the novel. In the novel polyphony takes the form of a re-presentation of different language forms. This in turn insures that the novel in all its manifestations, retains a flexibility and freedom, an open-endedness lacking in more fixed and timeless literary genres. Bakhtin argues that such closed genres - typified by the Epic - arise at times of cultural hegemony when nations and peoples come to perceive themselves as essentially homogeneous and monoglot. In contrast, novel-like forms arise precisely in epochs when centrifugal forces within the culture erode the apparent stasis and fixity and compel the acknowledgement of the polyglot and heteroglot nature of language and culture. For Bakhtin, the Renaissance was just such a period.

Bakhtin (1984b) analyses how the erosion of the certainties and cultural stasis of medieval Europe by the Renaissance is represented in Rabelais' work. He identifies the medieval culture of *carnival* as a significant factor within the process of change. According to Bakhtin, carnival festivities were an important part of medieval life. They were linked to particular feast days and thus to important moments in the life of the community. Bakhtin identifies a number of characteristics of carnival that account for its role in undermining the fixity of church and state officialdom.

Carnivals were marked by a general dissolution of cultural, linguistic, and ideological boundaries and a consequent increase in familiarity across class, sex, age, status etc.

Hierarchies tended to be dissolved and there was a general suspension of rank as everyone joined in the festivities, literally rubbing shoulders. This familiarity was accompanied by an increased freedom of speech, the forms of the marketplace - the coarse, the vulgar, the vernacular - displacing the officially sanctioned discourses of church and state.

This breaking of boundaries and suspension of hierarchy was both brought about, and sanctioned, by an all-pervasive carnival *laughter*. Laughter was central to the carnival ethos but it was of a particular character: it was festive and communal, but most of all it was mocking and derisory. No one escaped this laughter of the people, not even the deity. The fool and the grotesque were elevated and enthroned while the language and the figures of those highest in rank were mocked and parodied, their refinement travestied and their status undermined. Thus the characteristic imagery of the carnival was topsy-turvy and grotesque, the focus being upon the body rather than the mind or spirit, the lowest bodily parts and the coarsest bodily functions being given prominence over the more refined and elevated aspects of human being. Distasteful though much of this might seem to an educated, contemporary sensibility Bakhtin considered the coarseness and vulgarity of the carnival to be an essential part of the process by which an ossified culture could renew and revive itself.

The incompleteness, ambiguity and mingling of types and kinds found on the street and in the marketplace during carnival Bakhtin also finds in the work of Rabelais. *Grotesque Realism* was the term Bakhtin coined to express the carnival spirit as it found expression in such works as *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Rabelais' realism is grotesque, for his characteristic imagery, in keeping with the carnival spirit of inversion and transgression, is of the body and its functions. In contrast to the marmoreal 'Classical body' of Greece and Rome which is idealised, polished and impermeable, the 'Grotesque body' gorges, copulates, defecates and farts and makes constant use of the apertures, orifices and appendages that are normally kept hidden. Thus the Grotesque body not only exceeds canons of taste but lays stress upon those points at which the human body mingles with the world, the points at which the body's completeness is exceeded.

In Rabelais' work, Bakhtin finds a buoyant desire to override or undermine decorum; to yolk together dissimilar languages - the coarseness of the marketplace alongside the discourses of the learned and refined; to parody figures of authority along with their works; and to ignore the boundaries of the permissible in literature in his images of gargantuan excess and his endless, indigestible lists.

Rabelais' importance for Bakhtin, of course, lies in his being a forerunner of the modern novel. As I have already argued a central strand in Bakhtin's theory of the polyphonic novel is that such works cannot arise when closed, monologic and historically sanctioned forms hold sway. The novel looks to the unfinished future rather than to the completed past and a crucial stage in the novel's formation involves breaking the stranglehold of the official and the authorised. Rabelais does this in a number of ways, perhaps the most significant being through *parody*. The fabric of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* is woven from parodies of churchmen, lawyers, teachers, philosophers, and of the languages characteristic of each of these professions.

One reason why parody is especially significant for Bakhtin is that it elicits laughter, and laughter destroys fear and piety before its object - what Bakhtin calls 'epic distance', the aloofness that makes all official languages seem untouchable. Parody delivers into the hands of the reader an exaggerated image of the figure or language being parodied and thus makes that figure or language available for play. Parody is, of course, 'double-voiced', the real subject of a parody being not the apparent subject of the parodied discourse, but in fact the language itself. Thus there is always a meta-discursive core to parody.

Despite the fact that Grotesque Realism was the term Bakhtin coined to describe what he saw as the literary manifestations of carnival, it is the term 'carnival' itself, and the related form, *carnavalesque*, that have been adopted by critics as cultural and literary categories. Some writers, however, have expressed reservations as to the appropriateness of the term

for literary criticism. Stallybrass and White (1986) for example, citing Babcock (1978), feel that the term is too context-bound to be of much general application. They suggest that it is really only useful when displaced into a broader notion of “symbolic inversion and transgression” (Stallybrass and White, 1986). For the present study, however, while accepting these reservations I intend to retain the term *carnival* as the central part of my analysis is built around Bakhtin's work. In the next section I bring together and summarise those characteristics of the novel, as analysed by Bakhtin, that seem to be most illuminating in relation to the origins and nature of the picture book.

## 5. Characteristics of the novel: a summary

In this section I want to gather together the main points of the foregoing argument relating to i. the origins of the novel and, ii. the core characteristics of novels and novel-like forms.

i. According to Bakhtin, literary critics and historians make two grave errors when they consider the novel to be a distinct literary genre with a particular, specifically modern, history. For Bakhtin, the novel, along with many other novel-like forms, is the outcome of an historical process. That process - *novelisation* - transforms the nature of literary forms at times when the centripetal forces within society that create an overriding sense of unity and homogeneity within language and culture are giving way to centrifugal forces which tend towards diversity and difference. Novelisation is thus part of a wider cultural movement although its effects are noticeable only within literature.

Characteristically, the changes come from below; low, popular and coarse forms being mingled with the fixed, hieratic forms that predominate in culturally static societies.

*Parody* is identified by Bakhtin as the main agent of change. Parody is by definition anti-canonical, being disrespectful of all genres, all types, all modes of fictional decorum.

Parody induces laughter, and laughter breaks down epic distance, delivering discourse into

the hands of the reader and making discourse an object of *play*. Novelisation breaks down boundaries and clears the way for the *polyphony* that lies at the heart of novel-like forms.

ii. The novel then is a literary form like no other. Its polyphony is manifested in a number of different ways - through *genre-incorporation* (the ingestion and exploitation of other, primary and secondary genres), and a variety of *hybridisations* (parodic stylisations, character-zones etc.). Polyphony thus involves the re-presentation of languages. The novel constantly renews itself by adapting to whatever languages are available to it, parody and self-parody being the means by which it resists becoming fixed in any one form. Instead of language being assimilated to form as is the case with fixed and stable genres, "...the novel, by contrast, seeks to shape its form to languages" (Bakhtin, 1981, introduction).

The novel is thus in a state of continual becoming, it is "...the only developing genre" (EN). It has great flexibility and openness, an indeterminacy that Bakhtin claims arises from its "...living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the open-ended present)" (EN). He goes on to say, significantly for the picture book, "Only that which is developing can comprehend development as a process." (EN)

In the last section of part C I review some criticisms of Bakhtin's work and then, in what remains of this chapter, I demonstrate how Bakhtin's analysis of the novel can illuminate the development and the nature of the picture book, including its tendency towards the metafictional.

## 6. Some criticisms of Bakhtin

Since his emergence from obscurity in the 1970's and '80's Bakhtin's work has generally been well-received, particularly in the West, where he has risen to prominence as a thinker with extraordinary rapidity. Critical readings of his work have tended to be sympathetic to

his projects and much of his terminology has entered critical discourse - terms such as 'polyphony', 'carnival' and 'dialogism' are now a part of the final vocabularies of many literary theorists. Nonetheless, a number of writers have indicated blind spots, ambiguities and lacunae in his writings and I want to record one or two such criticisms here.

Booth (1982) has indicated what must now be considered an enormous gap in Bakhtin's various accounts of heteroglossia. In all of his formulations of this important and useful concept he never once refers to the distinctive voice of women. The lack is especially pronounced in his writings on Rabelais (Bakhtin, 1984b) as much of the scatological and sexual humour in Rabelais' work is targeted upon women. Booth argues that Bakhtin's is a subtle defence of this work - the carnivalesque laughter is both satiric and celebratory, and therefore ultimately healthful - but in both books, Rabelais' and Bakhtin's, the reader who does the laughing is taken to be male.

The concept of heteroglossia, however, is not significantly undermined by such a reorientation since Booth simply sensitises the reader to yet more voices, more discourses that are a part of the pattern. The concept of carnival however may not be so easily rescued, although Stallybrass & White (1986) and Babcock (1978) provide an alternative description in *symbolic inversion*.

Lodge (1990) expresses doubts of another kind. He points to the fact that much of Bakhtin's thinking is essentially binary - and thus vestigially structuralist - many of his important concepts coming in pairs: monologism and dialogism, epic and novel, centripetal and centrifugal, and so on. Lodge rehearses the post-Structuralist argument, exemplified by Barthes in *S/Z*, that binary oppositions are never simple and naive and inevitably become hierarchised so that one pole of the opposition becomes privileged at the expense of the other. The more extreme the hierarchisation, the less explanatory power the opposition has.



For Lodge, Bakhtin's difficulty arises from the fact that he relentlessly privileges dialogue over monologue. In these circumstances it is hard to see how they can strictly be opposites, for if language is *innately* dialogic how can there be monologic discourse? - a criticism also picked up in Todorov (1984). As far as Bakhtin is concerned, even the most resolutely monologic language - the scholarly paper, say - is full of 'hidden polemic' and thus basically dialogic. Lodge further asks whether lyric, epic and tragedy are inherently less interesting than the novel? Bakhtin places them in their historical and cultural contexts, and accounts for their fittingness within those contexts, yet somehow the novel emerges as simply *better*. Lodge wonders if there is the ghost of a critical dualism hovering over this aspect of Bakhtin's work.

In the end, Lodge admits that Bakhtin probably provides the best resolution of these dilemmas himself for, in his later work, he seems to move to a position where the duality of dialogism and monologism is recast in terms of *tendency* or *set*, different discourses thus being more, or less, dialogic rather than one thing or another.

In the remainder of this chapter, where I reconsider the nature of picture book text in the light of the foregoing arguments, I have assumed this latter position - i.e. that texts may be more, or less, polyphonic, dialogic, heterogeneous etc., rather than occupying one or another pole of a binary opposition.

#### D. THE PICTURE BOOK AS NOVEL: "MAKING IT NEW"

In claiming that Bakhtin's view of the novel can illuminate the origins and nature of the contemporary picture book I wish to claim more than a superficial similarity. I wish to argue 1. that Bakhtin's concept of polyphony in the novel can be very usefully adapted, with very little modification, to the picture book - i.e. that structurally and functionally the novel and the picture book are very similar; 2. that novel and picture book share the same freedom and flexibility; 3. that the historical development of the picture book - its origins in earlier forms - parallels much of the development of the modern novel and thus, that the means by which novels and picture books develop and renew themselves are the same. I shall deal with each of these points of similarity in a separate section.

##### 1. The polyphonic novel and the polysystemic picture book

In chapter 5 I argued that in order to reconstitute, or redescribe, the picture book it was necessary to recognise that pictures, both individually and in series, form a kind of language, a social semiotic. By accepting that pictures and words are different kinds of semiotic system, i.e. that they are both means by which we generate meaning, we can look to ways of describing how the two systems influence one another.

This is, of course, not an entirely original perception. Many critics have pointed out the dual, or composite, nature of picture book text. I have tried to show, however, that essays on this subject often do not get beyond the level of headline assertion (see chapter four).

Attempts to characterise picture book text tend to be either,

- i. general, banal and ultimately vacuous (words and pictures are said to exhibit *balance*, *unity*, *coherence* etc.), or
- ii. metaphoric: e.g. in good picture books we find a successful *marriage* (Tucker, 1970); a kind of *plate tectonics* (Moebius, 1986); the words *pulled through* the pictures (Meek, 1992a); an *antiphonal* effect (Moss, 1990); a *counterpoint* (Pullman, 1989); an *irony* (Nodelman, 1988) and so on.

The most useful of these formulations are clearly the metaphorical ones as they help us to rethink what is on the picture book page. However, as long as the ground which these metaphors and borrowings tap into remains implicit, and unexplored, they will remain simply at the level of revealing hints and suggestions.

What I wish to argue for here, is that Bakhtin's work on the novel, firmly rooted as it is in a coherent account of the social life of language and text, provides an extremely fertile ground for a theory - a redescription in the Rorty sense - of the ways in which picture book text might work. It is precisely because the picture book relies upon two interlocking semiotic systems, two languages, that I feel we are justified in drawing the parallel with polyphony in the novel.

However, it would be futile to attempt to find exact parallels for the polyphony Bakhtin finds in the novel. For one thing the verbal text within picture books is rarely as lengthy, developed and highly wrought as novelistic prose. Exceptions can be found (e.g. *The Man* by Raymond Briggs) but in the main, conciseness and brevity is the rule. What we must do is analyse the picture book on its own terms, as a composite text that exploits the possibilities of its two major components. Moreover, polyphony - meaning 'many voices' - seems an inappropriate term to use for a text type that relies on visual images as much as it does upon voices, or words. I have therefore adopted the term *polysystemic* to suggest the interactive relationship of words and pictures in the picture book. In what remains of this section I review some of the ways in which polysystemic picture book text can be layered, multiple, stratified and doubly-oriented

#### **a. polysystemy**

Polysystemy is the fundamental condition of all picture book text. When words and pictures are integrated within the covers of a single book and are intended to be read together we have a sufficient condition for a degree of layering and double orientation. As Nodelman has argued, the relationship between words and pictures in the picture book is fundamentally ironical in as much as the pictures tell us that which the words do not, and

vice versa. The differences ensure that words and pictures *interanimate* one another, to use Meek's terminology.

Not all picture books strive for complexity, of course. Most work at a fairly straightforward level of pictures illustrating words - Sendak's narrative illustration. In fact, many such books seem to work towards a blurring of the edges between pictures and words, an elision of the two media, to produce a text that appears as unified as possible. The pictures, for example, may be designed to match the emotional colour and tone of the written text. Nevertheless, in a picture book we tend to read the words through the pictures and the pictures through the words (unless, of course, the words constitute a free-standing story, as is sometimes the case, and then a reader may choose not to look at the pictures at all).

The easiest way to reveal this essential feature of picture book text is to compare differently pictorialised versions of the same written text as in Schwarcz (1982). Occasionally one meets the view that the good picture book is seamless, as if words and pictures had a natural and indissoluble affinity for each other, but in fact the words from any picture book could be offered to any illustrator, and in each case the resultant composite text would be different, not just in appearance, but in overall meaning. Above and beyond this basic condition of picture book text, however, it is possible to identify several varieties of polysystemy.

#### **b. genre incorporation**

For Bakhtin, genre incorporation, refers to the ease with which the novel can adapt itself to the genres it ingests and exploits. It is thus one of the most important ways in which the form can continually renew itself. The epistolary novel, the diary, the confession are all examples of novelistic genre incorporation cited by Bakhtin. Something akin to genre incorporation is also a very common picture book technique. In some cases a particular genre is used to structure the picture book as a whole as in the examples of non-fiction and fairy-tale parody cited in chapter 2. Further examples include catalogues (*The*

*Baby's Catalogue* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg); comics (Briggs' *The Snowman*; Sendak's *In The Night Kitchen* and *Some Swell Pup*, and Posy Simmonds' *Fred*); fables (*Anno's Aesop*) and traditional rhymes (*We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury, *EIEIO* by Gus Clarke)

Sometimes a book may be constructed from two different genres as in John Burningham's *Mr Gumpy's Outing* (cumulative tale and bestiary) and *Come away From the Water, Shirley* (domestic realism and pirate fantasy); Michael Foreman's *War Game* (war story plus history) and Charles Fuge's recent *Flea's Best Friend* (anthropomorphised animal story plus dog identification book). In a related fashion, the series from Walker Books entitled *Read and Wonder* seems to merge and exploit different generic types.

Many picture books also seem to incorporate genre fragments, or better still, types of image: posters, prints and paintings on walls, photographs, mirror images, advertisements and imitations of children's drawings are often used to add layers of significance or to refract the sense of the story. Babette Cole's *Mummy Laid an Egg*, employs imitations of children's drawings to carry part of the story, as does Russell Hoban and Quentin Blake's *Monsters*; Rodney Peppe's *The Mice Who Lived in a Shoe* makes use of diagrams and drawings in a similar way; David Macaulay's *The Ship* employs fragments of letters and other documents while Foreman's *War Game* includes reproductions of advertisements and posters; and Virginia Parson's *To Please the King* incorporates pastiches of Medieval illuminated manuscript. *The Big Baby*, a recent book by Anthony Browne, is replete with incorporated, secondary images - posters, photographs and five reproductions of works of art, an Edward Hopper, and Edvard Munch, a Salvador Dali, one of E.H. Shepherd's *Winnie the Pooh* illustrations and a doctored version of Fuseli's *Nightmare*.

### c. parody

I have already discussed parody as a feature of metafiction both in the postmodern short story and novel, and in the picture book. Now I believe we can see that parody is a basic

technique for presenting a doubly-oriented image - one that looks in two directions at once, or offers two perspectives upon one object. Parody, of course, is not simply one technique or device among many that writers and illustrators may take down from the shelf at will. It is, according to Bakhtin, integral to the continuous project of self-renewal within the novel. I would suggest we may postulate similar processes at work within the picture book.

In fact we often see at work within the picture book the very process that Bakhtin identifies in Rabelais and in the works of many novelists since the eighteenth century: closed and static forms of discourse being broken down through parodic reinvention. In particular we find two relatively inflexible and formulaic genres - the non-fiction text and the fairy-tale - frequently submitted to parodic treatment. The case of the fairy-tale is particularly interesting in that the genre resembles the Epic as characterised by Bakhtin in almost every respect.

In chapter two I mentioned *The Worm Book* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg and *How Dogs Really Work* by Alan Snow as good examples of parodied non-fiction. *Monsters, Witches, Vampires* and *Spooks* by Colin and Jacqui Hawkins belong to the same category. *The Frog Prince Continued* by John Scieszka and Steve Johnson and *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith, *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* by Eugene Trivivas and Helen Oxenbury, *The Paper Bag Princess* by Harold Munsch and many of the works of Tony Ross will all serve as examples of parodied folk tales. A further rather stiff and artificial genre that is occasionally - and easily - parodied is the basal reader or reading scheme text. *The Happy Hocky Family* by Lane Smith and *The Golly Sisters go West* by Betsy Byars and Sue Truesdell both exploit and mock the plodding nature of such books.

#### **d.      intertextuality**

Increasingly picture book makers are employing a deliberate intertextuality, particularly in the visual imagery, making explicit reference to other works, usually of the same type.

The effect is to add an extra layer of significance to the text being read, a double-orientation. Modern versions of fairy tales employ this device a good deal largely because it can only work if the reader spontaneously and without difficulty recognises the reference and nursery tales are the one tradition that the majority of children - at least those of Western origin - are familiar with. Examples may be found in the work of the Ahlbergs (*Each Peach Pear Plum*, *The Jolly Postman*), Graham Oakley (*Once Upon a Time: a Prince's Fantastic Journey*). Toni Goffe's *Joe Giant's Boot: a Mothergooseville Story* falls into the same category.

However, more subtle uses of the device can be found, they simply require more careful looking. Picture books are, for example, perfectly capable of referring to other picture books. A good example can be found in Colin McNaughton's *Have You Seen Who's Just Moved in Next Door to Us?* One of Barbara Firth's bears from *Can't you Sleep Little Bear* leans out of a window right next door to King Kong's house. Similarly, in Gwen Strauss and Anthony Browne's *The Night Shimmy* we find the 'night shimmy' reading - appropriately enough - Sendak's *In the Night Kitchen*, and in *Guess What*, an Australian picture book by Mem Fox and Vivienne Goodman we find stuffed 'Wild Thing' dolls as well as lots of extraordinary packaging to read. We should recall, of course, that the device goes back at least as far as the nineteenth century when much early picture book material deliberately drew on, and alluded to, popular theatre and pantomime.

#### e. layering

Colin McNaughton is in fact masterly at weaving together different kinds of text type to produce a fabric that is simply not reducible to any one strand, and *Have You Seen Who's Just Moved in Next Door to Us?* is a good example of the technique. It combines a rhymed text that runs through the entire book, a game of Chinese whispers, running jokes about peoples' names and how they behave, verbal and visual puns and references to many sources of visual imagery such as comic books, advertisements, films, video and television. Such multi-layered text can be found elsewhere in the picture book too - in Shirley Hughes' *Chips and Jessie*; Mitsumasa Anno's *Anno's Aesop*; *Once Upon a Time* and

*Henry's Quest* by Graham Oakley; Frank Muir and Joseph Wright's *What-a-Mess* books and in the work of Posy Simmonds.

#### **f. hybridisation**

A form of hybridisation can be found in the work of those illustrators who like to merge two or more meanings into their pictures. Examples may be found in the work of a number of illustrators. The most famous example in Sendak's work is probably the cartons and boxes forming skyscrapers in *In The Night Kitchen*. The fascination for children of Anthony Browne's illustrations rests in part upon his predilection for transforming everyday objects into alternative shapes: bedposts, pipe stems and door handles become babies' dummies (*The Big Baby*); shadows appear to be two things at once (*Hansel and Gretel*); jungle plants double as fish and neckties (*Bear Hunt*) and people can become pigs while still being people (*Piggybook*).

Clearly these types of double-orientation are not mutually exclusive categories, nor is the present list necessarily exhaustive. They do, however, give some idea of the ways in which what I have called polysystemy may operate within the picture book. Not surprisingly, what we find is that much of the work of ironising and double-orientation is done by the pictures. I identified the process of pictorialisation as a major engine of change and development in the picture book in chapter six, and I believe we can trace its importance and influence back as far as the chapbook. Many contemporary picture books would be thin indeed were it not for the inventions of their illustrators.

## **2. The flexibility of the picture book**

In the present section, and section three following, I move beyond the structural homologies of picture book and novel identified and discussed in section 1 and suggest that the similarities extend to the ways in which both forms have developed in the past and



continue to develop in the present. Here I consider the characteristic freedom and flexibility of the picture book.

The picture book appears to share with the novel a high degree of flexibility and freedom. Although individual texts may display greater or lesser degrees of closure the form as a whole is remarkably open-ended and flexible. I want to suggest in what follows three possible reasons for this flexibility: a) the responsiveness of the form to the open-ended present; b) the special nature of the picture book as a children's form of text; and, c) the effects of condensation and pictorialisation.

#### **a. the open-endedness of picture books**

Bakhtin argues that the novel is the "...only developing genre" and that its capacity to endlessly renew itself arises from its "...living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the open-ended present)" (EN). Bakhtin's view is that the novel is shaped by other languages and not by pre-existent genre conventions. I believe we can make a similar claim on behalf of the picture book.

During this century the picture book has learned from and adapted to the comic book and the cartoon strip; the art of the poster; the cinema, both in terms of the composition and the articulation of images; a vast array of artistic schools and styles; the visual cauldron of the high street, especially the visual punning of advertisements; micro-chip technology and so on. In addition it has plundered the imagery of the past, (Medieval illumination, Renaissance frescoes, Art Deco angularities, wood-cut and lino-cut); and of non-Western cultures.

In its responsiveness to shifts and changes within the wider culture the picture book displays that same contact with the open-ended, ever-changing present that Bakhtin claimed for the novel. To a very large degree it is this responsiveness - this omnivorousness - that accounts for the continual development of the form. It also accounts for the rather rag-bag nature of the picture book - there are no genre rules, just

the two broad constraints of brevity or condensation, and pictorialisation. If a written text is concise enough then it can be pictorialised and transformed into polysystemic picture book text no matter how unpromising it may seem to begin with. Satires on the Falklands War, stories of concentration camps, and solicitors' letters do not, at first glance, seem likely picture book material, but they have all been absorbed by the form and turned into, or incorporated within, highly successful books.

Thus development in the picture book comes about partly, perhaps mainly, through its sensitivity to, and ability to adapt to, changes in language and changes in patterns of image making in the wider culture. If you can read the High street then you can read picture books. In addition, however, the picture book resists becoming fixed in any one mode through its tendency towards parody, self-parody, playfulness and laughter. I have already considered the effects of parody upon the relatively fixed forms of the fairy-tale and the non-fiction book but over and above outright parody the strong and resilient tradition of *caricature* in picture book illustration ensures that nothing gets taken too seriously for too long. Caricature and parody draw upon the same gene-pool. In their purest form they aim at the correction of faults through targetting derision and scorn at public figures, fashions, societal trends and so on. In the picture book the mockery is far gentler, the result being a buoyant sense of irreverent fun. We see this in Quentin Blake, Tony Ross and Colin McNaughton as much as in Cruikshank, Lear and Caldecott. The picture book has its dark corners and its solemn moments but the shape-shifting characteristics of picture books along with their general playfulness ensure that no one mode or manner is permitted dominance over all others. The picture book is by nature a motley.

In chapters four and six I criticised the views of those historians whose sights were firmly fixed on exemplary texts and who took as their task the creation, justification and maintenance of a canon. That such a canon can be created I would not deny, but I would suggest that such a project runs counter to the fundamentally anti-canonical strain within the picture book. If there are no genre rules, or if what rules exist are extraordinarily plastic, it is futile to claim for certain examples exemplary status. The success and

popularity of a book such as *The Jolly Postman*, for example, is not the result of its being a direct descendent of Cruikshank, Doyle and Caldecott. To begin with, such genealogical claims stress only the qualities of the illustrations - fine though they are - and it would be ludicrous to ignore the very features that make the book a success (its incorporation of different text forms, its intertextuality, its ingenious use of engineered pages) in order to place it among the ranks of the great.

**b. the picture book as a children's form**

Throughout this study I have avoided the question of the extent to which the picture book can be considered a children's form of text. I have assumed that most picture books are created primarily for a child audience although increasingly picture book makers insert adult references, jokes and layers of meaning into what would otherwise be considered a children's text. Furthermore, there are enough examples of picture books now in circulation that clearly cross conventional age boundaries for us to hesitate over claiming the picture book as exclusively juvenile territory. However, here I wish to examine a consequence of the fact that many picture book makers clearly perceive themselves to be addressing an audience for whom *what counts as reading* and *what counts as a book* are still being learned.

I claimed in section a that Bakhtin's explanation of the flexibility and openness of the novel could be readily adapted to the condition of the picture book. I now wish to go further and claim a very special kind of openness that is specific to childhood and its culture. Indeed, Bakhtin could have been referring to the child reader when he wrote, "Only that which is developing can comprehend development as a process" (EN).

Many observers of children and childhood have commented upon the fact that childhood is a time of finding out where the boundaries lie, not just in the sense of ethics or acceptable social behaviour, but in the much wider sense that for anything to have meaning it must belong to some category, some order of existence. We no longer see childhood as a prelapsarian age of innocence and have substituted a view of childhood as time for making

sense. Paley (1981) has recorded fine examples of children in kindergarten making strenuous attempts to put the random experiences of their lives into some sort of order, promiscuously mixing narrative, logic and magical thought. Sendak too has observed that children will tolerate ambiguities, peculiarities and illogicalities and will do their best to make sense of them. He remarks that, "They're fluid creatures - like moving water. You can't stop one of them at any given point and know exactly what's going on" (quoted in Lanes, 1980), and Meek (1992a) has observed that young children only learn what reading is as they learn how to do it.

The writers and illustrators of picture books feel licensed by their audience's very inexperience to create new kinds of text. If this seems to be a rather cavalier view of the writer's task, a view that ignores the idea - prevalent amongst some researchers - that texts must conform to genre conventions, then we should recall Bakhtin's arguments on the social construction of texts and utterances. Genres are not transcendental, timeless categories but are produced in the social interaction of readers and writers. Meek's point - and it is essentially the one I wish to press here - is that the children's book (I would wish to say the picture book) is the perfect site for changing the rules.

### **c. condensation and pictorialisation**

I suggested, in chapter six, that the two formal processes identified as condensation and pictorialisation are responsible for much of the variety and interest in picture books. I suggested that we can see these two processes at work in the chapbook. The chapbook form required brevity in the printed text and, in most cases, a liberal sprinkling of pictures. The pictures, crude though they frequently were, opened up the text, lightening and illuminating it. Operating together, these two processes of condensation and pictorialisation appeared to be able to render any kind of text, from proto-novel to ribald rhyme, into suitable chapbook material. Something similar, I would suggest, operates within the picture book. The two cardinal features of the form - i.e. that it should be brief and copiously illustrated - seem to ensure that almost any printed textual matter can be absorbed and ingested

This is not, of course, a point derived from Bakhtin. It rests upon a unique feature of the picture book itself and not upon any congruence between the form and origins of the novel and of the picture book. I refer to it here simply to add a further layer to the image of a form of text that is endlessly capable of renewing itself.

### **3. The origins of the picture book in popular forms.**

In chapter 5 I reinterpreted the history of the picture book to restore to their proper place features of that history that had either deliberately, or incidentally, been marginalised. In the process the picture book emerged as having its roots in essentially popular forms. This is another important respect in which the picture book and the Bakhtinian novel are alike. A brief recapitulation of the low and popular forms that fed and nurtured the picture book should be sufficient to establish the points at which the similarity is most pronounced.

The picture book can trace its origin, both structurally, and in terms of typical themes, back through the nineteenth century to the chapbook. The chapbook was the meanest form of publication, was resolutely populist, and was scorned and feared by the emerging middle classes for its immoral, subversive and anti-rational character. Needless to say, chapbooks were widely read. They established the format that the picture book would ultimately inherit, being both concise and vigorously illustrated. These characteristics were passed on to the toy book at the beginning of the nineteenth century along with the folkloric, theatrical and pantomimic themes that were to become the staple diet of early picture books.

Toy books were also unashamedly populist. They were produced in great quantities, were often flimsy and poorly produced by contemporary standards. As toy books and other pictorialised forms developed throughout the nineteenth century they were influenced by, and sometimes produced by, caricaturists who worked on magazines satirising the learned

and the wise and who learned their skills as jobbing illustrators, communicating with and amusing large numbers of anonymous readers. Later, the picture book learned from the comic book, the cartoon strip, and the cinema - all popular, low forms that grew and thrived in a mass marketplace.

Bakhtin argues that the process of novelisation, proceeding from below, brings about a mingling of previously separated forms, the high and the low. Parody, laughter and the symbolic inversions of carnival are its main features and we find in the picture book's history ample evidence that similar processes were at work. We find mocking laughter, carnivalesque inversions and resistance to authority in the chapbook. Toy books were more deliberately marketed for a growing urban population but they carried on the folkloric theme of commoner triumphing over authority that was the staple of the chapbook. The caricaturists imported some of the levity and the wit of political satire into their work for children, though not the mockery and derision. Wit and humour - the source of laughter - became increasingly important, and laughter, according to Bakhtin, negates fear and piety before an object rendering that object available for free, experimental play.

In sections one, two and three of this part of chapter 7 I have tried to draw together important themes from Bakhtin's theory of language and the novel, features of the history of the picture book, and characteristics of the picture book as we know it today to try and establish a new perspective upon the form, a *redescription* that constitutes the picture book as inherently polysystemic, anti-canonical, open-ended and continually developing. In my view, the picture book is emphatically *not* a genre among genres. It does not survive by playing variations upon sets of rules, it survives and develops by ingesting and exploiting other, already existing, genres; continually breaking down received imagery and discourse through its tendency towards caricature and parody. If it is a form of art, as so many critics wish to claim, then - to borrow David Lodge's words again - it is a rule-breaking kind of art. The rule-breaking, however, is highly purposeful for, in continually

remaking itself in the form of the languages and images of the day, the picture book perpetually makes new the experience of text and of reading.

## E. THE METAFICTIVE PICTURE BOOK: A SECOND LOOK

In discussing picture books in general and the ways in which they might be better described I seem to have strayed from the original concerns of the thesis. I now return, however, to the theme with which I began: picture books and the metafiction. In chapter 2 I discussed the phenomena of postmodernism and metafiction in recent literature and drew attention to the similarities between the metafiction in adult literature and in the picture book, suggesting a number of different ways in which picture book makers and illustrators appear to undermine or foreground the codes and conventions of narrative fiction. In particular, I emphasised *boundary breaking*, *excess*, *indeterminacy*, *parody*, and *performance*. In chapter four I tentatively interpreted the attempts of two children to read one openly excessive picture book, *Where's Julius?*

Although the metafictional features of *Where's Julius?* were recognised by the children, and clearly influenced their readings, a number of questions about this kind of text remained unanswered. As yet I have not addressed further the question of how the existence of a metafictional tendency within picture books might affect the experience of learning to read, but have concentrated instead, in chapters five, six and seven upon paving the way towards some answers to the first two questions posed at the end of chapter three. Those questions were:

- a) Is the metafiction in picture books genuinely a tendency rooted in the form itself, or simply a stylistic quirk or preference on the part of a few illustrators? - i.e. what relation does the metafiction bear to picture books in general? and
- b) If it is something more than an ephemeral and marginal phenomenon, why should what appears to be “a rule-breaking kind of art” be offered to the least experienced and least competent, and why should it be found particularly in the picture book?

I believe I am now in a position to offer some answers to these questions.



I suggested in chapter two that metafiction is a more useful term in literary contexts than postmodernism as it foregrounds the reflexive nature of the works in question. Another reason for its usefulness in the present context is that it can be applied to fiction of all ages and not just those that came *post* Modernism. On close examination, the phenomenon of metafiction, turns out to be characterised by strategies and devices that are to a very large degree, transhistorical - we find them in Rabelais, Cervantes and Sterne as well as in Barth, Barthelme and Borges. Here is our first clue that the phenomena of postmodernism, and in particular metafictional literature, are more than historically localised.

Brooke-Rose (1981), in a critique of the attempt by David Lodge to define postmodern literature (Lodge, 1977), points out that his list of typical postmodern strategies (contradiction, permutation, discontinuity, randomness, excess and short-circuit), far from being ways of going 'under' or 'around' the two axes of prose fictional text - metaphor and metonymy - are simply extensions, elaborations or exacerbations of these fundamental modes. Her re-analysis again pushes us towards the view that the disorienting effects of postmodernism are in fact rooted in the familiar. Eco (1985) has also speculated that postmodernism is our own peculiar kind of *mannerism*, in the sense of an over-reaching elaboration of settled systems of representation.

Both Waugh and McHale have similar views about the nature of metafiction (Waugh, 1984; McHale, 1987). Crucially, they link the dislocations and disorientations of metafiction with Bakhtin's notion of the polyphonic novel. Waugh is unambiguous in her view that, "...although the term 'metafiction' might be new, the practice is as old (if not older) than the novel itself... Metafiction is a tendency or function inherent in all novels". This is a view straight out of Bakhtin.

Waugh draws classical Realism into this analysis by pointing out that this pre-eminent fictional mode creates its illusions through suppressing the dialogue of competing languages. In Realist fiction languages are always more or less explicitly hierarchised, most commonly through the "...dominant 'voice' of the omniscient godlike author", the

very point made by Stewart (1984) and Belsey (1980) (see chapters two and four).

“Novels which Bakhtin refers to as ‘dialogic’ resist such resolution”, argues Waugh.

“Metafiction displays and rejoices in the impossibility of such a resolution and thus clearly reveals the basic identity of the novel as a genre” (Waugh, 1984).

McHale (1987) echoes Bakhtin in warning that the mere presence of heteroglossia within novelistic prose is no guarantee of genuine polyphony - even within the texts of modernism. Just as polyphony is neutralized within Realism through the voice of the omniscient narrator, modernist novels weaken their apparently radical disjointedness and obscurity through the appeal to a unifying myth, or the fundamental category of the mind. For McHale, polyphony in modernist writing tends to be *inadvertent*, an “unintended side-effect of heteroglossia”, whereas in postmodernist writing the effects are neither on the side, nor are they unintended: “Postmodernism erects this advertence into a positive principle; the side-effect is shifted to the centre” (McHale, 1987).

To summarise: Bakhtin's analysis of the novel allows us to draw together the notions of classical Realism, the texts of modernism and works of postmodernism. Polyphony is a potentiality within all novelistic prose. It *can* be suppressed, as it is in works of Realism where the diversity of voices and languages are harnessed to the project of inducing an illusory sense of unified reality in the reader (an invitation that we can, of course, reject). It can be partial as in works of modernism where centripetal forces strive towards some kind of unity against the centrifugal forces created by the juxtaposition of fragmented discourses. For Bakhtin, it is realised best in the paradigmatic works of the novelistic tradition: the novels of Dostoevsky, Dickens, Turgenev. Postmodernism - metafiction - exaggerates and pushes to the limit the ways in which novels have always been ordered and composed.

I believe we may view the metafiction in the picture book in a similar light. Those writers and illustrators who delight in playfully prising open the gap between word and picture; who teasingly seem to ask questions about the kind of fictional world they are creating;

who parody other forms or invite their young readers to go ‘over the top’ into some realm of excess, are all doing nothing more than drawing attention, by exaggeration, to those features that are present in all picture books.

In chapter two I suggested a number of ways in which we might categorise the metafictional impulse in picture books. I claimed that one of the proposed categories - parody - was innately metafictional in as much as it took as its subject the nature of the text parodied. In the present chapter I discussed the same trope as a basic technique for presenting a doubly-oriented image - essentially a reformulation of the earlier definition. Thus, through the example of parody, we see how the metafictional is always implicit within the form of the picture book

The vast majority of picture books seem neither metafictional nor even polysystemic. Like classic Realist fiction they effectively cover their tracks as composite text and aspire to the stable state of the illustrated story. Polysystemy, however, in the form of interwoven words and pictures, ensures that the *potential* for fragmentation is always immanent. Despite appearances, words and pictures in the picture book, like different discourses within the novel, will always be in competition, will always to some extent relativise one another. To resort to metaphor once more, the words will always be refracted through the pictures, and vice versa.

Because the picture book is not constrained by genre rules as is the fairy-tale, the adventure story, the ghost story etc., it is always open to experiment and change - a process made even easier by its primary audience (the young and inexperienced) being in a state of perpetual becoming as far as literacy is concerned. When you have little experience of what constitutes a book you have little reason to be puzzled or to object if you are handed something new. Moreover, *play* is an entirely legitimate mode of activity for the young. In such a context, metafictional play - play with the text - need not seem so strange. I argued in the last section that, for all these reasons, the picture book is the ideal

site for making new the experience of books and reading. Metafictional experiment is simply at the leading edge of this enterprise.

## F. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Chapter seven is the last of the three theoretical chapters at the core of the thesis. At the end of chapter four I proposed that the picture book was in need of redescription, partly to counter the tendency of much criticism and most history to consider only the pictures; partly to find a way to do justice to the picture book's composite nature; and partly to establish a ground against which the metafictional strain in picture books could be examined. I further suggested that such a redescription should begin from an analysis of pictures as a way to mean.

In this chapter I have attempted to redescribe the picture book, drawing upon the work of Bakhtin and his associates on language, communication and the novel. I have argued that the picture book shares with the novel certain crucial features in terms of structure, processes of development and origins. Like the novel the picture book is fundamentally *polysystemic*. In part D I described some of the ways this polysystemy is manifested. The picture book also shares with the novel an inherent *flexibility and openness*. It is not a genre but survives and develops by ingesting, and adapting itself to, other pre-existent genres. This flexibility is the result of, i. the responsiveness of the form to the unfinished present; ii. the fact that the picture book is first and foremost a children's book; and iii. the twin principles of condensation and pictorialisation inherited from the chapbook. Finally, the origins of the picture book, like those of the novel, can be traced back to lowly, popular forms that were frequently irreverent, tended towards parody, and were generally anti-establishment. The most important parallel between picture book and novel is that both are able to revivify the experience of texts and of reading by continually re-presenting them and making them new.

I believe the tendency towards metafiction in picture books can now be seen as simply the furthest, most playful extremity of that which is normal in picture books anyway. The picture book has never been a stranger to experimentation and we should not be surprised to find a perpetual movement towards the bizarre and the new.

In the remaining chapters I return to a major concern of the first part of the thesis - the role that metafictional picture books might play in the experience of learning to read. In chapters eight and nine I am not so much concerned with the *teaching* of reading using picture books, but with how young children themselves deal with metafictional text. The question I now wish to address then is how do children read the metafictional?

**PART THREE**

**CHILDREN READING PICTURE BOOKS: SOME CASE  
STUDIES**

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **CHILDREN READING PICTURE BOOKS - METHODOLOGY**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Of the three questions asked at the end of chapter three the first two have been addressed in chapters five, six and seven. In these chapters I have been largely concerned with theoretical matters and have attempted to redescribe the picture book drawing upon the works of Nelson Goodman and Mikhail Bakhtin amongst others, and upon my understanding of picture book history. I have argued that picture books are a special form of text: composite and polysystemic, flexible, inherently indeterminate and thus prone to metafictional tropes. The third question was concerned with how children read picture books like the ones I have been describing. The remainder of the thesis is dedicated to exploring some aspects of this question.

As yet we know little about how children read ordinary picture books, let alone metafictional ones and the problem for the researcher is to find ways of gaining access to children's meaning making as they read. In chapter three I described and analysed the efforts my own two children made to retell an unfamiliar, openly metafictional book. Revealing though this exercise was, particularly in terms of helping me to see the book differently, and extending my understanding of metafictional techniques and strategies, it revealed little of how the children came to *their* understandings of the book, nor indeed, what those understandings were.

Since the texts in question are polysystemic, methods that rely upon the recording and analysis of verbal language processing will not do, nor will methods that focus upon reading, or appreciating pictures only. There is no precedent for the kind of enquiry I wish to carry out and therefore I require a methodology flexible and fine-grained enough to permit a close scrutiny of the ways in which young children negotiate indeterminate text. The detailed study of individual cases of reading in practice is the kind of approach that is necessary and in the next section I discuss the nature of the case study as a form of



research and review the reasons why it is the most appropriate approach in the present circumstances. In the following section, section C, I briefly contrast some published case studies with the cases reported and discussed in my next, and penultimate, chapter.

## **B. CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY: A DISCUSSION.**

### **1. An outline of the case study approach.**

The case study approach may be characterised in the following ways:

- i. Case study is not defined by any one particular method. (Simons, 1980)

Case study methodology is eclectic because it relies heavily upon descriptions and redescrptions of social phenomena and is thus disinclined to accept such phenomena as determinate. Kemmis (1980) argues that "...if the objects of case study... were determinate, then case study could be defined methodologically... But that would require foreknowledge of the cases being studied and make case study unnecessary." Hamilton (1980) is also concerned with the contrast between the determinate and the indeterminate and observes that whereas methods such as survey analysis tend, reductively, to treat social facts as things, case studies tend to treat things as social facts. Yin (1993) has a rather more prescriptive view and is happy to write of the case study *method*, but on the whole, flexibility of approach within the case tends to be the norm.

- ii. The case study permits the researcher to create the case. Kemmis (1980) puts it thus, "...it is the case study worker who 'makes the case a case by carrying out the study.'"

Case studies thus rely heavily upon the arguments and the interpretations of the case study researcher. MacDonald and Walker (1975) point out that implicit in the idea of the case study is the view that there is no one true or complete description or definition of a situation. "In social situations," they say, "truth is multiple". Similarly Kemmis (1980) and Mishler (1990) comment on the dialectic of data, analysis and theory - case study workers *arguing* the nature of their cases and the formation of their interpretations from their observations. Reason and Hawkins (1988), in an essay on storytelling as research, seem to imply that through reflecting on and processing an experience 'the meaning' can be made manifest, but such an essentialist - and determinate - view is strikingly at odds, not only with my own arguments so far, but also with most of the writing in this field.

iii. Because so much in case study research depends upon the 'case' made by the researcher the validity of the researcher's interpretation is potentially underwritten by whether it makes sense to the reader. (Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis, 1980; Hamilton, 1980; Mishler, 1990) Case studies are thus, according to Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis (1980), "strong in reality" - they tend to appeal to 'ordinary' processes of judgement. Kemmis (1980) also argues that the "rich descriptions" to be found in case studies allow readers to use their own "tacit knowledge" to understand the case. If 'tacit knowledge' is here intended to be no more than a kind of naive, lay knowledge then I think these accounts need some glossing. For example, a case study may employ a vocabulary more or less unfamiliar to the reader and may demand a degree of technical understanding. Furthermore, a case study report is unlikely to be wholly a "rich *description*" - if a researcher argues a case then there will be some degree of explanation, justification and persuasion incorporated into the discourse. These caveats aside, however, the point still stands that ultimately the validity of a case study is demonstrated by the researcher and underwritten by the reader.

iv. The inherent 'realism' of the case study extends to its sensitivity towards the subtleties and complexities of social action, and to the embeddedness of social truths, i.e. it can represent something of the discrepancies or conflicts between the viewpoints held by actors within the case (Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis, 1980). This last point is of especial interest to me for much of the discussion in the following chapter revolves around the differences, both large and small, between the cases described.

## **2. Some problems and difficulties.**

There are, of course, problems with case study research that need guarding against. (Simons, 1980) has summarised the difficulties associated with case study research as follows:

i. Individual case studies are difficult to replicate. The sensitivity of the case study researcher to subtleties, complexities and idiosyncrasies, and the context-boundedness of case study work make replication a problem. Even in spheres where there appears to be little variation from case to case (certain classroom processes, for example) the non-reductive tendency of case study research works against the close matching of cases and thus against the building up of an archive. However despite the fact that replication on the model of natural science is impossible for case study workers, the researcher can try to ensure that his or her findings are trustworthy and usable by others working in the same field. (Mishler, 1990)

ii. There are ethical problems associated with the identification of participants. Since case studies pay close attention to details of action in a social setting, preserving anonymity can often be difficult, especially when the cases analysed and reported lead directly to further action within the contexts described. In my own case, I have changed the names of the children concerned to preserve anonymity.

iii. The researcher is the primary instrument of data-gathering and interpretation in the case study so issues of bias become important. The case study researcher is continually called upon to make judgements and it is thus of paramount importance that in the argument that constitutes the study, clarity and openness should be maintained. As noted in iii. above however, the potential warrant for the researcher's case is the reader's understanding.

iv. A related problem is the mystique that can come to be attached to the researcher's intuitive skills of observation and interpretation. As the case study relies so heavily upon the researcher's close identification with the case, and as the researcher 'creates the case by carrying out the study', there seems little to separate observers and their interpretations from their original observations. Again, explicitness, clarity and openness, both in reporting the data and in arguing the case, seem to be necessary to minimise any possible sense of *legerdemain*.

A further problem for case study work with *young* children arises out of the contrast between 'democratic' and 'autocratic' approaches. (MacDonald and Walker, 1975) A democratic approach takes into consideration the interpretations of the actors in the case and tries to ensure that their understandings are represented whereas in autocratic cases, the researcher's perspective tends to dominate. Case studies of adults in social and educational settings readily allow discussion and negotiation of meanings but such discussion with young children can be very difficult to carry out. In the study of children *reading*, negotiation of meaning is frequently at the heart of the exercise as far as the act of reading itself is concerned, but further discussion of the meaning of the whole exchange requires a degree of reflexiveness that young children may not possess. Chambers (1993b) describes a method of talking with children about their reading as a *pedagogical* practice but it is clear from his account, and the accounts of his teacher colleagues, that it is a practice requiring some sensitivity, persistence and patience. However, in research, many case studies of children reading tend towards an autocratic mode.

### **C. CASE STUDIES OF CHILDREN READING PICTURE BOOKS.**

Although there is no shortage of case studies of children reading there are far fewer studies of children reading picture books. In what follows I characterise my own enquiry by comparing and contrasting it with a selection of published cases where picture book reading is an important focus.

Butler (1987); Cochran-Smith (1984); Crago and Crago (1983); Dombey (1992b); Snow and Goldfield (1983); and White (1956) have all observed, and written about, children interacting with picture books. Butler (1987); Crago and Crago (1983) and White (1956) all kept diary accounts of their own children's reading experience in the early years. There are some differences - for example, Cushla, the subject of Butler's study was severely handicapped at birth whereas the children in the other studies, Anna and Carol were normally developing children - but the similarities outweigh the differences. Each of these studies was guided largely by the fairly random events of reading to young children in the home. There is an attempt to see through the child's eyes, and to interpret what reading meant to each reader but there is no close attention to details of text and reader-text interaction, nor is there any theory of text underlying the interpretations. Almost inevitably the emphasis is upon development and response.

Cochran-Smith (1984) is a sociolinguistic account of how reading, and thus readers, are modelled and shaped in the social context of the kindergarten. A good deal of attention is given to mapping the contexts of reading and to showing how these contexts are embedded within other, commonplace kindergarten activities. As was noted in chapter four, Cochran-Smith is alert to the dialogic, interactive nature of picture books, and she includes many examples of picture book texts in her accounts but the books referred to are never considered in any detail, nor is the fact that they are pictorialised texts taken into account at all - they are largely considered as 'stories'. The teacher/storyreader as mediator is the main agent in this study and the social construction of the reader the central focus of the enquiry.

Dombey (1992b) is similarly concerned with the adult as mediating agent in the book reading process but in this particular case study of a single mother/child dyad her interest is in how the apparently formless parent child interaction enables the child to 'take on' the narrative. Dombey's analytical tools come from discourse analysis and by patiently unpicking the conversation she is able to show how mother and daughter create a story world together and to move about within it. Although the reader has a powerful sense of the chosen book (*Rosie's Walk*) as a *picture* book - partly through the careful transcription which acknowledges the place of the pictures - again the analysis is firmly concerned with the joint negotiation of a *story*, the more general syntagm within which both words and pictures are dissolved.

Finally, Snow and Goldfield (1983) report on their observations of a mother and child repeatedly discussing one particular book. They are interested in how children learn to do for themselves what they regularly do jointly with their care-givers. They posit the development of a strategy, or mechanism, that enables the child to address new books in the way he or she addresses familiar ones (not noticing, apparently, the conflicting world views that underlie the two very different terms *strategy* and *mechanism*). The book in question is a picture book and the activity at the heart of the study is talking about pictures, but there is nowhere in this work a sense of the book as a text. The focus is firmly upon the development of a strategy and the picture, or pictures, are little more than incidental starting points.

There are a number of points of contrast between my own enquiry and the ones outlined above. I wish to look closely at a small number of interactions where children can be seen to be actively reading and interpreting picture book text. To this end I have, over a period of one school term, regularly visited the classroom of an inner-city infant school and read a selection of picture books with a small group of top infant children, and to individuals drawn from the group, in the role of occasional classroom helper. I am not interested here in the mediating role of the adult - although I fully acknowledge that picture books are commonly mediated to the young by older, more competent care-givers and, furthermore,

that participant observers cannot pretend that they have no influence upon the observed - so I have concentrated upon the children's interactions with the *text*, rather than with myself as co-reader. In the main, this has meant trying to avoid deliberately guiding the reading and, wherever possible, withdrawing from the reading altogether if I seemed to be superfluous. It has also meant choosing children who are not only keen and interested readers of picture books, but children who happily voice their feelings and thoughts as they read. My cases are thus not a *sample*, but exemplars or protocols of articulate, though inexperienced, reading.

In part two of the thesis I argued that a profitable way of conceiving of picture books was as polysystemic text - i.e. text that offers to the reader more than one way of generating meaning, a plurality of semiotic systems. In my analysis of the reading conversations that took place during my visits to school I have not only drawn upon the specifics of chapters five and seven, but have also tried to remain faithful to the broadly semiotic nature of my argument. It is, of necessity, somewhat eclectic in as much as I have had to draw upon a range of sources, mostly familiar from earlier chapters, to try and interpret the different *kinds* of sense and meaning that the children seem to be making as they read.



## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **SOME ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDIES OF CHILDREN READING PICTURE BOOKS**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Towards the end of the 1980's I paid a series of regular visits during one summer term to a large primary school in one of the inner suburbs of south east London and, with the full agreement of the headteacher and the class teacher, acted as an occasional helper in a top infant class reading picture books with children. I tried to keep my visits to the same day of each week and I would spend all of the morning with the one class. Although the reasons for my visits were not explained in any detail to the children they knew that I was not only helping with their reading but was also interested in what they felt about picture books.

I had explained to the class teacher that I wanted to read with some of the children and talk to them about what we read and she chose for me a group of eight children, four boys and four girls, who spanned the range of reading competence within the class, and who were all more or less keen picture book readers and generally happy to talk about their reading. The choice of books was left up to me, as was how and where we carried out the reading. Sometimes I would read a book to the group and we would talk about it as we went along; sometimes I would share books with individuals, the responsibility for reading the words being shared out according to the preferences of the child concerned; and sometimes we would simply discuss books that the children had read, or had heard read, before. The staffroom was made available to me so that we could talk together away from the other children if we wished and that is where most of our conversations took place, although from time I worked with the children in their classroom.

Together we read quite a range of books and all of the children were happy to talk about their likes and dislikes and what they made of the books I had chosen. Three children in particular, however, were particularly open about their reading and were in the habit of

‘talking through’ the books that we read. These children were Martin, Nigel and Jane. Nigel and Jane were particularly interesting to me for it became increasingly obvious that they had very different approaches to the task of making meaning from picture books. It is therefore Nigel and Jane that I concentrate upon in the case studies that follow for they exemplify some clear differences in the way children go about the task of learning to read as well as revealing a great deal about what it is possible to do with metafictional text.

I begin by comparing and contrasting Martin’s, Nigel’s and Jane’s efforts to tell the story of a wordless picture book, *Where is Monkey?* By Dieter Schubert. In this first set of cases I analyse the children’s different approaches to reading picture sequences. In part C I examine in detail Nigel’s and Jane’s readings of *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley* by John Burningham, a text that presents the reader with some engaging metafictional puzzles. The two children read this text entirely differently - both in terms of what they do to make sense of it and in terms of their overall interpretations - and I suggest some reasons why this should be so. Finally, in part D, I consider how Nigel and Jane read and interpret *John Patrick Norman McHennesy - the Boy Who Was Always Late* by John Burningham, and *On the Way Home* by Jill Murphy. Part E is a concluding summary and discussion.

## B. READING PICTURES: THREE CHILDREN READING A WORDLESS PICTURE BOOK

### 1. Introduction

In this first case study I examine and discuss the transcripts of three children, Jane, Nigel and Martin, making a story from a wordless picture book. They had not seen the book before and as the story was an original invention and not a traditional tale they had no knowledge of the underlying narrative intentions of the illustrator. Each reading was carried out separately in the school staffroom and by the time the readings took place the children were quite comfortable with me (this particular session was the third time we had shared picture books together). Indeed, the children were excited and pleased to be working with me on this task and, as far as I could tell, they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. I asked each child, in turn, to *tell me the story in the book* and then left them to decide how best to set about the task. As I had no responsibility for generating the story by telling or reading it I tried to take my conversational cues from the children. If they seemed to desire a response from me I would respond, but if they wished to simply get on with the story I tended to remain silent.

It will, I hope, be clear from my description of *Where is Monkey?* in the next section that I do not consider it to be an openly metafictional text. If anything, I imagine that the illustrator, Dieter Schubert, was attempting the pictorial counterpart of a readerly text. It begins with a sequence of pictures that could readily be transposed into classic Realist prose. There is a little genre-switching part way through, but nothing that radically disturbs the course of the tale. The main reason for considering such a work first is that it raises right at the beginning three broad areas of concern that will be of interest to us when we come to examine the children's attempts at negotiating metafictional texts. First, the attempts the children made to tell the story revealed a great deal about how they read and interpreted pictures; second, their readings proved to be shaped as much by distinctive styles of telling as by the features of the texts before them. We shall find important characteristics of these storytelling styles shaping the more conventional readings later in

the chapter. Third, these three readings show that even apparently stable, readerly text is not without its traps and subversions.

In what follows I begin with a description of the book, drawing attention to those features of the text that were of most importance and interest to the children (section 2). Section 3 is an examination of the problems involved in treating the children's utterances as *readings*. The main section, section four, is devoted to an analysis of the three transcripts. Here, I examine how the children negotiate the opening pages of the book; how their different ways of telling the story affect the kinds of stories they construct; I briefly consider common features of their readings and then conclude with an examination of some examples of what appear to be misreadings. Finally, in section five, I summarise and discuss the findings of this part of the chapter.

## **2. *Where is Monkey?*: a description of the book.**

*Where is Monkey?* is a wordless picture book only in the sense that, once past the title page, the reader has to construct a narrative on the basis of sequences of pictures alone. The book obviously has a title and an author/artist and both the title and the author/artist's name appear on the cover and again on the title page along with publication details. The title clearly provides a significant clue to the theme of the book.

The book is printed in colour from relatively pale watercolour pictures, outlines having been lightly sketched in pencil. All the pictures - except the images on the title and concluding pages - are rectangular in shape but borderless so that they are framed only by a centimetre or two of the white paper page. The two images at the opening and closing of the book are without background and border and are placed centrally on the page. The number of pictures per page ranges from one to four, there being seven pages with only one, large picture, six with two landscape format pictures, five with three pictures and four

with four. It has little, therefore, of the comic-strip quality of, say, *The Snowman* and thus leaves greater gaps between images in the sequence.

In outline the story revealed by the picture sequence appears to be about a little boy who, on a trip to a park or wood to feed the geese with his mother, or an older female friend or relative, drops and loses his cuddly toy monkey. Despite a search in the rain they fail to find monkey even though he is lying not far from where they are looking, at the base of an old hollow tree. Some mice find the toy, drag it into the tree and play roughly with it. In doing so they break off its tail. Once they have tied its tail together again they use it to block up the entrance to the tree when a hedgehog tries to force its way in. The hedgehog claims the monkey and takes it back to its family where, once again, it is treated very roughly. Next, a magpie claims it after scaring away the hedgehogs, and takes it back to its nest where it proceeds to pull out one of the shiny eyes. Monkey is then dropped into the pond below from where he is rescued accidentally by an old gentleman who is fishing. The old man appears to be a toy-maker, or toy-mender for he takes monkey back to a small dolls' hospital where he washes and repairs him then sits him in the window of his shop facing the street. The little boy eventually reclaims his monkey once he has recognised it through the shop window. The sequence ends with an image of monkey and child reunited.

### **3. Telling the story: the children's readings as evidence**

To speak of reading a wordless picture book may once have seemed strange, but we now readily accept this usage. To speak of reading a wordless picture book *aloud* though is an altogether different matter. As long as reading involves no more than the reader making sense of textual matter there seems to be no difficulty, but when we mean the production of an oral text on the basis of a pictorial one then the processes involved seem to be more like translation than reading.

In asking the children to “tell the story” of *Where is Monkey?* I could only be inviting them to tell a story on the basis of their comprehension of the picture sequences. Their oral tales stand in a very different relation to the primary text than would be the case with the more familiar oral reading of a verbal text. For example, a child's oral reading of a verbal text may be assessed or gauged in terms of accuracy or fluency. No such possibility exists here. Indeed, it is not my intention that measures of accuracy or correctness should play any part in this exercise. The notion of accuracy would only make sense in this context if individual readings were to be measured up against some fixed notion of how the story was to develop.

What else might we reasonably expect to learn from an analysis of the transcripts of their talk? Each child tells a slightly different story, their oral texts based upon their interpretation of the pictorial one. From these tellings we might learn something of how, as readers and tellers, they go about the process of constructing a story; what kinds of knowledge they bring to bear on and through their interpretations and what groups and sequences of signifiers they appear to be sensitive to. Reflected in their tellings we might also expect to learn something of the nature of the text before them, and thus more about the nature of picture book text in general. What we may *not* suppose is that what they say is what they see or what they read, as their perceptions and their readings may not always be registered within their tellings. They may at any time choose to be silent.

#### **4. The children's readings.**

I begin this account of the children's readings of *Where is Monkey?* with an examination of the ways in which they approach the first page opening. The opening passages of any story are often the most difficult to negotiate, involving most risk for the reader. The narrative lies in wait around the corner, so to speak, and there is little at the boundary for a reader to gain purchase upon. The sense-making strategies of the children at this point are, therefore, particularly revealing. I then consider both the different styles of telling that

the children employ as they make their way through the book and the common features of those tellings. Finally, I examine those moments in the children's stories when they differ in their interpretations of the pictorial matter before them.

**a. the opening pages.**

The book opens with a full page spread depicting the little boy dressed in outdoor clothes bending down and gesturing towards the toy monkey tucked up in a make-shift bed beneath a blanket-draped chair (see fig.3). Beyond an open front door stands a young woman dressed in overcoat and scarf, smiling towards the boy and holding a pink bicycle. The facing page shows, top: the woman riding the cycle, apparently away from the town with the boy in a small seat at the back and, bottom: woman and child feeding some geese amongst the trees with the child holding monkey protectively aloft, away from the snatching beak of one of the geese.

Below are the responses of the three children to this opening ensemble of pictures:

**Nigel** (appendix 5):

1      N\_\_      Well there he's playing with  
2                      the (.) there he's [making] a  
3                      cage for the monkey

4      DL                                      Hmm mmm

5      N\_\_      There [she's] takin' the little  
6                      boy to the wood with the monkey  
7                      and there they're feeding the  
8                      ducks (.) and he thinks it's  
9                      a worm (*laughs*)

10     DL                                      Yes he does doesn't he

**Martin** (appendix 6):

1      M\_\_                      ... ( ) his bike

2      DL                                      Alright

- 3 M\_\_ [lights] getting monkey out of  
4 bed
- 5 DL Right
- 6 M\_\_ [mother's] waiting for him
- 7 DL Hmm mmm
- 8 M\_\_ Riding along on his mum's bike  
9 (.) in the park (.) the goose  
10 is tryin' to get the monkey...

**Jane** (appendix 7):

- 1 DL and you tell me how  
2 the story goes
- 3 J\_\_ (*quietly*) well first of all the  
4 little boy puts the monkey (.) no  
5 he puts the monkey in a chair (.)  
6 under the chair in a box and then  
7 after that he gets him out and his  
8 mum's got his bike and so they go out  
9 and the little boy's on the back  
10 and they go and feed the geese and  
11 one of the geese is trying to get  
12 the monkey...

Of the three children only Martin confidently ascribes an intention to the boy in the first frame appropriate to the way the story unfolds at this page opening. His terse "...getting monkey out of bed" (lines 3-4, appendix 6) links together the child's gesture with his outdoor dress, the open door, the bicycle and the waiting adult. His comment upon the adult at the door is "...waiting for him", rather than standing by the door, or standing outside. He knows something is about to happen and perhaps it is the pictures to the right that nudge him in this direction. He comments separately on the two pictures to the right hand side and in doing so corrects himself over the ownership of the bicycle ("...his bike" (1) becomes, "...his mum's bike" (8) ) and decides that it is 'the park' where the geese are





being fed, rather than, say, the wood.

Nigel and Jane are both less sure in their approach, stumbling slightly as they begin. Jane appears to interpret the boy's gesture as putting the monkey to bed ("first of all the little boy puts the monkey (.) no..." (3-4, appendix 7) which is an entirely understandable reading of the first frame if one interprets the boy's frozen gesture as a goodbye wave, the boy and his mother being about to go out alone. Of course, the next frame will not permit such a reading since monkey is there, on the bicycle. Having realized the inconsistency, Jane corrects herself by adding a stage of getting monkey out of the box ("then after that he gets him out..." (6-7) ). This demonstrates early on her unwillingness to interrupt her narration. She, like Martin, appears to see the bicycle outside the door as belonging to the little boy ("his mum's got his bike..." (7-8) ) but does not go on to correct herself in such an overt way as Martin.

Nigel also has difficulty interpreting the boy's initial gesture and makes two attempts at it: "playing" and, possibly, "making" (this latter word is not wholly clear on the tape recording but the words which follow - "[making] a cage for the monkey" (2-3, appendix 5) - seem to suggest that this is correct). Again, both of these interpretations seem quite reasonable but only if the first frame is seen in isolation from the others which follow and, in addition, if only the boy and the monkey are considered. Nigel seems to ignore, or at least makes no comment upon, the figure beyond the open door. As he moves on to comment upon the remaining two pictures Nigel appears to put the action of this first frame behind him and makes no attempt to self-correct as Jane did. Nigel's reading of the second picture is interesting for here we see him making a glance forward with "[she's] takin' the little boy to the wood" (5-6). The picture is of the woman riding with the boy on the back of the bicycle but Nigel chooses to interpret the scene in terms of the woman's intention ("takin' the little boy..." ) with the destination being both in the future and in the next frame.

Not surprisingly, all three children comment upon the detail in the final picture of one of the geese trying to snatch the monkey's tail, but only Nigel gets inside the goose's head with, "...he thinks it's a worm [*laughs*]" (8-9) - a much more richly interpretive move than, "the goose is trying to get the monkey..." (8-9, Martin) or "one of the geese is trying to get the monkey..." (11-12, Jane).

In these opening lines, taking no more than a few seconds each, the three children not only orient themselves quickly towards the story to be told but also invest the depicted characters with intentions which are not only authentic and plausible but also, it seems to me, narratively driven. The children know they are tell a story and even at this first page-opening are prepared to move backwards and forwards amongst the depicted scenes searching for a way to make the story come to life.

**b. different styles of telling.**

Even at the first page opening it is possible to make out the characteristic ways in which these three children go about telling the tales that they are constructing. Nigel is conversational, including me in the reading and commenting through laughter, intonation and anecdote upon depicted events. Martin makes terse comments about each frame, telling me bluntly what he sees to be the case, although his intonation makes it clear that he is sensitive to developing meanings. Jane wants to tell a story from the very beginning so she creates a frame with "Well first of all..." and leaves little room for conversation or comment. The monologic nature of her telling can be detected even in the transcript. These styles are maintained throughout with some development and elaboration.

Nigel, for example, proves to be both curious about, and amused by, individual picture elements. A large bumble bee in the centre foreground of one of the pictures at the fifth page opening immediately catches his eye and he comments upon it twice (80 and 88) although it plays no part in the developing action. Here he appears to respond to a pictorial code relating to the relative sizes of pictorial elements along with their positioning within the frame. He appears not to be guided by his sense of a developing story but is

interested in attractive, amusing or prominent features of individual pictures. At the same page opening he comments upon the presence of a snail on a branch above the hedgehog's nest: "there's a little snail there", (85) and again, in the picture below: "look the snail's gone down an' (.) he's half way down the tree an' he's gone to sleep"(92-94). The snail is commented on again over the page (97) and, by this point, seems to have become for Nigel a character in a kind of sub-plot. Later, by page opening eight, Nigel's interest in this theme leads him to see the magpie as pulling the snail off monkey's head rather than pulling out one of his glass bead eyes (153-154). He is then surprised when, on the facing page, he sees what he takes to be the same snail clinging to monkey at the bottom of a pond: "*(surprised)* The snail's still on there!"163). My prompt then leads him to see this as a different, water snail (164-168).

Nigel's storytelling is very open in form and more than once he pauses to make some link to text observation ("...when soft toys get wet they're easy to come apart when they're only made of wool" (53-5) ) or to relate an anecdote from another book or from the television. This seems to be both a part of his conversational manner and, as we shall see in sections C and D, also a repeated strategy for linking the story he is reading (or in this case, telling) to events in his own life or events he remembers from books.

Nigel's apparent lack of concern for the overall shape of the developing story and his fascination with local detail and the pressing anecdote run alongside his inattention to a basic convention of book reading - i.e. that the eye's left to right progress across the verso page ends at or before the gutter and returns to the left margin at the next row below. The convention is the same in wordless books as it is in conventional, verbal text yet Nigel twice ignores it and runs his eye, and his storytelling, across the full page opening before returning to the picture sequence below. The first occasion occurs at page opening two where the initial trip to the park is curtailed by a rain storm and monkey gets dropped and lost. Nigel reads all of the top then all of the bottom and strives to make his story cohere despite the fact that the incorrect sequencing causes him to have monkey get lost twice. He chooses not to self-correct but continues his telling in the face of the difficult gaps he

has to bridge. Although I explain to him at this point that he should read one page at a time he appears to make the same error at page opening five where the hedgehog claims the lost monkey and takes it home to his family. Interestingly, this particular error comes immediately after Nigel has referred back to an event on the previous page ("I didn't know mice could (.) tie a knot" (76) ) and his first comment on the "big bee" (80). When he returns to the sequence in question the narrating thread seems to be temporarily broken.

Martin is a conversationalist of another kind. His narration comes in short bursts, brief statements or phrases that omit the subject ("Getting monkey out of bed" (3); "Dropped monkey!" (13); "Jumpin' on him" (68); "stitchin' it up" (138) ). However, he keeps me involved with a sprinkling of tag questions that make the dialogic nature of his telling clear ("...looks like it's starting to rain now doesn't it?" (10-11); "They're not that far away from him are they?" (25-26); "...looks like he's gonna (.) tread on it doesn't he?" (60-1); "...he pulls it out doesn't he?" (124-125) ) and he reveals a grasp of the dynamics of his story through a sometimes bold use of intonation. For example, when monkey gets dropped from the rear of the bicycle Martin's response is, "*(emphatically)* Dropped monkey!" (13). Later, when monkey has been dropped in the pond ( or "the sea" as Martin has it), Martin responds with a melodramatically stressed "Oh..oh! Water snake!" (105).

Although the printed transcript reveals none of the patterns of stress and intonation that run through Martin's telling his reliance upon bold statement to carry the main thrust of his story does allow for contrast with those moments when he is unsure about what is happening in a picture or which way the story seems to be heading. We cannot hear the sound of his doubt and hesitation but he makes it clear at certain moments that he has temporarily lost his way. At page opening three, for example Martin's narration takes this turn: "...in their holes (.) what're they doing here? Taking off his clothes (.) what're they doing now? (.) chopping off his tail" (33-37). I suspect that his doubt and hesitation here is brought on by a not particularly helpful picture sequence. It is the difference between frame and frame that creates significant information for the reader and the four pictures that make up this particular page opening are not especially varied. Mice or rats swarm

over the monkey and it is not very clear at first glance what is happening - or rather, how what is happening might be described. Later, he expresses uncertainty through the form 'looks like..', "...looks like he's gonna (.) tread on it...". (line 60) The illustration in question is one where the hedgehog has a foot lifted above the monkey's head (page opening five). The monkey is being pushed out of the hollow tree by the mice, but is the hedgehog's foot being raised or lowered? Martin clearly is not sure, but he opts tentatively for the latter. Again, at page opening seven, Martin is unsure about the correct name for the magpie and voices his doubt directly, "What is it though? (.) they're called blackpie..." (lines 78-79). At other times his doubts concern the relationship between two frames as in 98-99 where he attempts to link together the picture of the flying magpie with the picture of a nest which follows at the end of the page, "I think it's gonna put it in the nest". Again, at page opening ten, lines 148-149, he looks forward to how the story might develop, in response to a prompt of mine, "Probably he might put it on the end of his [ ]".

Despite the brevity of Martin's utterances we often see him glancing backwards and forwards to create a form of narrative discourse rather than a series of observations about pictures. "[Mother's] waiting for him" (5); "[ ] because he loses monkey (.) going back in the rain to find him (.) they're not that far away from him are they?" (23-26); "Hedgehog coming by" (48); "...carries it on his back (.) back to the family" (64-65); "The bees grab it and drop it in the sea" (104-105); "Found the monkey... ..takin' it back (.) to his place" (133-135) and so on. At these moments Martin seems to sum up a small group or sequence of pictures in one phrase or statement, looking for the whole sense of an episode rather than interpreting individual frames.

Jane tries even harder to forge a complete, seamless narrative text. It can readily be seen from the transcript (see appendix 7) that her telling is as monologic as it could possibly be, my role having been reduced to the occasional interjection. She achieves this cohesion largely through a reliance upon the connectives "and", "and then", "then after that" and so on. She does however attain a considerable narrative density through such cohesive ties as, "and so", "because", "who". Like Martin, she is quite adept at summarising ensembles

of images to move the story along and to create the very connections out of which the story emerges, e.g. "and they push the monkey out (.) to get the thing away (.) to get the hedgehog away from the thing (.) from the tree" (40-43); "and the crow tries to catch the hedgehog but it misses and it catches the monkey and it goes back to its nest" (56-59) and, "and some bees try and catch it but they can't because it's too heavy and it goes into the water" (73-76). By invoking reasons, intentions, causes and consequences Jane brings the narrative into being out of the discrete, static images.

She sometimes sacrifices detail, at least in the sense that she chooses not to comment upon it (for example she misses much that is going on at page opening five where the hedgehog first claims the monkey - details that Nigel dwells upon with fascination), although it is clear that she is very adept at reading the detail of pictures - see, for example, where she spots the hidden monkey in the doll's hospital in about one and a half seconds, something that Nigel fails to do even when given lots of time. Sometimes she is able to pull together the accumulating meanings of the story in a single word. At page opening nine, for example, she says about the man who has just caught the monkey, "...luckily it's a toy-mender" (83). The whole utterance is worth dwelling upon for a moment, but that "luckily" in particular is pregnant with narrative significance. It gathers up to the present time all the accumulated vicissitudes of the monkey and points towards a happy resolution. How does Josie know that this man is a "toy-mender?" Well, she is clearly able to read not only the general sense of the man's frozen gesture on that right hand page (Nigel's "takin' it home") but is also able to read the arcane symbolism of the dismembered toys surrounding a red cross mounted above the door. This act of interpretation she carries out swiftly, and equally swiftly translates it in to the phrase "toy-mender".

Both Martin and Nigel missed this particular cultural code at the time of reading but both were able to recognise the significance of the red cross when I took them back for a second look. Martin spotted it spontaneously once we had turned back to the relevant page - "Look teddy (.) ambulance (.) toys" (188). Nigel, however, needed his attention drawing to the sign before he would volunteer an interpretation - DL: "Why has it got

little red crosses on it do you think?" N\_\_: "'cos he's been mended... ..'cos it's a hospital" (249-257). He did, however, comment upon a resemblance between the toy mender and Gepetto from *Pinocchio*. What Nigel actually said was, "He's like Pinocchio". I took him, at the time, to mean that this part of the story was a little like the story of *Pinocchio*, but having listened to the tape-recording several times and studied the transcript I now think Nigel was referring to the character rather than the story and misattributing names (233-237). If this is so, then although Nigel appeared to miss the significance of the red cross sign first time around he was nonetheless able to respond, unprompted, to a different, intertextual, code.

Jane's dedication to a continuous narration does not allow much room for the expression of uncertainty. Unlike Martin, she does not openly express any doubts or hesitations though she does at times spontaneously alter her reading and occasionally corrects what she sees as a misreading of a picture by incorporating another small step in the narrative, thus keeping up the flow of her narration. I have already commented upon the way she adjusts her telling of the first page but I suspect she makes a similar move later when she turns to page opening eight and remarks, about the magpie, "And he pins (.) puts a pin in his eye (.) 'cos he takes one of his eyes out... ..'cos it's shiny" (67-71). Realising that the static gesture depicted in the picture may be interpreted in more than one way, rather than pause and admit the 'error', she weaves a little further intentionality around the scene with the word "'cos", implying that the pin is pushed in after the eye is taken out.

There is one final exchange between Jane and myself that is worth commenting upon. It comes at the point where she spontaneously admits that the story, "might not have gone that way..." (111). Here she appears to recognise that, as I remarked earlier, a verbal story based upon a wordless picture sequence can be no more than a kind of *translation*. The exchange goes as follows:

111 J\_\_ It might not have gone that  
way but never mind

DL

What do you mean it  
might not have gone



that way?

J\_\_ If (.) if the t (.) it might  
(.) the person might not have  
thought it could go that way  
who wrote it.

Jane is quite clearly a self-conscious reader, sensitive to the story's generic codes. She is aware to a high degree of story shape and form and is aware also of her own role in the construction of the text within the text.

## 5. Summary and discussion

Despite the fact that *Where Is Monkey?* is both wordless and, more or less readerly, text, we can find much in the readings of the children that helps prepare the ground for the analyses of metafictional texts that follow. For example, we find them responding in various ways to a range of pictorial signifiers. In their readings we see them interpreting gesture and posture, responding to the relative sizes of depicted objects, to their position within a picture's frame and to the effects of their overlapping. In addition we see the extent to which they can interpret culturally coded images such as the thieving magpie, the malicious rats, and the Gepetto-like toy-maker. Most revealing, I believe, are those moments when the children make mistakes, or disagree over how to read a particular image. We see here how even a text that does not aspire to "trouble the codes" (Scholes, 1985) can be problematic, either through the ineptitude of the illustrator (the sequence of pictures showing the rats at play, for example, leaves much work for the reader to do and is far from clear), or simply because the combination of textual gaps to be filled and reader inexperience can result in some bizarre readings.

Another interesting feature of these readings arises from the fact that as the children have to create the story on the move, so to speak, we see them gathering up information from several frames and putting together ensembles of images to create narrative meanings. They range backwards and forwards, bringing to bear what they recall, and what they

anticipate, upon the present moment. Their interpretations are clearly narratively driven and they constantly ascribe appropriate intentions and motives to the characters.

There are, however, important differences in the children's readings, and in how they go about putting those readings together, that are germane to the primary concerns of this thesis. Jane and Nigel in particular differ in the way they attend to what is before them and in how they use what they see. To some extent this difference is a function of how the two children interpret the task as set. Jane takes the injunction to tell a story very much to heart and proceeds to generate monologically an oral, narrative text. I have already remarked that we can see this even in the visual pattern of the transcription. Nigel on the other hand - and to some extent, Martin too - builds up his story dialogically. He includes me in the story-making, drawing me in through a questioning intonation, his frequent exclamations, and his ever-present readiness to go off at a tangent to tell some anecdote, or make some text-to-life or text-to-text connection.

Underlying this difference, however, is not simply a contrast in the children's interpretation of the original instruction. There also seems to be a clear difference in the style, or manner, in which they set about the task. The best way to characterise this difference is to say that whereas Nigel is more interested in the details of the pictures before him than he is in the overall story, Jane wants to get at the story and in so doing possibly misses the richness and significance of the detailing. We see this in, for example, Nigel's pursuit of the snail, and in Jane's summary treatment of what the hedgehogs do to the lost toy. Again, Nigel easily loses the thread whereas Jane has such a firm grip on her tale that she will not relinquish it even when she makes and recognises an error. Jane's looking is guided by her sense of the developing story, while Nigel's is far more at the mercy of present interest and enticing detail, and I suspect we see the results of this in the former's immediate success in detecting the repaired toy in the doll's hospital and the latter's complete failure at the same task.

What might the significance be of this for the thesis as a whole? Well, there is evidence to suggest that beginner-readers approach the task of learning to co-ordinate the various aspects of the reading process in different ways, building upon their strengths and their current understandings (Bussis et al, 1985, Barrs & Thomas, 1991). Some children seem to feel more secure when attending to small scale elements within a text while others are happier being guided by their sense of a developing macrostructure. I suggest that what we find in this first reading are similar preoccupations.

Now if children are prone to approach their reading lessons in these different ways we might expect them not only to vary in their interpretations of metafictional texts but also to approach the sense-making task in specific ways that reflect their preoccupations as beginner readers. In part C we shall see that this is exactly what we do find when we come to examine the children's attempts to read a determinedly metafictional picture book. Moreover we shall see that the children's characteristic ways of looking and reading engage with the metafictional strategies deployed by the author/illustrator to produce two quite distinct and different readings.

## C. READING THE METAFICTIVE: TWO CHILDREN READING A METAFICTIVE PICTURE BOOK

### 1. Introduction

In part C I examine two conversations that took place between myself and two of the children in the target group: Nigel and Jane. The conversations took place on the same day, the latter immediately following the former. Nigel, Jane and I were reading together, and discussing, *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley* by John Burningham. I have already referred to this book, and its companion, *Come Away From the Water, Shirley*, in chapters two and seven, and have claimed them both as paradigmatic metafictional picture books. Neither Nigel nor Jane had seen the former book before but both knew of, and had read the latter. *Come Away From the Water, Shirley* is, indeed, generally the better known of the two.

In what follows, I begin by briefly describing the book, emphasising its metafictional features and also drawing attention to some of the ways in which it is a characteristically polysystemic picture book text. Next, I examine those features of the children's interactions with the book, and with myself as conversational partner, that have some bearing upon their sensitivity to the book's metafictional character. I consider their use of modal constructions such as 'probably...' and 'might be...'; their interpretations of where Shirley is during her adventures; the prevalence and significance of text-to-life and text-to-text utterances and, in Nigel's case, two examples of misreadings. I compare and contrast their quite different readings of the book and try to show how they negotiate the book's peculiarities, and attempt to make sense of the text that is before them.

Finally, I summarise what I believe the two sets of interactions I have analysed so far in parts B and C can tell us about the ways in which children might read and interpret metafictional picture book text.

## 2. *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley*

### a. a description of the book

*Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley* begins with a panoramic view, spread across the first page-opening of a tangle of pipes set in the foreground against an ambiguous background of sky, clouds, leaves, flowers and castle turrets. Tiny figures and animals from the story are scattered around this scene. The next page-opening displays only the title page but a further page turn reveals the first picture and words of the story proper.

This third page-opening shows, on the right-hand side only, Shirley and her mother in a bathroom. Shirley crouches at the end of a pink bath furthest away from the taps and her mother gestures towards her with a towel in her left hand and the bath plug in her right - she appears to have just pulled the plug out. Above their heads are printed the words, "Are you listening to me now, Shirley?". The next page-opening shows Shirley's mother, on the verso page, to be standing on a pair of bathroom scales, apparently turned away from the bath, with the words, "You haven't left the soap in the bath again, have you?", printed alongside. Opposite this image, on the recto side, is a cutaway picture of the bottom of the bath showing the boards and joists upon which it rests and the plumbing down which the bathwater is flowing. A very tiny version of Shirley, astride her rubber duck, appears to be sailing down the pipe on the water.

It is this page-opening which effectively sets the pattern of juxtaposition which structures the rest of the book. Each successive page opening places Shirley's mother within a very sketchy rendering of the bathroom - apparently preoccupied with mundane domestic tasks, and uttering parental platitudes - over against much more detailed and colourful pictures which show Shirley, dressed in only a bath towel, becoming ever more deeply involved in an adventure involving storybook knights, kings and queens. The sequence of page-openings goes as follows:

Page-opening 5

verso Shirley's mother looks in the mirror, combing her hair or massaging her scalp, and says, "You really ought to have a bath more often, Shirley".

recto Shirley, still riding her rubber duck, emerges from what seems to be a sewage outlet beneath a bridge into a stream. In the background are meadows on either side of the stream, trees, cows and a bridge.

Page-opening 6

verso Shirley's mother cleans the sink and says, "Some people don't even have baths".

recto Shirley grabs a branch above her head to save herself as her duck tips over the edge of a waterfall. In the background armoured knights gallop on horse back through a forest. The sky in the background is red, the floor of the forest a deep, purpley blue.

Page-opening 7

verso Shirley's mother looks out of the page, as if towards Shirley, holds up a towel and says, "Have you been using this towel, Shirley, or was it your father?"

recto Shirley sits behind a knight, on the back of his horse, as they plod through a dark, moonlit forest. She looks over her shoulder at what might be a witch hiding behind a tree.

Page-opening 8

verso Mother picks up sandals from beneath a bathroom cupboard. She says, "Look at your clothes all over the floor".

recto Shirley gallops across a yellow field, still on the back of the knight's horse, but this time accompanied by two other knights, one with a king, the other with a queen, riding behind.

Page-opening 9

verso Again the figure of Shirley's mother looks out of the page, this time holding up a shirt or blouse. Her words this time are, "This was clean on this morning and just look at it now".

recto Shirley, the queen and the king, who is pointing, look down from the battlements of a castle. Below a stream flows through yellow meadows. Two cows watch a duck, presumably Shirley's, float past.

Page-opening 10

verso Shirley's mother folds up clothes. Beside her are printed the words, "I wish you would learn to fold up your clothes nicely".

recto The king and the queen blow up large rubber ducks.

Page-opening 11

verso Shirley's mother brushes her hair, looking out towards the reader over the sink, but it is clear that the picture plane is to be taken as the surface of a mirror. She says, "I have better things to do than to run around tidying up after you".

recto In the foreground, the king sits astride a large rubber duck. He cradles in his arm a mock lance tipped with a boxing glove. In the background can be seen the queen and Shirley in similar postures.

Page-opening 12

verso The figure of the mother is partly obscured by what is obviously intended to be an open door. She says, "I'm just going to get your nightie".

recto Shirley punches the queen with her lance. The queen is depicted just at the moment when she topples from her duck into the water.

Page-opening 13

verso Shirley's mother bends to wipe the floor. The printed text says, "Now there's water everywhere!"

recto Almost a repeat of the previous page except this time it is the king that is pushed off his mount into the water. We see the splash as he falls.

Page-opening 14

verso only In this final frame Shirley and her mother are seen together again for the first time since the page-opening 3. They stand facing each other, Shirley in the bath but now wrapped in a towel, mother facing her, hands on her hips. The duck and some other items of bathtime clutter are gathered around the edge of the plughole in the now empty bath. There is no printed text.

**b. important features of the book**

In chapter two I argued that Burningham's two *Shirley* books could be considered metafiction by virtue of the large gap left by the author/illustrator between the two sets of images. Shirley and her mother, in the book described above, are only depicted together twice - once at the beginning, and once at the end. The main bulk of the text - ten page-openings in all - presents the reader with pairs of incompatible images. They are incompatible in the sense that Shirley cannot both be in the bath listening to her mother and enjoying an adventure the same time. I maintained that the most comfortable and familiar reading of this text is to naturalise the story in terms of the codes of Realism thus embedding Shirley's adventures within the overarching tale of a small, but common domestic moment - bathtime (I used *Come Away From the Water, Shirley* as my example in chapter 2, but the argument holds for the other book too). I further argued that despite the fact that this is the most common explanation of the *Shirley* books there is no explicit authorisation for this reading written into the text. It is thus heavily dependent upon the contribution of the reader.

There are, of course, some small hints and clues within the pictures that suggest we might best settle the story down by interpreting Shirley's wanderings as her imaginings, but they are small clues indeed and are not the same as explicit guidance. In a more conventionally Realist story, for example, the narrator's voice might assure us that, "...as her mother's voice droned on, Shirley slipped away into a daydream...". This complete absence of an authoritative narrating voice in itself constitutes an immense gap to be negotiated by the reader. Moreover, the conventional picture book sign for an imaginative sequence or daydream - the wavy-edged thought-bubble or frame - is also missing: an important and significant lack. Without such guidance and authority I maintain that *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley* is a text that presents the reader with a number of textual puzzles.

In addition to a high degree of indeterminacy in *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley* we also find some of the characteristic features of polysystemic picture book text. For



example, in the juxtaposition of the two sets of images we find a clear example of genre incorporation. However we finally choose to read the relationship between them the pairs of pictures represent two very different story genre worlds. On the one hand we have a species of domestic realism that represents an everyday-life-world so familiar to most of us that we can read it accurately from the minimal cues provided. The sketches of Shirley's mum and her fragmentary, banal utterances, operate as metonyms for a wider world of the home that is not depicted. On the other hand, Shirley's adventures are built up from images drawn from a stock that exploits a nursery, storybook view of the middle ages - knights and armour, witches in pointed hats, castles, and kings in golden crowns. The story conventions are different here and in order to be able to read it aright you need to understand the relevant codes, in much the same way that you need some knowledge of storybook piracy to be able to read *Come Away From the Water, Shirley*.

I would thus expect child readers - young children especially - to be puzzled to some degree by a book like this, though not necessarily excessively so, for as I have already argued in chapter seven, since young children know relatively little about books, what they are for and how they may be used, they are less likely to be shocked and surprised by the inventions of picture book makers than more practiced readers. I would also expect young children to be amused, for Burningham is a practised writer and illustrator for the young, but over and above puzzlement and amusement I would expect quite deliberate efforts on the part of child readers to make sense out of what they were seeing, hearing and reading. It is these efforts to make sense that I explore below.

### **3. Commentary: Nigel**

#### **a. probability**

In this section I describe and analyse the transcribed conversations that took place between myself and Nigel, and myself and Jane, as we read *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley* together. When there was a printed text to be read Nigel very rarely wished to be

responsible for doing the reading (although he did do this once or twice). In contrast, Jane was far more confident - and competent. Thus, as I read *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley* with them, Nigel preferred me to read the words while Jane was happy to take over this responsibility for herself. I use the term 'reading' throughout whether the children concerned were listening to *me* doing the reading or reading aloud themselves. I begin with Nigel and then consider Jane.

Nigel was an observant reader and was quick to comment upon features of the story that attracted his attention. Most often this would be about elements of a picture: "That looks like a fan" (line 62, appendix 8); "why is there a tree up there?" (244-245); "look it's dirty there... and there and there" (239 and 242). Frequently such observations - some in response to remarks of mine, many entirely spontaneous - would result in attempts to interpret events or images in some way and Nigel would often avoid determinate interpretations through the use of the word 'probably' and other related forms. For example, he would comment upon the possible course or consequences of an action within a picture or the story. At page-opening 5 Nigel remarks,

- |     |     |   |                      |
|-----|-----|---|----------------------|
| 108 | N__ | They <i>probably</i> couldn't bend down to get it |                      |
| 109 |     | look.. look at that one he can't get              |                      |
| 110 |     | down to get it                                    |                      |
| 111 | DL  |   | No it's too far away |
| 112 |     |   | isn't it the water?  |
| 113 | N__ | <i>Probably</i> fall in it.. aghh!..              |                      |
- (my emphases)

Similarly, he comments at line 294:

- |     |     |   |                      |
|-----|-----|---|----------------------|
| 294 | N__ | They're blowing up, the ducks                       |                      |
| 295 | DL  |   | They are aren't      |
| 296 |     |   | they?... wonder what |
| 297 |     |   | they're doing that   |
| 298 |     |   | for?                 |
| 299 | N__ | <i>Probably</i> for Shirley                         |                      |
| 300 | DL  |   | Yea?                 |
| 301 | N__ | Or someone... <i>probably</i> for them 'cos they're |                      |
| 302 |     | going swimming... and they can't swim               |                      |

and a little later:

332 N\_\_ look [through] there *I think* they're playing  
 333 boxing fights...

Nigel would also speculate on the possible identity or nature of objects and people. For example, at page-opening 5 where Shirley emerges from the sewage outlet, Nigel remarks, "That *might* be a gate" (line 114). Later, discussing page-opening 6, I ask, "...is that water do you think?" and Nigel replies, "No.. *probably* the blue path" (144-146). Further examples are:

332 N\_\_ It's *probably* her dad and Shirley.

344 N\_\_ where the fro... *probably* where the frogs  
 345 live 'cos it's green water where the frogs  
 346 live

|     |     |                              |                      |
|-----|-----|------------------------------|----------------------|
| 458 | DL  |                              | she gets another     |
| 459 |     |                              | one... doesn't she.. |
| 460 |     |                              | or she gets it back  |
| 461 | N__ | <i>Probably</i> gets it back |                      |

There is, in addition just one occasion where Nigel makes a tentative response to a direct query in the printed text:

|     |    |                       |
|-----|----|-----------------------|
| 194 | DL | HAVE YOU BEEN USING   |
| 195 |    | THIS TOWEL SHIRLEY OR |
| 196 |    | WAS IT YOUR FATHER?   |

197 N\_\_ She's got it dirty

|     |    |          |
|-----|----|----------|
| 198 | DL | Hm.. mmm |
|-----|----|----------|

199 N\_\_ *Probably* Shirley 'cos it got dirty...

Altogether there are ten such tentative attempts at interpretation in Nigel's commentary on the book and we might reasonably be tempted to see such tentativeness as a sign of sensitivity to the indeterminacy of the text. As I have already remarked above, in the absence of an authoritative narrating voice, much of the significance of the events within the story will initially be unclear, and much will rely upon what the individual reader brings

to a reading and an interpretation. Sometimes Nigel's attempts at interpretation are speculations about elements within the pictures that are relatively inert in terms of the story as a whole. A good example is Nigel wondering whether the cows depicted at page-opening 5 might fall into the stream if they tried to bend down to drink from it (this rather wayward behaviour is highly characteristic of Nigel's reading as we have already seen in part B). On the other hand, there are times when the behaviour of the characters in Shirley's storybook adventure simply have to be interpreted - there is after all no-one telling us what's going on here. It is quite reasonable to wonder at page opening 10 why the king and queen are inflating rubber ducks. Very understandably, Nigel speculates on them going swimming (see lines 294-302 above). What Nigel is responding to here - with a little focussing of attention from myself - is the kind of low level indeterminacy referred to in the previous section, a widening of the gaps that are always present in fiction, both in picture books and in prose

However, all of the examples of tentativeness cited above are what we might call 'intra-diegetic' - i.e. they are all observations relating to persons, events and objects within the story. There is no real sign here that Nigel is much concerned about the status of the story as a story. There is no hint in these examples that he is beginning to wonder where Shirley is, for example. Nigel reserves judgement on the nature of the story as a whole until much later in the reading. Up until page opening 13 (see fig.4 overleaf), where Shirley knocks the king off his duck and into the water, Nigel contents himself with comments on individual pictures and page-openings. There is some evidence that he does revise his interpretation of the story as we go, and we shall come to that shortly, but at this particular page-opening Nigel commits himself to a view of what is going on for the first time. He spontaneously connects the two images, verso and recto, and immediately grasps the metaphorical relationship between them:



372 DL ...NOW  
 373 THERE'S WATER  
 374 EVERYWHERE!

375 N\_\_ 'Cos she's punched the.. king in

376 DL Why? what do you mean?

377 N\_\_ She punched the king in and it probably made  
 378 a splash.. she's probably still playing in  
 379 the bath

380 DL Yea?.. so what.. you  
 381 mean the king falling  
 382 in the water what...  
 383 what that's done?

384 N\_\_ yea.. she's playing with.. her toys.

Here he appears to acknowledge that this pair of images have a quite specific relationship. The king falls in the pond and thus "...THERE'S WATER EVERYWHERE" in the bathroom. At my request for clarification - "what do you mean?" - Nigel explains that Shirley is probably still in the bath and playing with her toys. The 'probably' is, of course, interesting for it establishes the tentativeness of the interpretation, i.e. *this is the most likely explanation that I can come up with at the moment*. At this point Nigel effects a kind of closure upon the twin narratives and, although he does not say so explicitly, he accepts that the narrative depicted in the sequence of wordless pictures can be subsumed under the 'bathtime' events shown opposite. In other words he accepts that one reading of the book - now the most likely one - takes Shirley to be fantasising about kings and queens and knights as she plays with her toys in the bath. He is more explicit about this interpretation at the end of our conversation when I ask him to explain a little more clearly. He says he liked part of the story with the water battle best and then I ask,

428 DL So where do you think  
 429 Shirley's been all  
 430 this time?

431 N\_\_ Erm... playing in the bath with no water

432 DL Oh I see... so what

- 433 about all this  
 434 galloping around on  
 435 horseback?... and all  
 436 that?
- 437 N\_\_ She was probably using her fingers
- 438 DL Using her.. how would  
 439 she use her fingers?
- 440 N\_\_ Like.. going like that [*making two fingers*  
 441 *gallop like legs*].. and putting little  
 442 people on her fingers
- 443 DL Ah I see!
- 444 N\_\_ Or play men
- 445 DL Yea?
- 446 N\_\_ 'Cos there's these little things [with]  
 447 horses and (.) things [*I think he means 'play people'*]

Earlier in the book, at page-opening 8, where Shirley's mum gropes for shoes beneath a cupboard and Shirley gallops off on the back of a knight's horse, Nigel makes an observation that could be taken as a sign that he is linking the two sets of images in the very same way, but as I did not ask for clarification at the time it remains ambiguous:

- 223 DL ..LOOK AT YOUR  
 224 CLOTHES ALL OVER THE  
 225 FLOOR... that's the  
 226 kind of thing mum's  
 227 say sometimes isn't  
 228 it?... But what's this?  
 229 [*recto picture*]
- 230 N\_\_ She's probably out with her dad
- 231 DL Yea?
- 232 N\_\_ It's probably her dad and Shirley
- 233 DL Hmm

234 N\_\_ Still wrapped in her towel... he's the king

This exchange is ambiguous because, unlike the earlier passages where Nigel states clearly that he thinks Shirley is not outside the bathroom but actually still in the bath (i.e. he links the two pictures together), here he merely makes a statement about the one recto picture. Thus "...probably out with her dad" and "It's probably her dad and Shirley" could be taken either literally (Shirley really is out there riding) or metaphorically (Shirley's 'playing' at it, imagining it in the bath. It would be unjust to read backwards from the later realisation to this earlier exchange and read it as a sign that Nigel is developing a fixed interpretation at this point, but it remains an interesting possibility.

### **c. text-to-life exchanges**

One of the reasons why Nigel's spontaneous realisation that the splash in the pond can be seen as the same splash as the one in the bathroom is so interesting is that it is typical of his openness to association. It is an essentially dialogic reading, not in the sense that he creates the meaning out of dialogue with another, but in the sense that the text here is doubly-oriented - here is an event that can be seen in two different ways, or rather, here are two picturings of the same event. An openness to such possibilities is essential if the subtleties of a text, and its layers of meaning are to be penetrated. Not all children see this, as we shall discover shortly. We have already seen that it was characteristic of Nigel's reading of the whole book, and indeed of other books too, that he would happily pause and pursue the implications of a particular observation before resuming his scanning and reading of the text before him. Most commonly these digressions would be of the 'text-to-life' kind, where some element of an illustration would initiate an exchange about either some aspect of life in general or a specific feature of Nigel's own circumstances. Examples of the former type include a digression about the nature and purposes of armour that took us away from the story for a short while (171-181), and a discussion about the queen's antique headgear (268-286). Examples of the latter, specific, kind include Nigel telling me about a plastic sword that he had (30-41) and a comment upon how often he



had baths (131-135). In total there are seven text-to-life references in the conversation but, interestingly, none that were oriented from life-to-text.

Text-to-life connections are held to be important in the early stages of reading as they can help the reader to see the significance of textual matters in their own lives. In *The Making of a Reader*, Marilyn Cochran-Smith discusses a number of such connections that are mediated by an adult story reader (Cochran-Smith, 1984), but recently doubt has been cast on the usefulness for some children of this kind of interaction precisely because it takes children away from the world of the story and re-directs their attention towards non-textual information and structures (Gregory, 1992). In effect, children who are excluded from the world of the story in this way fail to learn enough about how stories work. In contrast, moves from life-to-text are held to assist children in bringing their life-knowledge to bear on the text they are reading.

Nigel, in his reading of *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley*, was only too willing to move beyond the text and did so often quite spontaneously. Indeed, he was even side-tracked by an erased library stamp in the margins of one of the pages (356-368. I was using a copy of the book that had been transferred from one library to another).

#### d. misreadings

A related feature of Nigel's reading is his proneness that we discovered in part B to misread certain visual codes. It is worth discussing these minor aberrations as they shed light not only upon Nigel's reading of this particular book, but also upon the more general matter of the reader's share in the making of meaning - an important topic that I shall return to later in the chapter. At line 139 for example, as we turn to page-opening 6 where the knights on horse-back appear for the first time galloping through the forest, Nigel remarks,

139 N\_\_ [snorts with laughter] [ ] in the  
 140 water.. but there's no splashes [looking at  
 141 the horses galloping - apparently - on the  
 142 surface of some blue water] (.) there's two

- 143           bunny rabbits
- 144   DL                           That's right.. is that  
145                                   water do you think?
- 146   N\_\_   No.. probably the blue path
- 147   DL                           Hmm.. could be  
148                                   couldn't it?
- 149   N\_\_   They.. they've gone into the .. erm devils..  
150                                   in the red thing
- 151   DL                           Into the devils? What  
152                                   do you mean?
- 153   N\_\_   Yea.. mm hell
- 154   DL                           Oh I see
- 155   N\_\_   'Cos it's red [*the background to the riders*  
156                                   - *the 'sky' glimpsed through the trees*]

Nigel's mistake here is fairly obvious - he initially reads the horizontal blue band upon which the riders seem to be galloping, as water, and then compounds the mistake by reading the red background as a sign that Shirley, and the knights, are now in hell. He alters his reading of the blue band to "...probably the blue path" at my prompting but makes no overt attempt to amend his initial reading of the red sky. My response at lines 157-160 is to move Nigel's attention to the galloping figures and the subsequent discussion is about what they are called ('knights'). Nigel may, of course have immediately amended his interpretation of the colour spontaneously and have said nothing, but the opportunity to follow this up was lost.

The analogy with miscues in oral reading again springs to mind although of course the parallel is but a crude one. Here, the two mistakes are different in terms of the level of reading in which Nigel's remarks are grounded; and in addition, we might judge the

illustrator to be responsible to some extent for the mistakes in as much as he has employed non-conventional means for depicting path and sky.

Let us further consider the first point. We might reasonably take Nigel's comments about splashes at 139-140 to indicate a direct misreading of the way that the path upon which the horses are galloping has been depicted - i.e. he has misunderstood the denotative relationship: blue band = path. This is as close as we come to an oral reading miscue, though the analogy is still only partly accurate. In contrast, Nigel's remarks about devils and hell involve a layer of significance above the denotative. I suggest that the red patches denote flames for Nigel, and that 'flames' then connote 'hell'. (thus, red = flames [denotation], flames = hell [connotation]). The connotation could as easily, perhaps even more easily, have been 'forest fire', but Nigel's grasshopper mind takes him straight from red patches to hell. Here, the analogy with the miscue is quite definitely out of place as it is in the nature of connotation to be always potentially plural. Connotation crucially depends for its effects upon the cultural codes and life experiences that readers bring to their readings and thus there will always be some degree of variation at this level of interpretation.

My second point concerns the way in which the reader's responsibility for meaning making is cut across by the writer/illustrator's responsibility for the signs out of which he or she weaves the fabric of his or her text. We could argue that here Burningham has created an opportunity for misunderstanding by employing non-conventional signifiers for his path and forest background. In the pictorial language that Burningham uses in this book - a language that he has developed over a period of time, but which has remained relatively stable - colours tend to be more or less naturalistic, though skies, for example, can change colour from page to page and can sometimes be distinctly non-naturalistic (e.g. at page-opening 9 the sky is washed a fairly strong green). Thus the deep, saturated red of the background, and the saturated blue of the path, at page-opening 6 are somewhat abnormal within Burningham's scheme of things and thus misleading. The red sky could possibly be

a flaming sunset since events over the page seem to be taking place in the forest at night, but the blue forest floor is distinctly odd.

Even granting some degree of oddity to Burningham's choice of colours at this point in the book Nigel's reading and interpretation of events must be considered rather wayward. In particular, he does not seem to be guided in his reading by any sense of likelihood. The range of interpretations he is prepared to tolerate is considerably wider than one might expect. He is not especially helped by his focus of attention - the strong colours seem to come first, before the realisation that there are knights galloping through a forest. As we have seen in part B, Nigel does not seem to be especially sensitive to the larger forms and structures of a developing story, structures that should progressively narrow down the range of possible interpretations at any particular scene or narrative moment - even in a metafictional text such as this one.

#### 4. Commentary: Jane

##### a. probability

Jane's reading of *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley* is quite different from Nigel's (see appendix 9). To begin with, there are fewer signs of doubt about the significance of events, people and objects in the pictures. When she offers interpretations there are only four occasions on which she employs the word 'probably', three times when she is attempting to move beyond the information given, and once, at the very end, when she offers a reinterpretation of the story. I shall consider the significance of the latter case later, but the three former examples are listed below:

1)

147 J\_\_ HAVE YOU BEEN USING THIS TOWEL SHIRLEY OR  
 148 WAS IT YOUR FATHER?... *probably* her father  
 149 'cos it's got big hands

2)

- 209 DL What are they doing  
210 there?
- 211 J\_\_ They're blowing up ducks.. rubber ducks
- 212 DL I wonder why?
- 213 J\_\_ 'Cos they seen... 'cos they're *probably*  
214 going to get that other one or something

3)

- 232 J\_\_ [about frogs].. she's just about to fall  
233 on them and it just... just in time moved  
234 out of the way
- 235 DL That's right
- 236 J\_\_ 'Cos it *probably* [ ]
- 237 DL They have to be very  
238 quick don't they?

Interestingly, these three qualified judgements overlap with Nigel's, certainly in the case of the towel and the rubber ducks, but also, to some extent, in their shared interest in the frogs.

#### **b. Shirley down the plughole**

In general, though, Jane was far more confident about her interpretations than Nigel and her confidence extended beyond localised detail to the overall pattern of the story. Unlike Nigel, who only made a suggestion about the relationship between the two sets of pictures towards the end of our reading together, Jane began with a confident appraisal of what

was happening. Between lines 71 and 78 the following exchange occurs relating to the cutaway picture of the bath:

71 DL ...that's a strange  
72 picture isn't it?

73 J\_\_ it's at the side isn't it... oh  
74 look

75 DL [laughs]

76 J\_\_ She's gone down the plughole!

77 DL Looks like it doesn't  
78 it?...

There is no 'probably' here, no 'maybe'. Jane appears to apply a kind of naive realism, a *what you see is what you get* schema to the pictured events. For Jane, Shirley really has gone down the plughole, and therefore can no longer be in the bath. It is therefore particularly puzzling for her that her mother never seems to notice. At page-opening 6, Jane remarks for the first time that Shirley's mum seems oblivious to Shirley's absence:

117 J\_\_ SOME PEOPLE DON'T EVEN HAVE BATHS...she's  
118 not taking any notice!

119 DL Who isn't?

120 J\_\_ her mother... 'cos she... she doesn't know  
121 yet that she's gone

122 DL No.. it doesn't look  
123 like it does it?

A little later, at page-opening 8:

167 J\_\_ LOOK AT YOUR CLOTHES ALL OVER THE FLOOR...  
168 [snorts]... she's in the bathroom and she  
169 hasn't noticed anything

Again, at page-opening 9, Jane continues,

186 J\_\_ THESE... THIS WAS CLEAN ON THIS MORNING  
187 AND JUST LOOK AT IT NOW... [laughs]...

|     |     |   |                      |
|-----|-----|---|----------------------|
| 188 |     | hand prints on it... still hasn't           |                      |
| 189 | DL  |   | well she seems to be |
| 190 |     |   | erm...               |
| 191 | J__ | Yea she seems to be looking at the bath but |                      |
| 192 | DL  |   | Hmm                  |
| 193 | J__ | But she still doesn't know where she is...  |                      |
| 194 |     | not taking any notice.                      |                      |

By the time we reach the last page with the single picture of Shirley standing in the bath, wrapped in a towel, Jane is still wondering how it has all been done:

|     |     |   |                        |
|-----|-----|---|------------------------|
| 247 | DL  |   | Right... I think we've |
| 248 |     |   | reached the last page  |
| 249 | J__ | Yea... she's back in her bath again       |                        |
| 250 | DL  |   | Hmm.. mmm              |
| 251 | J__ | Wonder how she got there?... just in time |                        |
| 252 |     | Before her mum notices..                  |                        |

Jane's persistence in believing that Shirley has been elsewhere than in her bath is remarkable in that she sustains this interpretation in the face of what appears to be contradictory evidence. At line 191, for example, she even explains that although Shirley's mum seems to be looking at the bath (she's holding up a tee shirt for Shirley to look at), she doesn't notice that Shirley is missing. Jane is puzzled but presses on regardless.

One possible explanation for this persistence might be that Jane is being guided by me as her teacher-interlocutor, and as I make no disconfirmatory remarks, and seem to acquiesce in her interpretation, she sees no possibility of reorienting her interpretation as she goes on (see lines 77-78 above). This could certainly be a contributory factor, although throughout all our readings together I had made it quite plain, both in my instructions, in my gestures, and in the non-verbal features of my contributions to our conversations, that

I was primarily interested in what the children thought about the books that we read together.

An alternative explanation could be that Jane is bringing to Burningham's playful text the conventional expectation that, as I remarked above, 'what you see is what you get' - i.e. that figures depicted in a landscape usually are 'in' that landscape. Indeed, there are features of the way in which Shirley's adventures are literally framed that might support such a reading. The reading that Nigel eventually adopts - that Shirley imagines her adventures while still in the bath - would avoid the problem of Shirley's mum not seeing she has gone, but such imagined events, when they are depicted in picture books and comics, are usually signalled through some variant of the thought bubble. This framing device tells us that the scenes within the wavy lines of the frame are mental events only, and do not belong to the same order of reality as the events within which they are embedded. A good example of this embedding may be found in Jill Murphy's *On the Way Home*, which we shall be examining shortly. *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley* lacks any such framing cue, and thus the way is open for the kind of interpretation that Jane makes.

There is yet a further possible explanation for Jane taking the route that she does, and I believe this last to be the most powerful. Jane makes only two text-to-life references within our conversation. One occurs near the beginning, very shortly after Jane's observation that Shirley has gone down the plughole:

- |     |     |   |
|-----|-----|---|
| 94  | DL  | ....she's come out                              |
| 95  |     | through the drain                               |
| 96  |     | hasn't she?                                     |
| 97  | J__ | There was... you for the evening..              |
| 98  |     | there's an evening day [ <i>presumably an</i>   |
| 99  |     | <i>'open evening'</i> ].. and Virginia's done a |
| 100 |     | [ ] and there was something like                |
| 101 |     | this where a little boy went down the..         |
| 102 |     | but I can't remember what it was like..         |
| 103 |     | Alice in Wonderland                             |



- 104 DL Mmm
- 105 J\_\_ Except it was called Alex in Wonderland
- 106 DL Alex in Wonderland..  
107 that sounds good
- 108 J\_\_ And he went down the plughole
- 109 DL Oh I see
- 110 J\_\_ And he went into Wonderland

Despite her hesitations, Jane eventually manages to explain that one of her classmates had created a story, presumably for a school open evening, modelled on *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, in which the main character slips down a plughole, just like Shirley. In other words, Shirley's only text-to-life reference masks a text-to-text reference. As she begins to read *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley* Jane calls up the model of *Alice* and provides herself with a story structure that leads her to interpret Shirley's adventures as being in some kind of Wonderland, beyond the sewage outfall. For Jane then, Shirley riding with the knights and fighting with the king and queen is not a mental fantasy, but a literary one.

### c. revising the interpretation

Unlike Nigel, who seemed to attend to detail first and larger structures only later, Jane begins her reading committed to a view of how the story, or stories, will take shape and subordinates all her detailed observations to this overarching view. At line 140, for example (page-opening 6), Jane asks, "I wonder where she is". The question comes at the end of an exchange about the loss of the rubber duck over the waterfall and who the knights might be (124-143). Thus, while attending to the detail, Jane continues to shape the larger story.

However, once Jane had completed her reading, and she was revisiting her favourite moments, I asked her, "...do you think she's really gone down the plughole?". Her response was immediate:

286 J\_\_ (very quietly) No I think she's only dreaming  
 287 or something... and it's probably only a  
 288 little rubber duck... which came up again

289 DL What do you mean?...  
 290 you mean her little

291 J\_\_ Yea.. she was dreaming... 'cos she saw  
 292 it go down the hole and she was dreaming  
 293 that she was on it and going down the  
 294 plughole as well and she met the king and  
 295 queen

What is remarkable about this brief exchange is the rapidity with which Jane was able to revise her views about the overall nature of the story. Literally in a split second she sees the possibility of embedding Shirley's adventures as a dream within the larger, mundane bathtime tale. She uses the possibility of the rubber duck disappearing down the plughole as a trigger for Shirley's fantasy and suggests that it "...came up again" in time for the final picture. If we ask the question, *when does a story become a story?*, and answer, with Bakhtin, *only when it is realised by a reader*, then we must admit that for Jane, *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley* became on this occasion at least two stories - one that took shape as she was reading and sharing it, and one only when she had finished reading it.

A further feature of this exchange worth noting here is that it demonstrates very clearly Jane's sensitivity to prompts and probings on my part. Both Jane and Nigel demonstrated time and again their willingness to amend a judgement or an interpretation on the basis of my having asked a question of the *do you think...* variety. There can be no doubt that to some extent the children inevitably read my reading of any book we happened to be sharing.

**d. text-to-life and text-to-text**

There are far fewer text-to-life references in Jane's reading than in Nigel's, in fact, there are only two. One I have already referred to and discussed above as disguised text-to-text.

The other occurs later at page-opening 8 at the point where the printed text reads LOOK AT YOUR CLOTHES ALL OVER THE FLOOR. I ask Jane if that is the kind of thing her mother says to her and she replies,

- 173 J\_\_ Ermm.. sort of.. sometimes
- 174 DL Sometimes?
- 175 J\_\_ Yea...aha!... oh look.. the king's on the  
176 back of that one [*laughs*]... my mum doesn't  
177 have to crawl all over the floor though
- 178 DL No?
- 179 J\_\_ [*laughs*]
- 180 DL Why.. she makes you do  
181 that does she?
- 182 J\_\_ No.. she picks them up... she just bends  
183 over that's all
- 184 DL Right.. shall we go  
185 on?

Here, Jane responds to a prompt that takes her away from the story, but by line 175 she is again involved with the details of Shirley's adventure. She is willing to talk about how the story relates to her own life, and responds again to my question at line 180, but she will not be distracted for too long from her reading.

As well as this text-to-life exchange, and the text-to-text reference discussed earlier, Jane makes a late allusion to another text at lines 267-272. She recalls the first picture of Shirley in the bath where she almost shows her bottom - a detail which made her laugh - and then explains to me that there is a similar incident in a book by Tony Ross, *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*. As we shall see, text-to-text cross-references of this kind were quite

common in Jane's and Nigel's reading, but in the present case there were far fewer examples in Jane's reading of the spontaneous wandering away from the story exhibited by Nigel. Her attention and understanding were more firmly rooted in the world of the book and, as I have argued above, the evidence suggests that her localised interpretations - details of individual pictures, for example, - were embedded within her understanding of the overall story. In the next section I review the two sets of readings considered so far.

## 5. Summary and discussion

In the readings analysed in this part of chapter nine we find confirmation of some of the findings from part B. In particular, again we see Nigel willing to relinquish the thread of the story to pursue an intriguing observation or a pressing anecdote that takes him from text to life; we see his proneness to misread visual codes - in this case the connotations of various colours; and again we see his relative lack of interest in an overarching, developing sense of story. At times it seems as if he is interested, amused and intrigued by the picture book more as a set of pictures than a story in pictures.

This list of characteristics looks very much like a catalogue of flaws. As a developing reader, Nigel does not look as if he is doing too well. However, there are certain aspects of this reading that add a layer of complexity to our picture of Nigel as a reader. To begin with, as he discusses the story with me, Nigel seems to be able to tolerate high levels of uncertainty. Time and again, as he wonders about the significance of some image or event he appears to settle for a 'probable' interpretation - for much of this reading, *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley* is an indeterminate text. It is true that some of this indeterminacy is of Nigel's own making. He wonders, for example, over details that other readers would have little time for such as whether the cows can drink without falling in. Most of his hesitations and doubts, however, are more closely linked to the kinds of indeterminacy that Burningham has inscribed into the text - why the king and queen are blowing up rubber ducks for example.

In addition to this remarkable tolerance Nigel appears to be quite sensitive to allusion and association. We see this sensitivity at work in his interpretation of the bizarrely coloured forest. My immediate response was a genuine exclamation of astonishment at the extravagance of the association. To move from floating down a stream into the environs of hell is quite a jump. More usefully, Nigel perceives the king's fall into the pond as a metaphor for what is happening back home. This is a very interesting interpretative move for it requires the recognition that the pictures may not be what they seem. This is a kind of looking and seeing that is far from naive. Moreover, it demonstrates a particular kind of interanimation of word and image, for it originates in my reading of the verbal text.

In Jane's case we find, once again, a more secure sense of story form. From the very beginning Jane thinks she knows what is going on, how the narrative is taking shape. There are fewer signs of uncertainty in her reading than in Nigel's, fewer modal constructions such as 'probably' and 'looks like'. Again she uses her sense of the overarching shape to guide her interpretations of the smaller details, even to the extent of over-ruling her sense that some of those details do not tally with her decided views of where Shirley is and what she is doing. To this extent Jane looks a far less competent reader in her interactions with this metafictional text than she did with the more conventional *Where is Monkey?*

When we put what we know about this text against the different ways in which the children set about reading it we see that Nigel's more open-ended approach, his willingness to suspend interpretation and his pleasure in arresting detail allow him to move along in a relatively untroubled way until his appreciation of the metaphoric function of some of the imagery helps to sort things out for him. Although his approach leads him to stumble once in a while, what we might call his indeterminate reading accords well with the indeterminate nature of the text. In contrast, Jane's more determinate manner, her firm grip on what she thinks the story should be like, does not serve her particularly well. Two aspects of Jane's reading intersect and interact here. First, one of the text's

indeterminacies - the lack of a conventional 'daydream' frame for Shirley's adventures - paves the way for her being blind to this particular interpretative avenue. Second, the allusion to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* seems to prime her with a particular, and paradigmatic, story form - the fall down into Wonderland. Stewart (1978) argues at length and persuasively that framing devices, the cues and clues that mark out the boundaries of different kinds of discourse, are especially important and interesting to the student of texts and reading as they are *sites of transformation*, they tell us what kind of thing we shall be looking at, or reading, or hearing should we shift our attention to text within the frame. Thus the absence of a normally high-profile frame is a serious matter for a picture book reader.

Jane's allusion to *Alice* not only helps us to understand how she may have come to make a determinate reading of *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley*, it raises for us the general issue of the role of the children's text-to-text references in their readings. Most of the children I read with were knowledgeable about picture books and children's stories, but Jane and Nigel were particularly prone to weave intertextual references into their conversation. In the next part of the chapter I examine two readings with Jane and Nigel where their own previous experience of books and stories plays an important role in their interpretations.

## **D. TWO MORE BOOKS**

### **1. Introduction**

In part D I analyse the transcripts of conversations that took place during readings and retellings of two more, metafictional picture books: *John Patrick Norman McHennessy - the Boy Who Was Always Late* by John Burningham (hereafter JPNM), and *On The Way Home* by Jill Murphy. The former book was the first picture book that I read with the group of infant children described in part A. Some extracts from that original reading may be found in appendix 10. At that time the children had not met me before. Nevertheless, they were interested and talkative and our group sharing reveals a little more of Jane's and Nigel's approach to reading. Two weeks after this first meeting I asked a number of children in the group to retell the story to me. This they did, one at a time, in the school staffroom (appendices 11 and 12). Some weeks later still I shared with the children, one at a time, *On The Way Home* (appendices 13 and 14).

In the following sections I again begin by describing the two books and then move on, in parts three and four, to discuss the children's readings and retellings. The most noteworthy parts of this discussion are, perhaps, the differences between Jane's and Nigel's interpretations of the second of the two books. Finally, I summarise part D and gather together the accumulated evidence of all the readings discussed so far.

### **2. *John Patrick Norman McHennessy - the Boy Who Was Always Late* and *On The Way Home***

#### **a. the books described**

*John Patrick Norman McHennessy - the Boy Who Was Always Late* was published in 1987, one year after *Where's Julius?*, and it possesses a number of similar features. In JPNM, Burningham explores further his interest in how different styles of pictorial imagery may be set against each other, and how what is really happening to the characters in the story might be interpreted. The cover shows an ogre-like caricature of a

headmaster, complete with cap and gown, leaning menacingly towards a little boy stood before him who appears to be dripping water into a puddle on the floor. The endpapers consist of rows and rows of apparently handwritten 'lines' - "I must not tell lies about crocodiles and I must not lose my gloves".

The story proper begins with a picture of John Patrick walking down a road that winds through open fields. It is dark, presumably just before dawn for a glimmer of sun peeps over the horizon, and the printed text tells us that he is "...off along the road to learn". The first full page-opening depicts John Patrick engaged in a tug of war with a crocodile who has his satchel clamped in its jaws. The sun is now rising and the picture is in full colour across both pages. The words tell us that "...the crocodile came out of a drain.." and that, "John Patrick Norman McHennessy pulled and pulled but the crocodile would not let go." The next page-opening shows, on the verso page, John Patrick throwing his glove for the crocodile to catch thus releasing his bag and opposite, set within a rough oval, a tiny John Patrick crossing more fields as he hurries "..along the road to learn". Unfortunately, the episode has made him late.

The following page-opening shows a confrontation between the little boy and the large, black-gowned headmaster. The latter holds a cane in his hands and asks, "John Patrick Norman McHennessy, you are late and where is your other glove?" John Patrick meekly replies, "I am late, Sir, because on the way a crocodile came out of a drain and got hold of my satchel, and would only let go when I threw my glove, which he ate." The picture opposite shows the headmaster shouting, "There are no crocodiles living in the drains around here. You are to stay in late and write out 300 times, 'I must not tell lies about crocodiles and I must not lose my glove.' ". Both of these scenes are pictured against the blank white page, the school and classroom being represented simply by a token, old-fashioned school-desk. The only colours are the black and white of the headmaster's clothes, the dingy brown of the desk, and the dull red and grey of John Patrick's jacket and trousers. The following page-opening shows, on the left, John Patrick sitting at his desk writing his lines ("So John Patrick Norman McHennessy stayed in late and wrote 300



times, 'I must not tell lies...' ") and, on the right, another picture in full colour of him as he hurries off once more "...along the road to learn".

The sequence of events, along with their consequences, is now repeated. The next page-opening shows John Patrick's trousers being seized from behind by a lion. Over the page the lion wanders away while John Patrick hides in a tree and then, on the facing page, we see him hurrying on to school. Over the page we see the headmaster in a rage at this latest of John Patrick's 'lies'. He shouts and yells and jumps in the air in his anger. This time, John Patrick must stand in the corner and say out loud 400 times, "I must not tell lies about lions and I must not tear my trousers." The next sequence of pages shows the hapless child hurrying along and then being swept off a bridge by a tidal wave. He manages to cling on to a rail and eventually makes it to school dripping wet. This time the headmaster is furious. He leaps and yells, becoming more demonic than ever. John Patrick is to be locked in while he writes out 500 times the record of his crimes. In addition he is now threatened with a caning if he continues telling lies.

The final sequence shows that next day John Patrick manages to get to school unmolested and unharmed and thus on time. Inside the old-fashioned school-house he sees the headmaster held up in the rafters beneath the roof by a huge gorilla (see fig.5 overleaf). The pictures show this in more or less the same way that John Patrick's mishaps have been depicted, except that the pictorial style of the schoolroom scenes (sketchy outlines, token single desk and door) is now merged with the more detailed and colourful imagery of the creature. The verbal text at this page-opening reads as follows: (verso) "'John Patrick Norman McHennessy, I am being held up in the roof by a great big hairy gorilla. You are to get me down at once.' (recto) 'There are no such things as great big hairy gorillas in the roofs around here, Sir.' (over page) And John Patrick Norman McHennessy set off along the road to learn." This final page shows him walking off towards a sunset.

*On The Way Home* by Jill Murphy is also concerned with stories and lies. I have already briefly described the story in chapter 2 part C but here I want to try to suggest the way the



book might appear to a first time reader. It begins with a picture of Claire, the heroine, leaning on a waste-bin beside some park railings, clutching a grazed knee, and looking sorry for herself. The printed text reads, "Claire had a bad knee, so she set off home to tell her mum all about it." Over the page the first full page-opening shows Claire meeting a friend, Abigail, to whom she proceeds to tell the story of how she got her bad knee. The meeting and the story Claire tells are shown in a sequence of pictures, three on each page. The first two frames, where Claire meets her friend and starts her story, are rectangular, finely outlined in black. The middle three frames are cloud-like in shape, rather like thought-bubbles, and these depict the events described in Claire's account. The final frame shows Claire rounding off her story to the astonished Abigail.

Abigail is astonished because the story is highly dramatic and quite extraordinary - " 'Well,' said Claire, 'there was a very big, bad wolf, and it came sneaking up behind me as I passed by, and it tried to take me home for its tea! But I screamed for help, and a woodcutter came and chased the wolf away, and the wolf dropped me, and that's how I got my bad knee.' 'Gosh!' said Abigail."

Over the page Claire meets another friend, Paul, to whom she tells another, quite different story. The layout of the page is the same - Claire's tale to her friend represented in large thought-bubble frames in between the rectangular panels of the frame story - but this time the cause of Claire's bad knee turns out to be an alien invasion. She claims to have been abducted by a flying saucer from which she managed to struggle free just in time, crashing to the earth below, which is how she hurt her knee. Paul can only exclaim, "Good gracious me!" Over the page the reader discovers another friend and another tale. this time it is Amarjit who listens to the story of the crocodile that came lumbering out of the canal and that tried to pull the hapless Claire into the water. "How dreadful!" says Amarjit. In successive page-openings Claire is squeezed by a snake, picked up by a dragon, dragged away by a gorilla, caught up by a giant, frightened by a ghost and captured by a witch.

Eventually Claire arrives on her doorstep and as she begins to tell her mother what we assume is the true story - i.e. that *she fell off a swing in the park - she bursts into tears*. The final sequence of pictures shows (verso) *Claire in close-up against the wall of her house asking for a very big plaster*; (recto) *an image of larger than life-size plasters scattered from an open box against a plain white background*, and (over page) *a final tail-piece of a smiling Claire sitting on the ground, arms around knees, a huge plaster covering her graze*.

**b. important features of the texts**

JPNM is similar in many respects to the *Shirley* books and to *Where's Julius?*. It shares with these earlier books a concern with the different worlds of adults and children; with more or less irreconcilable sets of events within the same one story; and with alternating different pictorial languages to represent different sets of events. However, there are important differences. In *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley* the separate worlds of parent and child face each other across the gutter of each page-opening and, as we have seen, the reader can be led to interpret one tale as being embedded within the other. In *Where's Julius?* the two worlds are separated through the book's pagination so that a page has to be turned each time before we can fully discover where Julius is. Moreover, the question, narratively speaking, of Julius' whereabouts is less easily resolved. The conventional closure of child's daydream represented within a familiar domestic world does not map onto the page by page features of the book.

In JPNM the events in the out-of-school life of the child may or may not be daydreams. We are given no clue. A reader may begin by responding to the preposterousness of the crocodile, the lion and the tidal wave with the assumption that they must be *stories*, John Patrick's inventions and, of course, such a perspective is supported by the headmaster's demands for truth - despite his fiendish rages, his is the voice of everyday common sense. The twist in the tail not only gives the ogre-like headmaster his comeuppance, it casts into doubt any assumption that what we have seen of, and heard about, John Patrick is fantasy. Are the animals and the tidal wave real - i.e. really present to the boy and the headmaster -

or not? The reader has no way of knowing. JPNM is thus rather more radically indeterminate than *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley*.

*On the Way Home* exploits the indeterminacy of its opening to create the necessary gap into which Claire pours her extravagant tales. These tales can in no way be made to cohere except as a group of untruths, fabrications or lies. Their incoherence thus prepares the reader for a resolution in the form of the true story told to her mother at the end. The most distinctive feature of the book, however, is the extraordinary collection of fantastic stories at its heart - a "festive display of accumulation over balance" (Stewart, 1984). It is in this accumulation, this excess, that the book's main interest lies.

As with other cumulative tales, Claire's stories lead nowhere. They do not advance an overall plot, do not thicken or enrich an overall story, do not even advance our understanding of Claire as a character (we know what she is like after the first two or three stories). Rather in the manner of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, they actively inhibit, rather than promote development.

We may enjoy Claire's stories, admire the way they are depicted, even smile at the gullibility of all her friends but there is, of course an alternative response. Claire's proneness to exaggeration is not just a narrative matter, it is an ethical one too (see chapter two part C). In what follows, when we examine Jane's and Nigel's readings of *On the Way Home*, we shall see how their interpretations of this matter differ profoundly.

### **3. Commentary: Nigel**

#### **a. sharing the first book**

*John Patrick Norman McHennessy - the Boy Who Was Always Late* was the first book that I shared with the infant group as a whole. This first group discussion reveals features typical of Nigel's contributions to book-sharing. For example, at the very beginning, he

recognises that JPNM is by John Burningham, and remarks that, "...we've had lots of John Burningham" (line 28). As we shall see later in section three, when I examine Nigel's reading of *On the Way Home*, he was very aware of intertextual allusions and frequently referred to other books and stories that he knew. Books and stories were clearly important to him and were never far from his mind while discussing what we were reading.

Later, Nigel makes one of his characteristically quirky observations about the depiction of the Headmaster in the book (the two asterisks indicate unidentifiable voices):

- 80 N\_\_ [*indicating picture*] The teacher there is different to the back  
 81 it looks like
- 82 DL Different to the back?
- 83 N\_\_ Yea
- 84 \*\* Different bit of [ ] say he's got a bigger nose
- 85 DL Got a bigger nose? Do you think so?....
- 88 \*\* (*several voices*) He is the same man... but he looks... he don't  
 89 look like it... he looks longer
- 90 DL Which... well who's got the bigger nose?... do you think he's got  
 91 the bigger nose or he's got the bigger nose?
- 92 \*\* (*several voices*)..he's got the bigger nose
- 93 N\_\_ It's big there but on the other side it's quite small

Nigel was, indeed, quite correct that there was a distinct shift in the way Burningham represented the headteacher from page to page, but characteristically, this observation comes out of nowhere and does not seem to be anchored to any larger sense of what is happening in the story.

#### b. Nigel retelling the story

At first, Nigel had some difficulty in remembering much of the story, although with very little prompting he recalled the long-winded title (8-24, appendix 11). His first attempt to tell the story proper involved a telescoping of events into a very compact summary (40-50). He then moved straight to the ending, where the headteacher is caught up in the rafters by a gorilla:

52 N\_\_ And then the teacher said [ ]..  
53 he was pretending he had got stuck up there  
54 a gorilla [was holding him]... John Patrick  
55 Norman McHennessy said there's no such  
56 thing as gorillas and in one bit when John  
57 Patrick Norman McHennessy was coming to  
58 school there was a lion...

This brief account seemed to remind Nigel of some of the details of the story and he moved on to mention the lion and the crocodile. I was intrigued that Nigel remembered the conclusion of the story in terms of the headmaster pretending to be in the clutches of a gorilla, so at the end of his retelling I asked him about this interpretation:

83 DL Right.. do you think  
84 erm.. you said you  
85 said that the.. the  
86 teacher pretended he  
87 was up in the roof  
88 with the

89 N Yea I don't think he really did that

90 DL the gorilla

91 N I think he was holding on to it

92 DL Holding on to what?

93      N      Holding on to the top of the roof

94 DL Oh I see.. so erm..  
95 what about the gorilla  
96 in the picture.. you  
97 think the gorilla was  
98 just sort of pretend?

- 99 N\_\_ Yea.. I think he was just holding on to it..  
 100 [ ] his glove came off in the  
 101 wind
- 102 DL Oh I see right..  
 103 right.. so..
- 104 N\_\_ And the satchel just got caught on something  
 105 that looked like a crocodile
- 106 DL Right.. so Patrick  
 107 just sort of lost.. he  
 108 lost his glove?
- 109 N\_\_ Yea
- 110 DL and tore his trousers  
 111 and things
- 112 N\_\_ Tore the trousers on a tree going past.

Nigel's interpretation of this climactic event appears to be that the headmaster only *imagines* the presence of the gorilla and that really he is simply holding on to the rafters - though why anyone, let alone a headmaster, should want to swing from the roof beams does not seem to trouble him. This interpretation belongs in the same category as Nigel's perception that Shirley is splashing in the bath when the picture shows her to be toppling the king from his duck (see back, part C). It is a grasping of something that is unsaid, or better still - since there is nothing there to be grasped - a positing of a particular relationship between image and meaning. As in the case of Shirley and the splash, Nigel appears spontaneously to see the picture meaning other than what it represents. In other words, he does not see the picture as operating metonymically - i.e. as a small part of a much larger whole scene - but *metaphorically*, a standing in for something else - the headmaster's fantasy.

This interpretation, mediated through Nigel's retelling of the tale, was entirely spontaneous. Moreover, it appeared to suggest to him how he might account for the presence of all the other animals and bizarre occurrences in the story. He goes on to imply



that John Patrick must also either have been fantasising or was simply using stories about thieving animals to excuse his lateness. He doesn't use terms like 'imaginary' or 'daydream', he simply offers explanations in everyday-life-world terms ("Tore the trousers on a tree going past"). Interestingly, however, he does suggest the means by which the animal fantasies might have been conjured up in John Patrick's mind: "...the satchel just got caught on something that looked like a crocodile". And again, he did not really throw his glove for the crocodile, it simply "... came off in the wind". Nigel seems to impute to John Patrick the same level of suggestibility that he is possessed of himself. -

c. *On the Way Home: Claire's stories*

Two and half weeks after Nigel and Jane had retold the story of JPNM we discussed *On the Way Home*. Both children knew the story, in fact, they had heard it read in a school assembly some weeks previously. My conversation with Nigel (see appendix 13) was somewhat shorter than usual, partly because I had no desire to take the children all the way through what is in fact a long book, and partly because I only had a short while before the staffroom where we were reading would be used for morning break. Nonetheless, Nigel's contributions to the conversation are once again revealing.

One of the most interesting features of Nigel's account of this story is his interpretation of what Claire, the central character, does each time she meets one of her friends. "She makes up stories", he says (4), "...she makes up loads of stories" (11), and "Now she's making up another story" (150). At first sight this may not appear a particularly profound observation, but it is in sharp contrast to Jane's view as we shall shortly see, and tells us much about Nigel's understanding of, and attitude towards Claire's behaviour. Nigel identifies each episode as an episode of storytelling and surmises that Claire does it to make her friends laugh (152). When I ask him about this, he shifts his ground slightly and says it is "...to make 'em.. surprised and impressed." This last is a good hypothesis - Claire seems to be trying very hard to impress her friends - but Nigel doesn't concern himself at all with the ethics of Claire's willingness to mislead her friends. He is more concerned with

the tales she tells and the stories that they remind him of - indeed, he makes four distinct text-to-text references.

I have several times referred to text-to-text references within the children's commentaries - overt allusions to stories that the children have heard or read before. We might call these allusions 'intertextual', except that they vary enormously in terms of the detail invoked by the reference, and also in terms of how integrated the allusion appears to be in their meaning-making. For example, sometimes the children simply allude to a title (e.g. Raymond Briggs' *Jim and the Beanstalk*, line 238 of the present transcript), and sometimes the reference seems to help in the construction of meaning (e.g. Jane's invocation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* discussed in part B above). Here Nigel refers to:

***Little Red Riding Hood -***

- |    |     |  |
|----|-----|--|
| 75 | DL  |  |
| 76 |     | ...AND A WOODCUTTER CAME AND CHASED THE WOLF                     |
| 77 |     | AWAY AND THE WOLF DROPPED ME AND THAT'S HOW I GOT MY<br>BAD KNEE |
| 78 | N__ | That's like erm (.) Little Red Riding Hood                       |
| 79 | DL  | Why.. why do you say   |
| 80 |     | that?  |
| 81 | N__ | 'Cos.. in..s.. in one of my stories a                            |
| 82 |     | woodcutter comes to help Little Red Riding                       |
| 83 |     | Hood and   |
| 84 | DL  | right [     ]  |
| 85 | N__ | cuts her up and puts stones in it and he                         |
| 86 |     | can't move   |
| 87 | DL  | That's right yes   |
| 88 |     | .. you're right (.) do   |
| 89 |     | you think that's what  |
| 90 |     | Claire was perhaps   |
| 91 |     | thinking of when she   |
| 92 | N__ | Yea  |

93 DL told that story?..

***Jack and the Beanstalk -***

229 DL ... there's a giant

230 N\_\_ Jack and the Beanstalk

231 DL Oh!.. what.. you mean  
232 that's where the giant  
233 comes from (.) sort of  
234 thing.. yea?

235 N\_\_ There's a story and.. and the giant.. in  
236 Jack and the Beanstalk

***Jim and the Beanstalk***

238 N\_\_ And there's Jim and the Beanstalk

239 DL That's right.. there  
240 is too

241 N\_\_ But there's not.. I've never seen a giant  
242 like that before

***The Pied Piper of Hamelin -***

120 N\_\_ ... hey what they  
121 do is some stories they [true].. story on  
122 the front and they're true like the Pied  
123 Piper says true story on the front

124 DL Yea?

125 N\_\_ so it's true!.. like he says

It is clearly the pictures of the wolf and the woodcutter that suggest to Nigel the tale of *Little Red Riding Hood* though there is no sign of that particular character in Claire's story. *Jack and the Beanstalk* is similarly called up by the explicitness of the illustrations in the book. Jim and the Beanstalk appears to be suggested by Nigel's referring to the

former tale rather than through any pictorial information, and the reference to *The Pied Piper* is part of a longer attempt to account for what Nigel perceives to be the falsity of Claire's stories. As such, it is the most interesting of the four allusions for it helps to guide Nigel's thinking. Indeed, it begins in a classic life-to-text statement - an attempt to bring his life-knowledge to bear upon the story to help him make sense of it. The fact that he eventually fails to make sense testifies to the text's overall complexity

**d. Claire's stories are "...not really true"**

The reference to *The Pied Piper* comes at the end of an attempt by Nigel to find the evidence that supports his contention that Claire's stories are "...not really true"

|     |     |  |  |
|-----|-----|--|--|
| 95  | DL  |  | THE  |
| 96  |     |  | WOLF DROPPED ME AND THAT'S HOW I GOT MY BAD KNEE (.) |
| 97  |     |  | GOSH! SAID ABIGAIL! (.) cor!                         |
| 98  | N__ | That's not really true                         |  |
| 99  | DL  |  | ( <i>laughing</i> ) how do you                       |
| 100 |     |  | know it's not true                                   |
| 101 |     |  | though?  |
| 102 | N__ | 'Cos there's no such thing as foxes and wolves |  |
| 103 | DL  |  | No?  |
| 104 | N__ | There is but.. you'd never ever see them       |  |
| 105 |     | in day.. they only come out at night           |  |
| 106 | DL  |  | Yea?.. But there are..                               |
| 107 |     |  | there are sometimes                                  |
| 108 |     |  | wolves and woodcutters                               |
| 109 |     |  | in stories aren't                                    |
| 110 |     |  | there?   |
| 111 | N__ | Wolves don't live in this country              |  |
| 112 | DL  |  | No they don't that's                                 |
| 113 | N__ | foxes sometimes do                             |  |
| 114 | DL  |  | Right.. right... I                                   |



Claire "...probably makes it up" (120) and then seems to have a brain wave: Claire's story cannot be true because the book "...doesn't say true story on the front" (127-128) like *The Pied Piper*. The implication of this last claim would be that not only are Claire's tales to her friends not true, but even her truthful account to her mum at the end is not true either. In this sense, 'not true' means not based upon real life events, i.e. fictional.

Nigel does not seem to get very far with this largely solitary dialogue and argument. I believe that having made the original, and perfectly correct, claim that Claire's story is not true, he finds himself at a loss to explain quite why this is so. The difficulty, I think, lies in the fact that several senses of 'true' and 'not true' intersect at this point. Claire's stories are implausible, given the basic premise of the frame story (real wolves do not leap out at you as you walk suburban streets); they are lies too - you simply should not say a wolf leapt out at you if what really happened was you fell off a swing; they are also clearly fictional in the sense that Claire gets them from the world of story (e.g. *Little Red Riding Hood*); but they are also doubly fictional in that Claire's stories are embedded in Jill Murphy's story. In a sense, this is Nigel's final point. I suspect this network of intersecting untruths is responsible for Nigel's inability to get it straight.

"That's not really true" is one of only two life-to-text connections that Nigel made in all of the readings we shared (the other is the reference to magpies in *Where is Monkey?*). As we saw in the case of *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley*, he is much happier moving in the opposite direction, letting the story lead him to the wider world outside the book. Once again, as we shared *On the Way Home*, Nigel took several opportunities to move outside the text. These occur at 61-69 ("In our classroom there's a Claire"); 136-143 ("I've got a friend Paul"); 203-206 ("There's laughing Hyenas though") and 213-223 ("I've got a great... computer game"). Nigel also makes the observation that my way of pronouncing the name 'Amarjit' sounds like /a midget/.

#### 4. Commentary: Jane

##### a. sharing the first book

Jane's role in the original, group sharing of JPNM was quite prominent. Her voice is quite recognisable on the audio-tape recording and her quick laugh, and sharp response to the book marked her out from the beginning as an interested, and interesting, reader. Indeed, it is her quick appreciation of the story that is the most notable feature of her contribution. She seemed extremely skillful at making predictions on the basis of extremely limited information and was delighted when her predictions were confirmed. None of the children knew JPNM although they were all familiar with the books of John Burningham. It was Jane who spotted the author's name first (line 4, appendix 10), and who immediately recognised the design of the endpapers as JPNM's punishment for being late. I deliberately attempted to conceal this design as I opened the book, for I wanted the children to start on the story proper without extra clues. Jane caught the merest glimpse of the 'lines' at the front and commented,

35 J\_\_ that's good.. what the boy.. [several voices].. how much writing  
36 he had to do

37 DL That's right [turning back] there's a lot of writing there

38 J\_\_ He.. umm.. [several voices] comes to school really late

Before we had even begun the story, Jane had connected the title (the only piece of text we had read), the endpaper design, and the front cover picture, and transformed them into an interpretation (punishment for being late). A similar moment occurs a little later when I paused from reading the printed text to ask how the children knew he was on his way to school (59). Several voices contributed the observation that he was carrying a satchel, but Jane commented that JPNM was "walking along the road to learn" (65-66), an echoing of Burningham's oblique refrain, "John Patrick Norman McHennessy set off along the road to learn", and a demonstration of her sensitivity to allusive language.

**b. retelling the story**

Later, when I asked her to tell me the story of JPNM, Jane was hesitant and thoughtful. She was clearly concentrating hard, apparently trying to remember the events in sequence, and seemingly trying to recall it as a written text. She remembered, and repeated, memorable phrases such as "...the road to learn" (80, appendix 12) and took every opportunity to reproduce other lines and phrases from the book: "I must not tell lies about crocodiles I must not... lose my glove" (54-56).

Interestingly, Jane's account of the climactic moments of the story transforms her interpretation of the book into the text of the book just as Nigel's did:

91 J\_\_ After.. after that when he went [forward] to  
 92 learn and he saw the teacher was hanging  
 93 up [by] the gorilla.. and he said get me  
 94 down and.. and he.. and the boy said no  
 95 'cos you.. 'cos you made me write and write  
 96 or something like that.. and that was the  
 97 end of the story

In the original, the headmaster simply asks JPNM to "Get me down at once", to which the boy replies, "There are no such things as great big hairy gorillas in the roofs around here, Sir". Jane fills in the gap in the text with the reasons she supposes JPNM to have. In so doing she moves the story metonymically along in the direction of Realism. Nigel, we recall, substituted a metaphoric reading.

**c. *On the Way Home: Claire's lies***

In striking contrast to Nigel, Jane interprets Claire's accounts of her accident as 'lies' rather than stories:

1 DL Why do you think this  
 2 one's a good one?  
 3 J\_\_ 'Cos she lies t... she lies to her friends  
 4 DL Yea?



5       J\_\_ But when she gets home she tells her mum  
 6           and I like the bits where she lies to her  
 7           friends 'cos she does funny ones where she  
 8           punch[ed] the giant on the nose and..  
 9           [*laughs*] things like that

We know from Heath (1983) that the cultural context into which children are born, and within which they mature and develop, can profoundly affect their conception of what counts as a story. Stories for some children are untruths for others. In this study I am not concerned with the factors that influence the development of children as readers, and I have no evidence that the communities within which Nigel and Jane were raised taught different lessons about stories, but their reactions to *On the Way Home* are nonetheless very interesting for the light they cast upon the ways in which meaning might be made from such a text.

A useful way to approach this issue - i.e. are Claire's stories simply stories, or are they lies - is through the categories of reading proposed by Scholes (1985). Several times within this chapter, and within the thesis as a whole, I have alluded to Scholes' analysis of the reading process, but nowhere in the transcripts is it more clearly exemplified than here. Scholes proposes that we might consider three stages, or levels, within reading (though there is no suggestion that these stages occur in any sequential order). First is the creation of *text within text*, i.e. the base level at which we make meaning from the array of signifiers before us on the page. It is 'within' for, as we saw from the account of Bakhtin's translanguistics in chapter seven, every reader creates meaning afresh at each reading. The words on the page are but the framework around which the specificity of the meaning is woven. Second, is *text upon text*, the interpretation we make of the text we have woven. At this level we look for significances over and above the bare recognition and recounting of events and utterances. Finally, as we read, we can - even should - create *text against text*, i.e. place the meanings and interpretations we have made alongside some standard, within some Goodman-like world, and be prepared to criticise the text we have wrought.

In Jane's reading, as much as in Nigel's, I believe we can see these different levels of reading being negotiated.

Here, for example, at lines 1 to 9, we see Jane recalling an earlier reading at the levels of text upon text, and text against text. The interpretation she offers of Claire's behaviour is that she is lying. What Claire is doing, i.e. telling each of her friends a different story, is not in question, but the feature of that activity that is most prominent for Jane is the fact that the stories are untrue. Within the world of the embedding story, the world where Claire fell off a swing, she is quite correct - the stories are untrue - but we saw above, in my discussion of Nigel's reading, how the concept of truth is not transparent in this book, interpretations are thus far from obvious. Claire's stories, then, are interpreted by Jane as lies. In employing the term 'lie', Jane is also implicitly creating a text against text in as much as she is invoking an ethical standard - i.e. you should not tell lies, especially to your friends. It is true that Jane is not moved overmuch to castigate Claire for this breach of common decency for she is also attracted by the fact that her lies are also "funny" (6-9). She recognises, in other words, that the book is not a serious tract and is intended to be enjoyed.

Nigel in contrast moves towards a different interpretation, one that is rather less easy to describe. As we have seen, he seems content to leave his interpretation at the level of storytelling. Toward the end he offers some reasons for Claire's behaviour, and these range across: to make her friends laugh; to surprise them, and to impress them (152-161, appendix 9). The one reason he does not bring forward is *to deceive*. He is aware that the stories are untrue, but we saw how difficult it was for him to unravel what 'untrue' might mean. He does remark that Claire "...probably makes it up" (120, appendix 9), but is really not at all concerned about the ethical implications of this. Indeed, he does not explicitly make a move towards text against text in any form, but seems content to be beguiled by Claire's Scheherezade-like ability to keep them coming.

When I asked Jane why Claire tells lies (13-15), she initially found it very hard to explain. Her account at 16-19 is awkward and stumbling. It is difficult to follow her attempts at finding a reason, and I suggest that she had not really thought about this before. It is likely, I think, that she settles for *wanting to impress*. What she actually says is,

17 J\_\_ ..say that they think that  
18 things are doing exciting.. that  
19 thing.. she done things exciting...

Like Nigel she surmises, quite correctly, that one of the reasons that people like Claire tell untruths is to enhance their image in the eyes of their friends and acquaintances. Beneath these interpretive moves lie certain kinds of life knowledge that assist the children in their reading.

Even when pressed about the origins of Claire's stories, Jane does not seem to see them as storybook constructions. When I ask, "Where do you think she gets her stories from?" (72-74) she answers,

77 J\_\_ 'Cos the swing sort of did drop her didn't  
78 it and [hey] the swing did drop her because  
79 she fell off and... in all the stories it's  
80 dropping isn't it?

Now this is quite a sophisticated response to the question. First of all she refuses to take up my agenda (I'm interested in the fact that *they're all stories from books...*) and offers instead a metaphoric reading of the pictures with the image of dropping or being dropped as the pivot of the substitution. Not to be deterred from my own aims, I pursued the question further. "I just wondered why she chose things like wolves and woodcutters and witches and ghosts.." (86-90). Jane's response - "...because they're exciting and she wants to tell her friends exciting things" (92-94) betrays a lack of interest in the literary and folkloric roots of Claire's tales and a dogged belief in Claire's desire to impress. She seems stubbornly uninterested in them as tales.

**d. life-to-text: what Jane knows about mums**

Towards the end of our reading of *On the Way Home* Jane recalls that Claire begins crying:

(from Extract 2)

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
| 1     | DL  | ...and then of                                 |
| 2     |     | course she gets home                           |
| 3     |     | doesn't she?                                   |
| <hr/> |     |  |
| 4     | J__ | Starts crying                                  |
| 5     | DL  | And what happens...                            |
| 6     |     | yea she starts crying                          |
| 7     |     | doesn't she                                    |
| 8     | J__ | and she tells.. she tells her mum all          |
| 9     |     | the proper things                              |
| 10    | DL  | How do you know.. how                          |
| 11    |     | do you know its the                            |
| 12    |     | proper story though?                           |
| 13    | j__ | Because it's her mum and her mum would say     |
| 14    |     | (.) no you're telling lies because she might.. |
| 15    |     | because she might.. she believes in.. that     |
| 16    |     | there's no dragons or witches or things        |
| 17    |     | [     ]  |

Here again Jane makes use of her life knowledge, this time about mums, or at least her own mum, to orient her understanding of the story. The reason for asking how Jane knows that Claire's explanation is *proper* is that the first time reader is not informed until the end of the book that the cause of Claire's injury is a fall from a playground swing. We should recall that the book is structured around a deployment of Barthes' hermeneutic code (Barthes, 1974). We are neither told nor shown at the beginning of the story the real cause of the injury, and the sting in the tail is that when Claire blurts out her explanation to her mum at the end, she has already demonstrated time and again that she is a most unreliable narrator. Indeed, she is a classic teller of tall tales. There is no omniscient

narrator to point us to the truth so we must bring to bear what we know about hurt children explaining to parents in order to pass judgement upon Claire's last tale. Jane frames it in terms of a mum's superior everyday life knowledge. In other words, if Claire had tried out another fanciful tale it would not have impressed her mum, as the latter knows "...there's no dragons or witches or things".

During the final few moments of our conversation I tried to draw Jane's attention to what I took to be a final joke on Jill Murphy's part about Claire's predilection for tall tales. Claire asks for the biggest plaster in the whole box and is shown in the accompanying illustration to be making the gesture traditionally associated with boastful fishermen - i.e. arms spread ludicrously wide to suggest a gargantuan size. The close up illustration of the plaster in question does indeed make it look huge. My own interpretation of this final rigmarole is that Claire, the shameless teller of tall tales, is going to be regaling her friends the following day with stories of the magnificence of her wound. But then I am aware of the possible significance of Claire's boastful gesture, and Jane probably is not. After reading the passage and discussing the accompanying illustrations I asked Jane " ...why do you think she wants the biggest in the whole box?" (59-61, extract 2). Jane's reply, "Because she's got a big cut" (62), indicates a far more literal interpretation than my own. Jane, as we have seen, is far from incapable of rapid, sophisticated interpretations, but here, probably due to her limited knowledge of gestural codes, she is satisfied with the banal.

## **5. Summary and discussion**

In the two readings analysed above we see further evidence of Nigel's delight in stories and his quirky, undisciplined observations. We see again the ease with which he blends his reading with his life experiences and, contrariwise, his relative lack of skill in employing his life-knowledge to unravelling a story. To move outwards from a story towards life seems less arduous - at least in the random way Nigel goes about it - than bringing to bear an understanding of the everyday-life-world to the mysteries of text. Nigel can certainly

bring his knowledge of other books to his reading, he can trace the origins of some of Claire's tales back to their folkloric sources and is quick to recognise characters and situations. Such utterances as are recorded in the transcripts suggest quite a range of intertextual crossing points. This is no minor matter in the reading of metafiction where the rules of fiction have been unravelled and reknotted in a different way. Familiarity with stories and story patterns is an essential prerequisite for the negotiation of metafictional text.

Nigel's lack of concern for the implications of the piled-up stories is interesting too. True, he does recognise them as untruths, but the centre of gravity of his concern, so to speak, lies not with the fact that they are falsehoods, but with the fact that they are narratives - stories that he knows and can enjoy. The one factor that unifies Claire's tales (their status as untruths told to deceive/impress friends) is overshadowed by his concern with another factor - their status as stories.

In the case of his retelling of JPNM we have another glimpse of Nigel's ability to read beyond an image to a possible metaphorical meaning. Despite the ultimate implausibility of his interpretation (i.e. the headmaster is hanging on to the rafters pretending to be in the clutches of a gorilla) Nigel's memory of this narrative moment incorporates a sophisticated reading of the visual imagery. In fact, there are strong similarities between the example of interpretation recorded here and the one analysed in section C over and above the metaphorical content. In both cases, Nigel is led through the interpretation of one image towards a way of interpreting the whole story. The fact that this retroactive interpretation works in the case of *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley*, but not with JPNM is largely due to the greater complexity of the latter - as I remarked in section 2, JPNM is more radically indeterminate than the earlier book and there is no one interpretive door that will lead to the way out.

In the first group reading of JPNM Jane provides us with an excellent example of her quick-witted ability to co-ordinate fragments of imagery and printed text into overall meanings. In *Where is Monkey?* we saw her time and again striving to produce a flowing,

coherent, monologic narrative out of the sequences of images, and here we see her offering an interpretation on the basis of minimal information. Like Nigel she recalls JPNM as if her interpretation were the text itself but, as I have already remarked, her interpretation of the climactic scene - or rather, the fragment she comments on - moves towards Realism in her ascription of a motive for John Patrick's retort to the headmaster ("... 'cos you made me write and write"). Unlike Nigel's interpretation, Jane's view does not help her to unify the story as a whole, and she does not attempt a resolution of its contradictions and tensions.

She is better able to impose some unity on *On the Way Home*, for her designation of Claire's stories as lies gathers up the random accumulation of stories into one category and thus simplifies the tale: Claire hurts her knee; fibs her way home; and then reveals the truth to her mum and to the reader. Having cleared the decks in this way, Jane frees herself to enjoy the silliness of Claire's stories, secure in the knowledge that truth will out. She can even articulate the reasons why Claire's story to her mum must be the right one, and in so doing, demonstrates her ability to successfully employ her knowledge of life in the elucidation of text.

In the final part of chapter nine I discuss in broader terms the significance of the various readings analysed above for the thesis as a whole. The aim in this chapter has not been to make generalisations about how children may or may not read and interpret metafictional picture books, but through some specific comparisons and contrasts attempt to throw some light upon the kinds of things that beginner readers have to do to make sense of complex, even contradictory texts. In so doing, I hope to be able to develop further the concept of the metafictional picture book.

## E. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this final part of chapter nine I draw together the observations and analyses of the foregoing parts and attempt to reveal their significance for the thesis as a whole. Much of the discussion in this chapter has, inevitably, been of readers reading, and may at times have appeared to be more concerned with the process than the artefacts - the texts - that lie at its heart. This is inevitable, for there can be no access to text except through reading. Even my relatively neutral and apparently objective accounts of the books that preface each part of the chapter depend upon my readings. Try as I might to side-step interpretation I have inevitably selected, omitted and emphasised features in as much as they seemed to me more, or less, important

Jane and Nigel approach the task of reading in entirely different ways. These different approaches seem to me to correspond closely to the two different 'styles' outlined by Bussis et al (1985) in their study of American children reading. Thus Nigel is attracted to, and tends to focus his attention upon, small details whereas Jane has a well developed sense of story form, is fluent, and looks for larger patterns. The American research team labelled these approaches styles as they felt them to be manifestations of personal predispositions and preferences in learning and not better or worse ways of approaching the task. Eventually all learners must come to fuse and combine both perspectives, they say, if they are to read effectively.

A somewhat similar, though not identical, view of the reading process can be found in Scholes (1989). In the opening chapter Scholes attempts to find an appropriate metaphor for the process of reading. After several false starts he comes up with the analogy of opposing centripetal and centrifugal forces:

Centripetal reading conceives of a text in terms of an original intention located at the centre of that text. Reading done under this rubric will try to reduce the text to this pure core of unmixed intentionality. Centrifugal reading, on the other hand sees the life of a text as occurring along its circumference, which is constantly expanding, encompassing new possibilities of meaning.



We have, of course, met this analogy before in Bakhtin's account of conflicting forces in socio-cultural and linguistic life. Scholes, however, eventually rejects this two term analogy precisely because it is a static binary system. His preferred view is of reading as a *dialectical* process, one that must perpetually move between the two poles of centrifugal and centripetal. Just as Bussis *et al* (1985) argue that children must learn to recognise and use both the 'large shapes' and the 'small shapes' in reading, Scholes claims that without both opposing forces, "the process [of reading] stops, becomes dead, ceases to be."

Maybe it is true that readings can neither completely eschew individual interpretations, nor completely ignore authorial intentions, but in Jane and Nigel I think we have readers with something like centripetal and centrifugal tendencies as well as predispositions towards large shapes and small details. As they develop as readers it is to be hoped that they will both broaden their reach. What is fascinating is that they can both be made to seem more, or less, competent as readers depending upon the kind of text that they are reading. I can demonstrate this most easily by rehearsing once more the characteristics of their readings.

At the outset Nigel does look to be the weaker reader - indeed, he does not possess the fluency at handling print that Jane has. His attention wanders from the core events and scenes within a story and he readily slips out the world of the text to the everyday-life-world. He loses his place; makes very elementary errors, such as continuing across the gutter of the page-opening in *Where is Monkey?*; and generates some very unorthodox and curious meanings from the pictures he reads. All of these predispositions look very much like drawbacks in a learner reader.

In contrast, Jane already possesses considerable fluency as a reader of print, is quick at marshalling available information to generate narrative meanings; is competent and confident in her application of both cultural and generic codes; can make use of her knowledge of life and of books to guide her interpretation of text; and seems to possess that kind of guided looking that is essential for the reader of picture books (witness the speed with which she located the repaired toy monkey within a complex and unfocussed

picture). Add to all this a very evident delight in books and reading and Jane appears to be well on the way to competence in reading.

However, when these two children attempt to read picture books that possess metafictional features such as *indeterminacy* or *excess* the picture begins to look rather different. Nigel's willingness to suspend closure; his delight in the odd, the random, the curious; and his suggestibility when faced with pictorial codes all begin to look more useful and helpful. He is also well-read within this field and takes in his stride the fact that pictures do not always mean what they show, just as words do not always mean what they say. Indeed, this latter ability enables him to achieve a broad perspective upon the two Burningham books, but only after he has manoeuvred his way through them.

Nigel holds meanings in suspension while he reads and achieves some kind of resolution at the end, but Jane posits meanings from the outset that then guide her reading. In *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley*, for example, she thinks that she knows what the story is, and what it will continue to be, right from the beginning and is then puzzled when her predictions are not confirmed. Nigel is less puzzled as he has fewer predictions to be confirmed or confounded. As I tried to establish at the beginning of this study, metafiction is a literary kind that plays freely with the laws of literature, and it is this ludic quality that disorients Jane. When she reads Burningham, her competence begins to look like closure.

Metafiction seems to demand something different of them. They respond to that demand in their characteristic ways and it is suddenly less easy to decide who is the better reader. Scholes says that both centrifugal and centripetal movements are necessary in reading, but not all texts are the same and some seem to require a different balance. Sometimes, as in the metafictional, it is not so easy to identify a still, stable core of meaning that a centripetal reading can reach. In such cases, a more expansive, flexible, centrifugal reading might be more productive. Here, I believe Nigel has the advantage over Jane.

What these observations suggest is that views about how to read - i.e. theories of reading - presuppose views about texts and literature. Thus psycholinguistic theories that rely heavily upon the concept of prediction assume thoroughly predictable kinds of texts. To give metafictional texts their due we need a theory of reading that is flexible enough to allow for different proportions of the centrifugal and the centripetal in reading, and to permit us to recognise the value of the centrifugal. Although there is no room to pursue such a speculation here, I think that as adult readers, steeped in the traditions of Realism, our sensibilities and desires attuned to its rewards and satisfactions, we may all too readily mistake skill at narrative closure for all round competence.

Furthermore, I think that it is clear from the readings analysed in this chapter, and from my commentary upon them, that the literary category of the metafictional with which I have been working throughout this thesis is far from straightforward. Indeed, it is perhaps best conceived of as a category *under erasure* (Derrida, 1967) - i.e. despite the fact that it is finally inadequate to the task we ask of it there is no alternative and thus we must continue to use it. It is finally inadequate because in our readings, at the point where reading becomes interpretation, we may not be willing to acknowledge and work with what the text has to offer. Jane's predominantly centripetal reading/interpretation of *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley* goes a long way to transforming it into a readerly, stable text. Given a little push at the end, she transforms the story into another, different text, equally readerly and stable, if not more so. It is not hard to imagine that she may well have begun with this interpretation, short-circuiting much of the metafictional fun and jumping straight to a resolution, as if reading stories were a kind of problem-solving, and that the sooner the problem is solved, the sooner the troublesome details can be dealt with. Many competent readers, both child and adult, follow precisely this manoeuvre when reading Burningham. There is nothing wrong with that, but it creates, in my view, an unproblematic Realist-text-within-metafictional-text, an unnatural, but naturalised, beast if ever there was one.

That children are capable of metafictional readings of metafictional texts is, I think, clear from my conversations with Nigel. He is unclear about the larger scheme of things in the books he reads, at least when he begins, but this does not cause him distress or difficulty. On the contrary, Burningham and Murphy are a delight to him and he revels in the inconsistencies and puzzles that he sees. I have no wish to suggest that Nigel is an ideal reader, either of metafictional or any other kind of text. Indeed, I suspect his career as a learner reader will not be entirely smooth. But I should hate to see his openness, his sensitivity to allusion, his delight in detail replaced by a competence that says, 'ah yes, I see how it goes'.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **1. Summary**

There have been two broad strands to this thesis, one concerned with the nature of picture books and the other concerned with the reading of picture books. I have felt it necessary to bring both these concerns together in the one study because analysis of text can easily forget readers, and analysis of reading can easily ignore the nature of what is read. Texts are brought to life by the reader, and by studying both - the text and the reader - we gain a more complete picture of the reading.

I believe my view of picture book text to be an original redescription in as much as it begins from the commonplace observation that picture books are composite in form, and seeks a way of grounding this composite nature in theory and history. In brief, the picture book form is inherently flexible and open and as such cannot be considered simply as a genre alongside other genres within children's literature. Rather than working within a set of genre rules and conventions the picture book continually ingests and absorbs other genres, and image types, and is thus able to re-present them and make them new. In this respect, as in many others, the picture book is remarkably akin to the Bakhtinian novel. Picture book reading is where novel reading truly begins.

The picture book gains its flexibility from its responsiveness to the open-ended present (a trait traceable as far back as the chapbook); its deep-rooted association with childhood and its sensitivity to the fact that children are perpetually becoming; and from the two formal processes of condensation and pictorialisation, the twin, active principles of the form's polysystemy. Given this flexibility, and the picture book's origins in popular, frequently lowly forms, it is hardly surprising that many works appear vulgar and crude to the adult eye. However, despite the attempts of historians, picture books resolutely resist being drilled into a canon.

I believe that against this background, metafiction in picture books no longer appears to be a particularly bizarre notion. It appears to be in the main a playful exacerbation of that which is already latent within the form - its flexibility, its open-endedness, its tendency towards parody and irony. Moreover, we should not be surprised that the makers of picture books, especially illustrators, are sensitive to and interested in more general developments in the visual arts, and increasingly postmodernism is looking like a late twentieth century form of mannerism, an exaggeration of representational norms.

Metafiction, however, begins to look different when seen through the eyes of its readers. The two children studied in the penultimate chapter were not intended to be taken as *typical* readers of picture books, but as two different and contrasting ways of reading. Nigel and Jane see in the books they read two different kinds of activity. Jane wants a story, whole and complete, whereas Nigel wants to savour the details of the story's passing and is not especially troubled by miscues and mistakes. In conventional terms Nigel is the weaker reader of the two, yet when the children negotiate metafictional texts Jane's relative competence begins to look like premature closure.

Of the two, Jane is further along the road which naturalises Realism. Already, she does not see that there are other ways of reading, other pleasures to be had and understandings to be gained. In contrast, Nigel's wayward, wandering, indeterminate style delivers him many delights along the way. With readerly text Nigel would look rather inept, but he is at home with the metafictional. The metafictional as a *literary* category, however, appears to be dissolved in these readings. What becomes important, finally, is the personal text within text wrought by each reader in their readings. Despite the fact that Nigel and Jane read the same *books* their readings are quite different.

## 2. Further questions and issues

Numerous questions and problems have arisen during the course of this research and most of them have had to be set aside to make way for the two major concerns of the thesis. In what follows I suggest a number of issues that arise from the work carried out so far that would benefit from further research.

i. It is clear from my analysis of currently available works that the history of the picture book is still waiting to be written. I have described the inadequacies of the history we possess at present in chapter four, and have suggested some of the distortions it produces in chapter six. It is worth repeating once more that the history of the picture book cannot be forged out of the language of art and art criticism. My attempt at redressing the balance in chapter six does not itself constitute a wholly adequate alternative as it is tailored to the needs of the present project but I believe that some of the themes raised there - e.g. the central importance of the chapbook, the importance of the picture book's popular origins and its heterogeneous nature - are all important.

ii. It is clear from the case study material that Jane's and Nigel's *approaches* to reading are of crucial importance to the readings they make. To put it another way, how you are constituted as a reader matters. I am especially interested in how a competent reader like Jane can almost entirely miss the special kind of invitation made by a book like *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley*. Increasingly I have come to believe that what we ask children to *do* with books, and how we model their use, contribute to what they eventually are able to take from the books we offer them. In itself this is not a new insight but I believe there are still avenues of investigation into the processes involved in the mediation of books to children that are as yet unexplored.

iii. There are pedagogical implications to ii. Metafiction invites critical reading and there is scope for exploring how children might be encouraged to read Burningham, Browne and the Ahlbergs in ways that preserve their openness and resist premature closure. I have already referred to Chambers' (1993b) account of his thoroughly road-

tested methods of 'booktalk' but an awareness of the metafictional could add a unique slant to such projects.

iv. More generally, there is the need to keep conceptions of reading and of text open and complex. As teachers we are prone to think we know what reading is and how to do it, but picture books are perpetually telling us that it is never the same from one generation to the next.



## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX 1

### TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

- (*quietly*) Words in italics inside round brackets govern the words that immediately follow.
- (.) A stop within round brackets indicates a definite pause.
- ... A row of dots within an utterance indicates a hesitation, a break in sense, or a new start (not a definite pause).
- [Lights] Words within square brackets indicate an utterance that is unclear and therefore transcription is tentative.
- [ ] Empty square brackets indicate that an utterance is very unclear and therefore cannot be transcribed.
- FOR LUNCH Words in capital letters indicate a reading from printed text.  
TODAY...
- AND SO... Words in capital letters that are underlined indicate miscues in a reading from printed text.
- (\*\*\*\*) Asterisks in round brackets, underlined, indicate an omission miscue during a reading from printed text.
- [*Laughter*] Words in italics inside square brackets indicate noises other than speech.
- [***Turns page***] Words in bold italics inside square brackets describe actions taken by one of the speakers, or give clarificatory information about an utterance.
- It's him...  
...who's that? The words of consecutive speakers, underlined, indicate utterances that overlap, the extent of the underlining showing the points at which the overlap begins and ends
- \*\* Two asterisks, in place of speaker's initials, indicate unidentifiable voice or voices.
- In dyadic conversations, the contributions of each speaker are kept in separate columns to preserve the thematic or narrative continuity of any one speaker's utterance.

## APPENDIX

2

CHILD'S NAME Simon  
 TITLE OF BOOK *Where's Julius?* By John Burningham  
 ACTIVITY Reading book aloud

1 DL Off you go as soon as  
 2 you're ready

3 S Where's Julius? Written and illustrated  
 4 by John Burningham (*quietly*) doesn't say  
 5 that (.) read by S \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_ (*quietly*)  
 6 doesn't say that either (.) FOR  
 7 BREAKFAST SAID MRS TROUTBECK WE ARE  
 8 HAVING SCRAMBLED EGGS WITH MUSHROOMS  
 9 CORNFLAKES AND SOME ORANGE JUICE  
 10 WHICH I HAVE UNFROZEN WHERE'S JULIUS?  
 11 MR TROUTBECK CALLED ON THEIR SON (\*\*\*\*)  
 12 AND THEY ALL SAT DOWN TO BREAKFAST  
 13 FOR LUNCH TODAY WE ARE HAVING SARDINES  
 14 ON TOAST A ROLL AND BUTTER TOMATOES  
 15 AND NOTHING FOR PUDDING WHERE'S  
 16 JULIUS? JULIUS SAYS HE CANNOT HAVE  
 17 LUNCH WITH US TODAY BECAUSE HE HAS  
 18 MADE A LITTLE HOME IN THE OTHER ROOM  
 19 WITH TWO CHAIRS THE OLD CURTAIN AND  
 20 THE BROOM SO MR TROUTBECK TOOK  
 21 THE TRAY WITH (\*\*\*\*) SARDINES ON TOAST  
 22 AND THE ROLL AND THE BUTTER AND THE  
 23 TOMATO AND THE PUDDING (.) AND NO  
 24 PUDDING TO THE OTHER ROOM WHERE JULIUS  
 25 HAD MADE HIS LITTLE HOME OUT OF THREE  
 26 CHAIRS AND THE OLD CURTAINS AND THE BROOM  
 27 and the cat decides it likes sardines and pinches one of them  
 28 I'VE GOT THE LAMB CASSEROLE FOR SUPPER  
 29 OUT OF THE OVEN AND THE POTATOES IN  
 30 THEIR JACKETS AND THE BROCCOLI [*hiccups*] (\*\*\*\*)  
 31 ON TOP (\*\*\*\*) FOR AFTERWARDS AND THE ROLY-  
 32 POLY PUDDING WHERE'S JULIUS? JULIUS SAYS  
 33 HE CANNOT HAVE SUPPER WITH US JUST AT  
 34 THE MOMENT BECAUSE HE IS DIGGING A  
 35 HOLE IN ORDER TO GET TO THE OTHER SIDE  
 36 OF THE WORLD SO MRS TROUTBECK TOOK

37 THE LAMB CASSEROLE WITH THE POTATOES  
 38 IN THEIR JACKETS AND BROCCOLI WITH BUTTER  
 39 ON TOP AND THE ROLY-POLY PUDDING FOR  
 40 AFTERWARDS TO WHERE JULIUS WAS DIGGING  
 41 HIS HOLE

42 DL Did you turn over two  
 43 pages then?

44 S *(looking at picture of Julius digging)*  
 45 He's digging his hole... FOR BREAKFAST THERE  
 46 IS SAUSAGE BACON AND EGG TOAST AND  
 47 MARMALADE AND ALSO A GLASS OF THREE  
 48 FLAVOUR FRUIT JUICE WHERE'S JULIUS?  
 49 JULIUS SAYS HE CANNOT HAVE BREAKFAST  
 50 (\*\*\*\*\*)BECAUSE HE IS RIDING A CAMEL TO THE  
 51 TOP OF THE (.) TOMB OF (.) NEE.. FA.. TA.. TOOM

52 DL Looks a bit like that doesn't  
 53 it

54 S NEE.. FA.. TUTOOM or something

55 DL OK that'll do

*[Simon reads through to the end making occasional miscues, hesitating over some place names, and occasionally commenting on the thieving animals in the full page spreads.]*

## APPENDIX 3

**CHILD'S NAME** Claire  
**TITLE OF BOOK** *Where's Julius?* by John Burningham  
**ACTIVITY** Reading and talking about book

*[Transcript begins part way through the reading at the point where Julius is throwing snowballs at wolves in Siberia - DL reading the book with very few contributions from Claire so far.]*

- 1 DL ... (*whispering*) there's a wolf
- 2 C [ ] I'll bet that is going to eat it
- 3 DL D you think so?
- 4 C [I think so]
- 5 DL Hmmmm
- 6 C Where is his food? Oh there [ ]
- 7 DL Do you think the wolf is stealing  
8 something?
- 9 C Yea... I think he's stealing a snowball
- 10 DL It looks as though it might be...  
11 I think it's... I think it's probably  
12 something on the tray
- 13 C Yea
- 14 DL What was it he was having for his  
15 meal? Shall we turn back and have  
16 a look?
- 17 C Baby peas (.) no carrots (.) (*emphatically*)  
18 baby carrots garden peas
- 19 DL Mashed potato to go with them...  
20 and then apple

21 C Yea

22 DL crumble for pudding... and grilled  
23 chops do you..

24 C What...

25 DL ...think that might be a grilled chop?

26 C Yea

27 DL Looks.. pretty much the same  
28 doesn't it?

29 C Yea

30 DL Perhaps the wolf is pinching a grilled  
31 chop... FOR BREAKFAST WE ARE  
32 HAVING BOILED EGGS TOAST AND MARMALADE  
33 AND THE TROPICAL FRUIT JUICE THAT YOU  
34 WANTED WHERE'S JULIUS? JULIUS SAYS HE  
35 CANNOT HAVE BREAKFAST WITH US JUST AT  
36 THE MOMENT BECAUSE HE IS WATCHING THE  
37 SUNRISE FROM THE TOP OF THE CHANGA  
38 BENANG MOUNTAINS SOMEWHERE NEAR TIBET  
39 SO MR TROUTBECK TOOK THE TRAY WITH THE  
40 BOILED EGG TOAST AND MARMALADE AND THE  
41 TROPICAL FRUIT JUICE TO THE TOP OF THE  
42 CHANGA BENANG MOUNTAINS SOMEWHERE  
43 NEAR TIBET WHERE JULIUS WAS WATCHING THE  
44 SUNRISE

45 C (*whispering*) Tibet

46 DL What's that love?

47 C (*whisper*) Tibet

48 DL (*whisper*) Tibet... mmm... there you  
49 are

50 C He's stolen the toast I say

51 DL That's right

- 52 C The goat has..
- 53 DL It's a mountain goat isn't it?
- 54 C Yea... [*laughs*]
- 55 DL A wonderful sunrise... FOR LUNCH  
 56 WE ARE HAVING SPAGHETTI BOLOGNESE WITH  
 57 LETTUCE AND CUCUMBER FOR PUDDING THERE  
 58 IS PLUM DUFF WHERE'S JULIUS? JULIUS SAYS HE  
 59 CANNOT HAVE LUNCH WITH US AT THE MOMENT  
 60 BECAUSE HE IS ON A RAFT HE HAS MADE FROM  
 61 PIECES OF WOOD AND OLD OIL DRUMS AND HE IS  
 62 ABOUT TO SHOOT THE RAPIDS ON THE CHIKO  
 63 NEEKO RIVER SOMEWHERE IN PERU IN SOUTH  
 64 AMERICA
- 65 SO MRS TROUTBECK TOOK  
 66 THE TRAY WITH THE  
 67 SPAGHETTI BOLOGNESE  
 68 THE LETTUCE AND THE  
 69 CUCUMBER AND THE PLUM  
 70 DUFF TO THE CHICO  
 71 NEEKO RIVER IN SOUTH  
 72 AMERICA WHERE JULIUS  
 73 WAS ABOUT TO SHOOT THE  
 74 RAPIDS IN HIS RAFT..  
 75 look at her balancing  
 76 on the raft (.) there  
 77 he is on the raft
- 78 C [ ] stole the lettuce the fish has
- 79 DL That's right
- 80 C I think soon there's going to be  
 81 a little bit of lettuce (.) floating  
 82 on the water
- 83 DL (*laughing*) why is  
 84 that? Do you think  
 85 the fish might drop  
 86 it?
- 87 C No I think the fish might like it

## APPENDIX 4

CHILD'S NAME Claire  
 TITLE OF BOOK *Where's Julius? By John Burningham*  
 ACTIVITY Claire retelling the story

- 1 C Well... his mother said (.) Mrs.Wom...  
 2 what's her name?
- 3 DL Er (.) Troutbeck I  
 4 think
- 5 C Yea Troutbeck (.) well she said (.)  
 6 for breakfast we're having bacon  
 7 and egg and toast (.) and (.) then  
 8 she said Where's Julius? And Mr  
 9 whatever-it-is (.) he (.) he called  
 10 Julius and they had supper (.) not  
 11 supper breakfast (.) and then it was  
 12 lunch he said and she said for lunch  
 13 (.) I've forgotten what now (.) but  
 14 that doesn't say it in the story  
 15 [laughs] but I (.) (*emphatically*)  
 16 I (.) not her but me...
- 17 DL That's alright...

*[Claire invents 'fried toast' as a meal and  
 dissolves into fits of uncontrollable giggles]*

- 18 C ...I'm afraid Julius can't have dinner  
 19 with us today because he's made himself  
 20 a house with three chairs and a  
 21 broo...oom so Mr. Troutbeck walked  
 22 to the other room (.) and (.) the (.)  
 23 lunch (.) and then in the story it  
 24 was supertime and (.) and she sai...  
 25 and therefore (.) erm (.) I'll make  
 26 something up [ ] again (.) erm (.)  
 27 I know what (.) uh (.) uh what shall  
 28 I have [ ]?



|    |    |   |                              |
|----|----|---|------------------------------|
| 29 | DL |   | It doesn't really            |
| 30 |    |   | matter                       |
| 31 | C  | Beefburgers peas and carrots again (.)        |                              |
| 32 |    | and then she said where's Julius? And         |                              |
| 33 |    | Mr. Troutbeck said I'm afraid Julius          |                              |
| 34 |    | can't have supper with us today because       |                              |
| 35 |    | he is digging a hole to get to the            |                              |
| 36 |    | other side of the world (.) [ <i>laughs</i> ] |                              |
| 37 |    | Fried toast indeed (.) and then it was        |                              |
| 38 |    | breakfast and Mrs. Troutbeck said for         |                              |
| 39 |    | breakfast we are having blah blah blah        |                              |
| 40 |    | blah blah blah (.) and she said where's       |                              |
| 41 |    | Julius? And Mrs. Troutbeck said Ju...         |                              |
| 42 |    | I'm afraid Julius can't have supper           |                              |
| 43 |    | with us today because he is riding a          |                              |
| 44 |    | camel to the top of a pyramid in              |                              |
| 45 |    | something something near (.) near             |                              |
| 46 |    | Tibet (.) (.) yerk (.) I just can't           |                              |
| 47 |    | really remember any more travels he           |                              |
| 48 |    | goes into                                     |                              |
| 49 | DL |   | Can't you?                   |
| 50 | C  | The second one I can't [     ] the next       |                              |
| 51 |    | one   |                              |
| 52 | DL |   | Well you tell me             |
| 53 |    |   | anything at all that you can |
| 54 |    |   | remember about it, even if   |
| 55 |    |   | you can't remember about     |
| 56 |    |   | them in order                |
| 57 | C  | Well the last one is him going to kill        |                              |
| 58 |    | some fish on a raft he had built              |                              |
| 59 | DL |   | Hmm... hmm                   |
| 60 | C  | And one of them was watching the sun          |                              |
| 61 |    | rise (.) and one of them is two cats are      |                              |
| 62 |    | sitting in my lap that isn't in the story     |                              |
| 63 |    | but two cats are sitting in my lap            |                              |
| 64 | DL |   | Is that as much as you can   |
| 65 |    |   | remember?                    |

- 66 C (*apologetic*) I can't really remember any more
- 67 DL Well instead of remembering  
68 all the different journeys (.)  
69 can you (.) can you say just  
70 what happened very (.)  
71 generally to (.) Julius?  
72 What...what did Julius do?
- 73 C Julius did all sorts of things (.)  
74 he dugged a hole
- 75 DL Hmmm
- 76 C He (.) made a house
- 77 DL Hmmm
- 78 C He (.) climbed a pyramid
- 79 DL Hmmm
- 80 C He saw the sun rise
- 81 DL Hmmm
- 82 C He killed the fish
- 83 DL Hmmm
- 84 C He (.) threwed snowballs at the  
85 wolves (.) and then (.) Mrs. (.)  
86 just a (.) this is a little bit  
87 with Mrs. Troutbeck (.) and at the  
88 end when Mrs. Troutbeck said where's  
89 Julius? Is he doing all those journeys?  
90 and then she said or is he teaching  
91 the owls to fly or is he tucking the  
92 polar bears in their nice beds? And (.)  
93 Mr. Troutbeck said Sally (.) which is  
94 her name (.) Ju... today Julius is  
95 having tea with us that's all I  
96 can really remember.

**APPENDIX**                      **5**  
**CHILD'S NAME**                **Nigel**  
**TITLE OF BOOK**                ***Where is Monkey?* by Dieter Schubert**  
**ACTIVITY**                        **Child telling story from a wordless picture book (unknown text)**  
**DATE**                                **15. 06. 1989**

### PAGE OPENING ONE

1        N\_\_    Well there he's playing with  
 2                the (.) there he's [making] a  
 3                cage for the monkey  
  
 4        DL    Hmm...Hmm  
  
 5        N\_\_    There [she's] takin' the little  
 6                boy to the wood with the monkey  
 7                and there they're feeding the  
 8                ducks (.) and he thinks it's  
 9                a worm [*laughs*]  
  
 10       DL    Yes he does doesn't he

### PAGE OPENING TWO

11       N\_\_    And there they're goin' for a walk (.)  
 12                [     ] and he's lost his monkey  
  
 13                [*Here Nicholas reads across the two pages of the page opening first at the top and then at the bottom*]  
  
 14       DL    Where (.) where does  
 15    he lose his monkey  
 16    then?  
  
 17       M\_\_    In the forest somewhere  
  
 18       DL    Yea?  
  
 19       N\_\_    There they've gone back to look for it  
 20                There they've lost it again (.) [     ]  
 21                and there [     ] looked in [     ]

22 not there (.) and there's the Monkey

23 DL

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

Right (.) I think when  
you read (.) when  
you read the story  
what you do is you  
read the pictures on  
on that page and then  
you read the pictures  
on that page (.)  
instead of going  
across like that  
(.) you read those (.)  
first

### PAGE OPENING THREE

35 N\_\_ There the mice have got him (.) they're  
36 tyin' him up (.) In my book...

37 DL

Hmm

38 N\_\_ ...the mice have got a cake It's all  
39 about one baker bakes a cake (.)  
40 it's called One Baker Bakes a Cake  
41 and lots of mice get the cake to tie  
42 it up (.) there the mice have found it  
43 [*referring back to the first picture*  
44 *of the four*] and there they're tyin'  
45 it up (.) and there they're erm (.)  
46 they can't (.) they're pullin' it  
47 because they can't tie it up...

48 DL

Hmm... Hmm

49 N\_\_ ...and there they're going to tie it  
50 with their tails (.) they've pulled  
51 his tail [off]

52 DL

Oh dear

53 N\_\_ 'cos ermm (.) when t.. (.) when soft  
54 toys get wet they're easy to come  
55 apart when they're only made of wool

56 DL Yes, they do, don't  
57 they

#### PAGE OPENING FOUR

58 N\_\_ [What do they do in] this one?

59 DL What are they doing  
60 now?

61 N\_\_ What do they do with this one [ ]  
62 they've pulled him all to bits

63 DL Hmm

64 N\_\_ There (.) there (.) looks like broken  
65 it and they're throwin' it about (.)  
66 they're fightin' what (.) who should  
67 have what bit like their [sisters do]  
68 and there the hedgehog's lookin' (.)  
69 found [ ] and there he's lookin'  
70 in there (.) oh it looks like (.) I  
71 thought that was (.) a great big  
72 hedgehog there

#### PAGE OPENING FIVE

73 there [he] goes (.) there he's goin'  
74 to get it (.) there he's pullin' it out

75 DL Hmm

76 N\_\_ I didn't know mice could (.) tie a knot

77 DL No well these (.)  
78 these ones could,  
79 couldn't they

80 N\_\_ Cor (.) big bee!

81 DL Hmm

82 N\_\_ There they're pullin' the Monkey out (.)  
83 [ ] on his back an' he's pullin'  
84 it back out (.) the hedgehogs have got

85 it (.) there's a little snail there  
 86 [*looking at top picture right hand side*]

87 DL Hmm

88 N\_\_ ... a big bee and there he's takin' it  
 89 back to the boy and there they're  
 90 cuddling it (.) 'cos they're (.) they're  
 91 cuddling it there 'cos erm (.) [it's]  
 92 gettin' quite (.) look the snail's gone  
 93 down an' (.) he's half way down the tree  
 94 an' he's gone to sleep

95 DL Hmm

#### PAGE OPENING SIX

96 N\_\_ An' there (.) they're jumpin' on it (.)  
 97 there the snail's on his head

98 DL Hmm...Hmm

99 N\_\_ There they're carryin' it back (.) Oooh  
 100 I wouldn't want to! it's got all prickles  
 101 in it

102 DL That's right

103 N\_\_ There they're (.) [ ] on his head  
 104 and there's only one carryin' it

#### PAGE OPENING SEVEN

105 and there the bird's found it  
 106 [ ]

107 DL He's what, sorry?

108 N\_\_ [The] bird's found it

109 DL Oh, right

110 N\_\_ He's peckin' it [ ] they collect  
 111 lots of gold things (.) them (.) I  
 112 can't remember what they're called

113 but in one of those [them] books it was  
 114 (.) or on telly (.) yea it (.) on ermm  
 115 (.) can't remember what it was (.) what  
 116 it was called (.) and it's all about [one]  
 117 (.) rabbit (.) an invisible rabbit

118 DL Hmm...Hmm

119 N\_\_ Ermm (.) erm they called one of these  
 120 birds the cook (.) they cook things

121 DL Ahh right (.) can you  
 122 not remember (.) the  
 123 name at all?

124 N\_\_ No

125 DL Shall I tell you?  
 126 They're called  
 127 magpie's.. those big  
 128 black and white birds  
 129 they're called magpies  
 130 aren't they you're  
 131 quite right they like  
 132 to collect things  
 133 don't they

134 N\_\_ Ohh that's [just gave me] (.) they're  
 135 called (*emphatically*) Maggie (.) the  
 136 coo (.) Maggie (.) Maggie the pie 'cos  
 137 she cooks pies

138 DL Oh I see that's why  
 139 she's a cook

140 N\_\_ she's pulled someone's eyeballs out  
 141 Maggie the

142 DL It looks horrible  
 143 doesn't it (.) do you  
 144 think they're real  
 145 eyes?

146 N\_\_ No (.) toy

147 DL Yea (.) I wonder what  
148 she does with ermm

149 N\_\_ she's flown off

150 DL I wonder what she does  
151 with Monkey?

## PAGE OPENING EIGHT

152 N\_\_ [ ] (.) there (.) she's pulling  
153 it up by his [clothes] (.) tryin' to  
154 pull the worm off (.) the snail off

155 DL Hmm...Hmm

156 N\_\_ [he's] stuck (.) there he's [dropped]  
157 in the water. While she's erm (.)  
158 pullin' the snail off (.) the fish [got]  
159 it (.) the bees carrying it off (.) the  
160 bees dropped it in the water (.) there  
161 the fish (.) the fishes have found it

162 DL Hmm...Hmm

163 N\_\_ (*surprised*) The snail's still on there!

164 DL Oh yea (.) do you  
165 think it's the same  
166 snail?

167 N\_\_ [*talking at the same time obscured*  
168 *by my voice*] ...No (.) water snail

169 DL Yea (.) should be a  
170 water snail, shouldn't  
171 it

## PAGE OPENING NINE

172 N\_\_ And there (.) there's a man fishin'

173 DL Hmm...Hmm

174 N\_\_ He's caught it (.) [ ]



175 he's takin' it home to the boy

# **PAGE OPENING TEN**

176 DL

Now what's he doing?

177 N\_\_ he took (.) he's took it home and  
178 washing it

179 DL

Yea

180 N\_\_ He's stitching it up (.) he's put it  
181 with his collection (.) but where is it?  
182 Where is the Monkey?

183 DL

Can't you see him?

184 N\_\_ No (.)

185 DL

He's probably there  
somewhere

186

187 N\_\_ I think that's 'im

188 DL

Yea?

189 N\_\_ It's not up there (.) [I don't] think  
190 he's puttin' it with his collection (.)  
191 the boy's [gone]

# **PAGE OPENING ELEVEN**

192 There he's puttin' (.) put it on a  
193 giraffe there he's (.) he's gone passed  
194 it an' he's tryin' to get the (.) the  
195 monkey

196 DL

Hmm...Hmm

197 N\_\_ There he's takin' it in (.) there he's  
198 tellin' him all about it

199 DL

Right

# **PAGE OPENING TWELVE**

- 200 N\_\_ And there he's got it back!
- 201 DL Right (.) so how (.)  
 202 just a minute (.)  
 203 let's turn back just a  
 204 moment (.) that was  
 205 very good you did that  
 206 very well (.) do you  
 207 think it's easier  
 208 without any words or  
 209 more difficult?
- 210 N\_\_ Erm.. easier
- 211 DL Easier Oh right  
 212 When (.) when the old  
 213 man fishes him out of  
 214 the river (.)and takes  
 215 him back home(.)why do  
 216 you think erm (.) why  
 217 do you think he starts  
 218 to mend him and wash  
 219 him and sew him up?
- 220 Nic So he could give it away
- 221 DL Ahh (.) listen if you  
 222 keep (.)keep having a  
 223 look at that picture  
 224 and see if you can  
 225 find where Monkey is  
 226 'cos I know where he  
 227 is
- 228 N\_\_ He's not (.) there
- 229 DL He's quite easy to see  
 230 once you've seen him  
 231 he's a little bit  
 232 hidden away
- 233 N\_\_ He's like Pinocchio
- 234 DL Hmm?

- 235 N\_\_ He's like Pinocchio
- 236 DL Yes it is a bit isn't  
237 it
- 238 N\_\_ And they're like the hedgehogs we saw
- 239 DL Yes, they are
- 240 N\_\_ He's building him all up there
- 241 DL Hmm Hmm Can't see  
242 him? Shall I show  
243 you? Look down  
244 underneath all the  
245 cupboards
- 246 N\_\_ Ahh! I looked down there but
- 247 DL he's in bed *[laughter]*
- 248 N\_\_ He's sleeping
- 249 DL A little bit (.) why  
250 has it got little red  
251 crosses on it do you  
252 think?
- 253 N\_\_ 'Cos he's been mended
- 254 DL 'Cos there's a red  
255 cross there as well  
256 isn't there
- 257 N\_\_ 'Cos it's a hospital
- 258 DL Ahh! right a hospital  
259 for toys (.) so he  
260 must be a sort of toy-  
261 mender or something  
262 mustn't he
- 263 N\_\_ There's legs stickin' out

|     |     |   |                        |
|-----|-----|---|------------------------|
| 264 | DL  |   | I think that's just    |
| 265 |     |   | his sign isn't it over |
| 266 |     |   | the shop (.) all the   |
| 267 |     |   | little bits of toys    |
| 268 |     |   | sticking (.) sticking  |
| 269 |     |   | to it                  |
| 270 | N__ | To mend                                 |                        |
| 271 | DL  |   | Yea that's right and   |
| 272 |     |   | once he's mended the   |
| 273 |     |   | toys what do you think |
| 274 |     |   | he does with them      |
| 275 |     |   | then?                  |
| 276 | N__ | He puts them up to (.) to show          |                        |
| 277 | DL  |   | Yea                    |
| 278 | N__ | So people come in to buy them.. buy 'em |                        |
| 279 | DL  |   | That's right           |
| 280 | N__ | ...like the little boy did              |                        |
| 281 | DL  |   | So when the little boy |
| 282 |     |   | comes along on his     |
| 283 |     |   | sledge...              |
| 284 | N__ | He's sees it                            |                        |
| 285 | DL  |   | He sees (.) monkey in  |
| 286 |     |   | the window             |
| 287 | N__ | My sisters got a monkey.....            |                        |

**APPENDIX: 6****CHILD'S NAME:** Martin**TITLE OF BOOK:** *Where is Monkey?* by Dieter Schubert**ACTIVITY:** Child telling story from a wordless picture book (unknown text)**DATE:** 15. 06. 1989**PAGE OPENING ONE**

- 1 M\_\_ [ ]...his bike
- 2 DL Alright.
- 3 M\_\_ [lights] (.) getting Monkey out of bed
- 4 DL Right
- 5 M\_\_ [Mother's] waiting for him
- 6 DL Hmm...hmm
- 7 M\_\_ Riding along on his mum's bike (.)
- 8 in the park (.) the goose is tryin'
- 9 to get the monkey

**PAGE OPENING TWO**

- 10 looks like it's starting to rain
- 11 now doesn't it?
- 12 DL It does, yea.
- 13 M\_\_ (*emphatically*) Dropped Monkey!
- 14 DL Ohhh!
- 15 M\_\_ Ooh I'd love that rain if it came
- 16 down now
- 17 DL Why is that?
- 18 M\_\_ I'm hot

19 DL Because it's so hot,  
20 oh right. Not as bad  
21 as it was yesterday  
22 though is it

23 M\_\_ No (*faintly*) [ ] because he  
24 loses monkey (.) going back in the  
25 rain to find him (.) they're not that  
26 far away from him are they

27 DL They're not

28 M\_\_ mouse

29 DL [*laughter*]

30 M\_\_ One, two, three

### PAGE OPENING THREE

31 M\_\_ the mice are grabbing the Monkey

32 DL Right

33 M\_\_ [moving] in their holes (.) what're  
34 they doing here? taking off his clothes

35 DL Right

36 M\_\_ What're they doing now? (.) chopping  
37 off his tail

38 DL It does, doesn't it

### PAGE OPENING FOUR

39 M\_\_ Nicking his clothes (.) [ ]  
40 Monkey, oh no

41 DL Right. What... what  
42 do you think they're  
43 doing now? are they  
44 doing anything in  
45 particular?

46 M\_\_ Yea, they're playing with the Monkey

47 DL

Oh, I see right

48 M\_\_ Hedgehog comin' by (.) [one of the  
49 mouses] (.) [looking] in the hole (.)  
50 going inside the hole (.) some of his  
51 spikes might come off going through  
52 there

53 DL

Yes they might...  
might get stuck  
mightn't he in the  
hole

54

55

56

57 M\_\_ Pushing out the Monkey

58 DL

Hmm...Hmm

#### PAGE OPENING FIVE

59 M\_\_ Hedgehog (.) hedgehog looks as (.)  
60 looks like he's gonna (.) tread on it  
61 doesn't he?

62 DL

He does, yea

63 M\_\_ He sticks his [hands on] it (.)  
64 carries it on his back (.) back to  
65 the family.

66 DL

Right

67 M\_\_ And then they're sleeping with him

#### PAGE OPENING SIX

68 M\_\_ jumpin' on him (.) they're carrying  
69 him on their heads

70 DL

Right, what do you  
think they're gonna  
do?

71

72

73 M\_\_ I think they're gonna find the owner  
and give it back

74 DL  
75

Hmm... turn over and  
see [why]

# PAGE OPENING SEVEN

76 M\_\_ Oh, it looks like a bird

77 DL

Hmmm

78 Mic What is it though? (*faintly*) (.)  
79 they're called blackpie...

80 DL  
81  
82  
83  
84  
85

Almost isn't it,  
Magpie I think they're  
called, aren't  
they? (.) do you know  
one of the things  
magpies like doing?

86 M\_\_ Yes

87 DL

What's that?

88 M\_\_ Stealing things

89 DL

They do don't they yea

90 M\_\_ Look, false teeth, watch (.) pair of  
91 glasses

92 DL

That's right

93 M\_\_ [ ] tryin' to catch the hedgehog (.)  
94 they've dropped the Monkey

95 DL  
96

Yea, they have done  
haven't they

97 M\_\_ Taking him [into the air] (.) I think  
98 (.) I think it's gonna put it in the  
99 nest



## PAGE OPENING EIGHT

100 [ ] (.) no I don't [ ] (.)  
 101 he drops it (.) into the sea he drops  
 102 it from there

103 DL

Hmm...Hmm

104 M\_\_ The bees grab it and drop it in  
 105 the sea (.) Oh..Oh! water snake! Oh  
 106 look a paper boat (.) water snake's

## PAGE OPENING NINE

107 DL  
 108  
 109

Whoops! turned over  
 two pages there I  
 think

110 M\_\_ Look there's fish (.) a person fishing

111 DL

Hmm...Hmm

112 M\_\_ ...drag him out of the water (.) Oh no  
 113 one of his eyes has come out

114 DL  
 115  
 116

Do you know... do you  
 know where that came  
 out?

117 M\_\_ Where?

118 DL  
 119  
 120  
 121  
 122  
 123

Did you see, it shows  
 in one of the pictures  
 where he loses his  
 eye (.) let's turn  
 back a bit [*Turn back  
 to picture of Magpie*]

124 M\_\_ Ahhh (.) he (.) he pulls it out  
 125 doesn't he?

126 DL  
 127  
 128  
 129

That's right 'cos they  
 like (.) I think they  
 like bright things  
 don't they magpies?

130 Where were we up to?  
 131 Oh yes, somebody's  
 132 fishing

133 M\_\_ Found the Monkey

134 DL Hmm...Hmm

135 M\_\_ (*quietly*) Takin' it back (.) to  
 136 his place

## PAGE OPENING TEN

137 takin' it in his house (.) stitchin'  
 138 it up (.) stitchin' it up

139 DL Hmm

140 M\_\_ Then he's in a bowl of water (.)  
 141 an' dryin' it

142 DL Why do you think he's  
 143 doing all that?

144 M\_\_ Don't know

145 DL Sorry?

146 M\_\_ To repair it

147 DL To repair it

148 M\_\_ probably he might put it on the  
 149 end of his [ ]

150 DL Why do you think he  
 151 wants to repair it?

152 M\_\_ 'Cos he found it all sticky (.)  
 153 [unstitched]

154 DL I see

155 M\_\_ so he... so he could sell it

156 DL

Ahh. Right

# PAGE OPENING ELEVEN

157 M\_\_ There he is in the window! in the  
158 window.

159 DL

Hmm...Hmm

160 M\_\_ He's reaching for it

161 DL

Who is that?

162 M\_\_ Umm (.) the owner

163 DL  
164

Ah right yes it is  
isn't it

165 M\_\_ So he goes inside and asks for the  
166 Monkey (.) (*faintly*) doesn't he?

167 DL

168

169

170

171

172

173

174

175

176

177

178

179

180

181

182

183

184

185

There (.) he's got his  
Monkey back right  
that's very good(.)  
did you like that?  
It's quite a nice  
story that isn't it?  
Why do think (.) can I  
just ask you one  
little question about  
it? Monkey has a  
terrible time, doesn't  
he? falls in the  
stream and he gets  
pulled about by the  
hedgehogs and the  
magpies and all  
that (.) and when he  
gets caught by the man  
with fishing rod...

186 M\_\_ he gets repaired

187 DL

he takes him home

188 M\_\_ Look teddy (.) ambulance (.) toys

189 DL

Ah, right

190 M\_\_ He's an ambulance

191 DL

192

193

194

195

I wondered you see  
why the man repaired  
him (.) do you know  
what (.) do you know  
what that is?

196 M\_\_ It's an ambulance cross

197 DL

198

199

200

201

202

203

That's right the red  
cross is the sign you  
get on an ambulance  
isn't it? It's not  
(.) it's not for  
people though is it by  
the looks of things

204 M\_\_ No sort of teddies

205 DL

That's right yes.

## APPENDIX

7

CHILD'S NAME Jane  
 TITLE OF BOOK *Where is Monkey?* by Dieter Schubert  
 ACTIVITY Child telling story from a wordless picture book (unknown text)  
 DATE 15. 06. 1989

## PAGE OPENING ONE

1 DL ...and you tell me how  
 2 the story goes

3 J\_\_ (*quietly*) Well first of all the  
 4 little boy puts the monkey (.) no  
 5 he puts the monkey in a chair (.)  
 6 under the chair in a box and then  
 7 after that he gets him out and his  
 8 mum's got his bike and so they go out  
 9 and the little boy's on the back  
 10 and they go and feed the geese and  
 11 one of the geese is trying to get  
 12 the monkey

## PAGE OPENING TWO

13 DL Hmm..mm

14 J\_\_ and then they see a black cloud  
 15 in the sky and it starts to get windy  
 16 so they try and get home quickly(.)  
 17 and it started raining and (.) the  
 18 monkey falls off of the back and the  
 19 boy gets home he starts crying because  
 20 he's lost his monkey and they go out  
 21 again and (.) and look for the monkey  
 22 and they're looking over there and  
 23 the monkey's under the tree...  
 [*turns page, chuckles*]

## PAGE OPENING THREE

24 and the mice pull (.) and some  
 25 rats or mice pull in the monkey who

26 live in the (.) tree (.) they pull  
 27 the monkey in(.) and then (.) they  
 28 jump all over it and they pull it  
 29 [forward] er (.) and one of them pulls  
 30 a bit of the t.. (.) a bit of the tail off

#### PAGE OPENING FOUR

31 DL Hmm.. mm

32 J\_\_ and they (.) pull the trousers off  
 33 and a hedgehog comes and there's a  
 34 little rabbit (.) no! mouse!

35 DL Hmm.. mm

36 J\_\_ rabbit! (.) mouse [peeping]  
 37 out of the little hole and the  
 38 hedgehog comes in and sees the monkey  
 39 and they chase (.) the (.) mon.. (.)  
 40 chases the mice and they push the  
 41 monkey out (.) to get the thing away  
 42 (.) to get the hedgehog away from the  
 43 thing (.) from the tree and the monkey  
 44 comes

#### PAGE OPENING FIVE

45 and then the monkey comes out and  
 46 they pull[s] it out and [he] carries  
 47 it back to his family and children

48 DL Hmm.. mm

49 J\_\_ and they sleep all together  
 50 [ ]

#### PAGE OPENING SIX

51 and (.) they jump on it

52 DL Oh dear..

53 J\_\_ and they carry it all over the place  
 54 then they see something

## PAGE OPENING SEVEN

55. they see a crow and the hedge.. (.)  
 56 and the crow tries to catch the  
 57 hedgehog but it misses and it catches  
 58 the monkey and it goes back to its  
 59 nest (.) [*laughs*] (.) teeth!

60 DL Hmm.mm..mm

61 J\_\_ and glasses and eyes

62 DL Yea

63 J\_\_ glass eyes,

64 DL I think they must be  
 65 glass eyes mustn't  
 66 they

## PAGE OPENING EIGHT

67 J\_\_ And he pins (.) puts a pin in his  
 68 eye (.) 'cos he takes one of his  
 69 eyes out

70 DL Hmm.. mm

71 J\_\_ 'cos it's shiny

72 DL Hmm.. mm

73 J\_\_ and the (.) and then it falls and  
 74 some bees try and catch it but they  
 75 can't because it's too heavy and it  
 76 goes into the water(.) and it goes  
 77 down to the bottom (.) a [ ] where  
 78 [a] big fish finds it (.) [ ]

## PAGE OPENING NINE

79 and the man is fishing and (.) the  
 80 (.) and he catches some fish and it  
 81 also catches the monkey

82 DL That's right

83 J\_\_ and luckily it's a toy-mender

84 DL Hmm.. mm

#### PAGE OPENING TEN

85 J\_\_ and it (.) and he stitches the  
86 tail on

87 DL Hmm.. mm

88 J\_\_ and he gives it a wash and he  
89 dries it and then he puts it with  
90 the other toys

91 DL Can you see him there  
92 in the picture  
93 anywhere?

94 J\_\_ Mmm.. there

95 DL That's it!.. there he  
96 is

#### PAGE OPENING ELEVEN

97 J\_\_ Then he puts it on the zebra and he  
98 watches the children playing in the  
99 snow and it (.) and luckily it's the  
100 little boy's monkey and he (.) and  
101 he asks if he can buy it (.) and (.)  
102 well he tells the man that it's his  
103 monkey and he lost it and so the (.) so  
104 the (.) toymender gives it back and  
105 then he's cuddling the monkey at the end

106 DL That's right (.) very  
107 good.. you think  
108 that's a nice story?

109 J\_\_ Yea



- 110 DL It's good isn't it
- 111 J\_\_ It might not have gone that way but  
112 never mind
- 113 DL What do you mean it  
114 might not have gone  
115 that way?
- 116 J\_\_ If (.) if the t.. (.) it might (.) the  
117 person might not have thought it could  
118 go that way who wrote it
- 119 DL Oh I see (.) so you  
120 think.. the way you  
121 told the story might  
122 not be the same way  
123 as
- 124 J\_\_ Yea
- 125 DL Well (.)I think you  
126 did very well though  
127 (.) you know when you  
128 were looking at these  
129 pictures?  
130 \_\_s Yea
- 131 DL and you said.. the  
132 mice have got him.. or  
133 are they rats.. what  
134 do you think they are?  
135 are they mice or are  
136 they rats?
- 137 J\_\_ Rats I think
- 138 DL Why do you think  
139 they're rats?
- 140 J\_\_ Because they're big and
- 141 DL Right
- 142 J\_\_ they've got longer tails

143 DL Right.. yes they do  
 144 have very long tails  
 145 don't they (.) can you  
 146 see any rats in those  
 147 pictures? [*boy and mum*  
 148 *hunting in the*  
 149 *rain*] (.) [*laugh*] (.)  
 150 that's [right] peeping  
 151 out of.. of the holes  
 152 in the tree aren't  
 153 they?... Now I'll just  
 154 show you one more  
 155 picture.. can you see  
 156 anything in that big  
 157 picture which is in  
 158 the story?

159 J\_\_ The hedgehogs and the geese and the  
 160 crow (.) er (.) [ ]

161 DL Hmm.. mm

162 J\_\_ Mmm

163 DL That's about it really  
 164 isn't it except there  
 165 is

166 J\_\_ There's the fish

167 DL that's right..  
 168 there's the big fish  
 169 underneath.. yea

170 J\_\_ I wonder if the monkey's there!

171 DL Let me ask you just  
 172 one more little  
 173 question 'cos it's  
 174 very very nearly..  
 175 your playtime isn't  
 176 it.. how long do you  
 177 think the story takes?

178 J\_\_ About fifteen minutes

179 DL Mmm?.. I don't mean  
 180 takes you to read but  
 181 how long.. how long  
 182 does it take when  
 183 monkey's lost and then  
 184 all those things  
 185 happen and.. how long  
 186 does it take before  
 187 the little boy gets  
 188 his monkey back again?

189 J\_\_ A day I think.. No erm..erm three days  
 190 the first day he loses it and

191 DL Mmm

192 J\_\_ ...and

193 DL Mmm

194 J\_\_ ...then the second day he finds it (.)  
 195 'cos the hedgehogs.. 'cos the hedgehog's  
 196 found it and they sleep

197 DL That's right they do don't they?.. 'cos the rats play with him don't they and  
 then the.. then the hedgehogs take him away and they sleep.. and he gets all covered in  
 prickles doesn't he 'cos the hedgehogs bounce up and down on him... right jolly good..  
 well done.

## APPENDIX

8

**CHILD'S NAME** Nigel  
**TITLE OF BOOK** *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley*, by John Burningham  
**ACTIVITY** Myself and Nigel reading book together, myself reading the words  
**DATE** 18. 07. 1989

1 DL .....now how do you  
2 know that?

3 N\_\_ 'Cos we've got lots of books in our class  
4 by John Burningham like Where's Julius?

5 DL Right.. so how do you  
6 know this one's

7 N\_\_ ...and they've all got erm things like that  
8 'cos I've seen the name and it's [always] the  
9 same colour

10 DL Right

11 N\_\_ [ ]

12 DL ...and can you read  
13 his name?... yea?...you  
14 recognise the name do  
15 you?... that's right..  
16 what about the title  
17 of this one? ..do you  
18 know it?...No?... can  
19 you read it or shall I  
20 read it to you?

21 N\_\_ You read it to me

22 DL It's called TIME TO  
23 GET OUT OF THE BATH,  
24 SHIRLEY

25 N\_\_ Hmm... but she's not in the bath she's on  
26 a horse

27 DL She is isn't she...  
 28 very strange (.) I  
 29 wonder why?

30 N\_\_ That looks like snake skin... erm that  
 31 bit there

32 DL Oh that's the.. that's  
 33 called the sheath of  
 34 the sword isn't it..  
 35 that's what you put  
 36 erm.. a sword into

37 N\_\_ I've got a plastic sword but that bit's  
 38 broken I think but my dad can fix it and  
 39 it's got one of them bits

40 DL Right

41 N\_\_ ... and it's got a belt to go with it

42 DL I know what you  
 43 mean... OK shall we  
 44 have a look at this  
 45 one?... yea... and  
 46 we'll do what we  
 47 usually do.. shall I  
 48 read it to you?(.)and  
 49 you can ask me  
 50 questions or tell me  
 51 anything about the  
 52 book that you want  
 53 to.. to say(.)right..  
 54 there we are.. there's  
 55 the title again TIME  
 56 TO GET OUT OF THE  
 57 BATH, SHIRLEY(.)  
 58 there's the first  
 59 picture... ARE YOU  
 60 LISTENING TO ME NOW,  
 61 SHIRLEY? (.)

62 N\_\_ That looks like a fan

63 DL What is it do you  
64 think?

65 N\_\_ A towel

66 DL Yea.. it's a towel  
67 isn't it?

68 N\_\_ ...'cos it's got the [lines] in and erm..  
69 if it was all stiff you could wave it on your  
70 face but you'll get too cold

71 DL Hmm..hmm yea I don't  
72 think she's going to  
73 do that though is she?

74 N\_\_ No

75 DL Let's turn over... YOU  
76 HAVEN'T LEFT THE SOAP  
77 IN THE BATH AGAIN HAVE  
78 YOU?

79 N\_\_ Yea... soap

80 DL Mmm.. it is yea... (.)

81 N\_\_ She has left it in there 'cos it says 'soap'

82 DL It does doesn't it on  
83 the bottom of the bath

84 N\_\_ (*laughing*) it's the duck going down the plug

85 DL (*laughing*) that's  
86 right

87 N\_\_ ...with Shirley on it

88 DL ...I wonder where  
89 she'll end up?... shall  
90 we turn over and  
91 see... YOU REALLY  
92 OUGHT TO HAVE A BATH  
93 MORE OFTEN, SHIRLEY

- 94 N\_\_ I know where the duck is.. there [*laughs*]
- 95 DL Where is that do you  
96 think?
- 97 N\_\_ It's c.. it's coming out of the drain
- 98 DL That's right
- 99 N\_\_ ...in a bridge into the dirty water
- 100 DL That's right
- 101 N\_\_ ...coming..down the drain.. out of the erm..  
102 in.. into there.. that's all water.. dirty  
103 water.. I'll bet the cows like to drink it..yuk
- 104 DL You think they do?
- 105 N\_\_ No!
- 106 DL No I shouldn't think  
107 they do
- 108 N\_\_ They probably couldn't bend down to get it  
109 look.. look at that one he can't bend down  
110 to get it
- 111 DL No it's too far away  
112 isn't it the water?
- 113 N\_\_ Probably fall in it.. aghh!.. It has got a  
114 gate.. that might be a gate.. to lean over
- 115 DL Who, do you think that  
116 is in that picture?  
117 [*pointing at Shirley's*  
118 *mum*]
- 119 N\_\_ Shirley
- 120 DL You think that might  
121 be Shirley?

122 N\_\_ Yea

123 DL Yea?

124 N\_\_ Doesn't look like it though.. but the hair

125 looks like it

126 DL Yes, it does a bit

127 doesn't it?.. Let's

128 turn over and go on...

129 SOME PEOPLE DON'T EVEN

130 HAVE BATHS

131 N\_\_ I do

132 DL Hmm.. mmm

133 N\_\_ I have to have one every night

134 DL Do you?

135 N\_\_ Yea

136 DL Good thing... so

137 what's going on over

138 here?

139 N\_\_ [*snorts with laughter*] [ ] in the

140 water.. but there's no splashes [*looking at*

141 *the horses galloping - apparently - on the*

142 *surface of some blue water*] (.) there's two

143 bunny rabbits

144 DL That's right.. is that

145 water do you think?

146 N\_\_ No.. probably the blue path

147 DL Hmm.. could be

148 couldn't it?

149 N\_\_ They.. they've gone into the..erm devils..

150 in the red thing

151 DL Into the devils? what

152 do you mean?



- 153 N\_\_ Yea.. mm hell
- 154 DL Oh I see
- 155 N\_\_ 'Cos it's red [*the background to the riders*  
156 *- the 'sky' glimpsed through the trees*]
- 157 DL Crikey... well who...  
158 what sort of people  
159 are those do you  
160 think?
- 161 N\_\_ Erm (.) I know what they're called but I  
162 can't remember
- 163 DL Can't think of the  
164 name.. Well never mind  
165 perhaps you'll  
166 remember as we go  
167 along
- 168 N\_\_ Ah.. I remember.. they're called knights
- 169 DL Knights!.. that's  
170 right
- 171 N\_\_ Some have metal some have.. some have armour
- 172 DL That's right
- 173 N\_\_ armour's made out of metal
- 174 DL Mmm.. it is isn't it
- 175 N\_\_ So when they shoot it don't hurt them
- 176 DL That's right.. it  
177 protects them doesn't  
178 it from er
- 179 N\_\_ Yea
- 180 DL ...arrows and things  
181 like that

- 182 N\_\_ There's a witch [*having turned over*]
- 183 DL Oh..oh behind the  
184 tree!
- 185 N\_\_ Yea
- 186 DL Yes it looks like a  
187 witch doesn't it..  
188 I've not seen that  
189 before... What does  
190 the.. I haven't read  
191 the words over here  
192 have we?
- 193 N\_\_ No
- 194 DL HAVE YOU BEEN USING  
195 THIS TOWEL SHIRLEY OR  
196 WAS IT YOUR FATHER?
- 197 N\_\_ She's got it dirty
- 198 DL Hm.. mmm
- 199 N\_\_ Probably Shirley 'cos it got dirty.. and  
200 there's a bat.. there
- 201 DL That's right yea...  
202 LOOK AT YOUR CLOTHES  
203 ALL OVER THE FLOOR
- 204 N\_\_ That's her mummy... [*pointing to Shirley's*  
205 *mum, referring back to my question at line 47*]
- 206 DL Yea?
- 207 N\_\_ 'Cos on the other page she's got all the  
208 blue clothes
- 209 DL All the blue clothes?  
210 what do you mean?
- 211 N\_\_ She's blue there [*turns pages back*]

212 DL Yea?

213 N\_\_ ... but Shirley isn't

214 DL Oh I see

215 N\_\_ ...she's blue there but Shirley isn't

216 DL Right

217 N\_\_ ...she's... and you said..that is..[ ]

218 ..is it Shirley but it isn't Shirley

219 DL Right.. so you think..

220 it must be her.. her

221 mum

222 N\_\_ ...[ ]...(.) ...yea

223 DL Yea... LOOK AT YOUR

224 CLOTHES ALL OVER THE

225 FLOOR... that's the

226 kind of thing mum's

227 say sometimes isn't

228 it?... But what's

229 this? [*referring to*  
*recto picture*]

230 N\_\_ She's probably out with her dad

231 DL Yea?

232 N\_\_ It's probably her dad and Shirley

233 DL Hmm

234 N\_\_ Still wrapped in her towel... he's the king

235 DL Yea?... (.) ..let's try

236 this page... THIS WAS

237 CLEAN ON THIS MORNING

238 AND JUST LOOK AT IT  
NOW

- 239 N\_\_ Look it's dirty there
- 240 DL Yea you can see the  
241 marks on it can't you
- 242 N\_\_ ...and there and there
- 243 DL That's right
- 244 N\_\_ And a bit up on the collar (.) why is there  
245 a tree up there? [*looking at recto picture*]
- 246 DL A tree?
- 247 N\_\_ It's growing.. look how little it is.. on  
248 the flag
- 249 DL On the flag?... do you  
250 think it's a.. a.. an  
251 actual tree?
- 252 N\_\_ No
- 253 DL ...a real tree?
- 254 N\_\_ 'Cos erm.. you've got them on cards (.) with  
255 kings they have these
- 256 DL Oh that's... he's got  
257 one there hasn't he
- 258 N\_\_ Yea
- 259 DL ...on his erm... on  
260 his costume
- 261 N\_\_ Yea
- 262 DL It's like erm.. the  
263 sign of clubs on a  
264 playing card isn't  
265 it?... is that what you  
266 were thinking of?...  
267 yea?

268 N\_\_ I know how they do that what it is it's just  
 269 a hat with erm.. s.. some of that stuff over (.)  
 270 material... how they make

271 DL Which one?.. the  
 272 king's crown? or

273 N\_\_ That [*pointing to the antique ladies' headgear*]

274 DL Yea

275 N\_\_ It's just a hat.. a normal hat

276 DL Yea?

277 N\_\_ ...erm.. with that over.. I don't know how  
 278 they do that because erm.. it would fall off(.)  
 279 that

280 DL What would

281 N\_\_ That hat

282 DL Well maybe it's..  
 283 maybe it's tied.. tied  
 284 on under the chin..  
 285 something like that

286 N\_\_ Yea but real ones don't

287 DL You can't see it in  
 288 the picture can you (.)  
 289 let's turn over  
 290 again... I WISH YOU  
 291 WOULD LEARN TO FOLD UP  
 292 YOUR CLOTHES NICELY...  
 293 Hmmph

294 N\_\_ They're blowing up the ducks

295 DL They are aren't  
 296 they?... wonder what  
 297 they're doing that  
 298 for?

- 299 N\_\_ Probably for Shirley
- 300 DL Yea?
- 301 N\_\_ Or someone... probably for them 'cos they're  
302 going swimming... and they can't swim
- 303 DL Who do you think these  
304 people are?
- 305 N\_\_ They're the k... king and the queen
- 306 DL The king and the queen
- 307 N\_\_ He's got that everywhere
- 308 DL He has hasn't he..  
309 what...what. his  
310 little.. sign
- 311 N\_\_ ..yea.. sign... look he's got it... erm..  
312 on his chair
- 313 DL Hmm... well I think  
314 kings and queens often  
315 do that don't they  
316 they often have...  
317 their special... erm..  
318 designs all over the  
319 place
- 320 N\_\_ ...they've got it all around there
- 321 DL All around the edge of  
322 the chair that's right
- 323 N\_\_ But he hasn't got it on his duck
- 324 DL No he hasn't has  
325 he?... Shall I read  
326 what the words say  
327 over here... I HAVE  
328 BETTER THINGS TO DO  
329 THAN RUN AROUND  
330 TIDYING UP AFTER YOU

331 N\_\_ My mum says that to Amy and Charlotte..  
 332 look [through] there I think they're playing  
 333 boxing fights.. the queen is

334 DL Yea

335 N\_\_ With Shirley

336 DL (chuckling) Where do  
 337 you think they are?

338 N\_\_ They're in the dirty water... dirty water  
 339 [referring, I think, to the sewage outlet  
 340 at line 38]

341 DL Yea?... it doesn't  
 342 look very dirty it's  
 343 got .. it's got erm

344 N\_\_ where the fro... probably where the frogs  
 345 live 'cos it's green water where the frogs  
 346 live

347 DL Hmm... let's turn over  
 348 again... I'M JUST  
 349 GOING TO GET YOUR  
 350 NIGHTIE

351 N\_\_ Punched her!... Aarrgh!... right into the  
 352 water.. bet she falls into the water

353 DL ..that's right she...  
 354 she's going over isn't  
 355 she?...with a splash

356 N\_\_ I wonder what that's for?

357 DL What?... down here?

358 N\_\_ ..this bit.. yea.. it's been crossed out

359 DL Oh.. it was erm... a  
 360 book that belonged to  
 361 a library and then it

362 was.. its was moved  
 363 from that library to  
 364 another library so  
 365 that was crossed out..  
 366 it was a rubber stamp  
 367 that's the name of the  
 368 library you see..  
 369 wonder what's going to  
 370 happen next?

371 N\_\_ She punches the king in! [then]

372 DL Hmm..hmm... ..NOW  
 373 THERE'S WATER  
 374 EVERYWHERE!

375 N\_\_ 'Cos she's punched the.. king in

376 DL Why? what do you mean?

377 N\_\_ She punched the king in and it probably made  
 378 a splash.. she's probably still playing in  
 279 the bath

380 DL Yea?.. so what.. you  
 381 mean the king falling  
 382 in the water what...  
 383 what that's done?

384 N\_\_ ..yea.. she's playing with.. her toys

385 DL Ah I see... ..so you  
 386 don't think this is a  
 387 real king then

388 N\_\_ No

389 DL No?

390 N\_\_ ...it's just a toy

391 DL Yea?... that's the  
 392 last page!

393 N\_\_ She wasn't.. there was no water in it but



- 394 she was still playing
- 395 DL Hmm.. hmm
- 396 N\_\_ But where's the soap gone?
- 397 DL Aahh!
- 398 N\_\_ It's not there now!
- 399 DL Unless it's sort of  
400 over the side and you  
401 can't see it down  
402 there
- 403 N\_\_ Aach!...
- 404 DL [laughs]
- 405 — can't see it [*turns the page back to 'see'*  
406 *behind the bath*]
- 407 DL No you won't be able  
408 to see it like that
- 409 N\_\_ I've got this book and it's.....

**[Long digression about another book]**

- 410 DL right... well there we  
411 are that was Time to  
412 Get Out of the Bath,  
413 Shirley... what did  
414 you think of that?
- 415 N\_\_ I liked that book
- 416 DL Alright?
- 417 N\_\_ 'cos it's
- 418 DL Which bit did you like  
419 then

- 420 N\_\_ I liked the [ ] at the end bit
- 421 DL What the end bit?
- 422 N\_\_ Yea
- 423 DL What you mean where  
424 they were fighting?
- 425 N\_\_ erm
- 426 DL on the ducks?
- 427 N\_\_ That bit 'cos she was still in the bath
- 428 So where do you think  
429 Shirley's been all  
430 this time?
- 431 N\_\_ Erm... playing in the bath with no water
- 432 DL Oh I see... so what  
433 about all this  
434 galloping around on  
435 horseback?... and all  
436 that?
- 437 N\_\_ She was probably using her fingers
- 438 DL Using her.. how would  
439 she use her fingers?
- 440 N\_\_ Like.. going like that [*making two fingers*  
441 *gallop like legs*].. and putting little  
442 people on her fingers
- 443 DL Ah I see !
- 444 N\_\_ Or play men
- 445 DL Yea?
- 446 N\_\_ 'Cos there's these little things [with]  
447 horses and (.) things [*I think referring to 'play people'*]

448 DL Right.. well she  
449 certainly seems to  
450 have a jolly good time  
451 doesn't she

452 N\_\_ She's lost her duck on that.. on the other  
453 page

454 DL On which one?.. there?

455 N\_\_ Yea

456 DL Yea

457 N\_\_ Yea

458 DL She gets another  
459 one... doesn't she..  
460 or she gets it back

461 N\_\_ Probably gets it back

462 DL Gets it back?... ah  
463 there it is...  
464 Right!.. OK then that  
465 was jolly good

## APPENDIX: 9

CHILD'S NAME: Jane

TITLE OF BOOK: *Time To Get Out Of The Bath, Shirley* by John Burningham

ACTIVITY: Myself and Jane reading book together, Jane reading the words

DATE: 18. 07. 1989

- 1 J\_\_ I know the person who wrote that
- 2 DL Why.. who wrote it?
- 3 J\_\_ John Burningham
- 4 DL Again [*laughter*]..
- 5 that's right
- 6 J\_\_ He writes good stories.. they're funny..
- 7 DL You like them do you?
- 8 J\_\_ Mmm
- 9 DL Yea?... 'cos we've
- 10 looked at one or two
- 11 of his haven't we?...
- 12 But you don't know
- 13 that one?
- 14 J\_\_ No
- 15 DL No?... What about the
- 16 title.. can you read
- 17 the title or shall I
- 18 read it?
- 19 J\_\_ TIME TO GET OUT OF THE BATH, SHIRLEY
- 20 DL Right.. that's it..
- 21 TIME TO GET OUT OF THE
- 22 BATH, SHIRLEY... well
- 23 she doesn't seem to be
- 24 in the bath does she?

25 J\_\_ No [*laughs*]

26 DL Well we'll have to  
 27 have a look at the...  
 28 the pictures and the  
 29 story inside won't we  
 30 to see what's going  
 31 on?... (.) ...right  
 32 now how are we going  
 33 to do this are you  
 34 going to read it or  
 35 shall I read it to you  
 36 or what? or shall we  
 37 read a bit each?

38 J\_\_ Read a bit each

39 DL Read a bit each!... It  
 40 hasn't got very many  
 41 words in it 'cos it's  
 42 not a very long  
 43 story... so I mean you  
 44 can read it all if you  
 45 want

46 J\_\_ TIME TO GET OUT OF THE BATH, SHIRLEY

47 DL There we go

48 J\_\_ ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME NOW SHIRLEY? [*laughs*]

49 DL Why are you laughing!?

50 J\_\_ [*continues laughing*]

51 DL What?

52 J\_\_ [It] looks funny...

53 DL Why does she look  
 54 funny?

55 J\_\_ 'Cos.. 'cos she... there... and [I].. and  
 56 [I'm] not there in the bath but it's



87 DL Yea?

88 J\_\_ YOU REALLY OUGHT TO HAVE A BATH MORE OFTEN  
 89 SHIRLEY... *[laughs]*... urgh! she's *[going]*  
 90 in the sewage pipe

91 DL She's what?

92 J\_\_ She's gone in the sewage bit

93 DL In the sewage

94 J\_\_ *[laughs]*

95 DL right.. she's come out  
 96 through the drain  
 97 hasn't she

98 J\_\_ There was... you know for the evening..  
 99 there's an evening day [*presumably an*  
 100 '*open evening*'].. and Virginia's done a  
 101 [ ] and there was something like  
 102 this where a little boy went down the..  
 103 but I can't *[remember]* what it was like..  
 104 Alice in Wonderland

105 DL Mmm

106 J\_\_ except it was called Alex in Wonderland

107 DL Alex in Wonderland..  
 108 that sounds good

109 J\_\_ And he went down a plughole

110 DL Oh I see

111 J\_\_ and he went into Wonderland..

112 DL Well... I wonder  
 113 what's going to happen  
 114 here?... Shall we turn  
 115 over?... you tell me  
 116 when you want to turn  
 117 over.. yea?

118 J\_\_ SOME PEOPLE DON'T EVEN HAVE BATHS... she's  
 119 not taking any notice!

120 DL Who isn't?

121 J\_\_ Her mother... 'cos she... she doesn't know  
 122 yet that she's gone

123 DL No.. it doesn't look  
 124 like it does it?

125 J\_\_ [Little] rubber duck [*laughs*]

126 DL Looks as though she's  
 127 going to lose it  
 128 doesn't it?

129 J\_\_ Yea.. 'cos it's going down the waterfall...  
 130 ah!.. just in time she went up there

131 DL What.. you mean  
 132 managed to catch  
 133 onto

134 J\_\_ Yea

135 DL onto a branch.. yea..  
 136 who are these people  
 137 galloping up do you  
 138 think?

139 J\_\_ Knights

140 DL Hmm

141 J\_\_ I wonder where she is?

142 DL Hmmm

143 J\_\_ In the forest.. or something

144 DL That's right... shall  
 145 we turn over?

146 J\_\_ Yea..



147 DL Yea?

148 J\_\_ HAVE YOU BEEN USING THIS TOWEL SHIRLEY OR  
 149 WAS IT YOUR FATHER?... probably her father  
 150 'cos it's got big hands

151 DL Hmm... mmm

152 J\_\_ She's gone on the back of the horse... is  
 153 that an owl or a bat?... bat!

154 DL Don't know.. could be

155 J\_\_ Oh look there's a witch!

156 DL Yea?

157 J\_\_ (*chuckles*) funny... and there's another one  
 158 there.. and there

159 DL That's right it looks

160 J\_\_ there hiding behind the trees

161 DL Looks as if they're  
 162 hiding all over the  
 163 place doesn't it?

164 J\_\_ Yea

165 DL Shall we go on?

166 J\_\_ Yea

167 DL Yea?

168 J\_\_ LOOK AT YOUR CLOTHES ALL OVER THE FLOOR...  
 169 [*snorts*]... she's in the bathroom and she  
 170 hasn't noticed anything

171 DL No... is that the kind  
 172 of thing that your mum  
 173 says to you?

174 J\_\_ Ermm.. sort of.. sometimes

175 DL Sometimes?

176 J\_\_ Yea... aha!... oh look.. the kings on the  
 177 back of that one *[laughs]*... my mum doesn't  
 178 have to crawl all over the floor though...

179 DL No

180 J\_\_ *[laughs]*

181 DL Why.. she makes you do  
 182 that does she?

183 J\_\_ No... she picks them up... she just bends  
 184 over that's all

185 DL Right.. shall we go  
 186 on?

187 J\_\_ THESE... THIS WAS CLEAN ON THIS MORNING  
 188 AND JUST LOOK AT IT NOW... *[laughs]*...  
 189 hand prints on it... still hasn't

190 DL well she seems to be  
 191 erm...

192 J\_\_ Yea she seems to be looking at the bath but

193 DL Hmm

194 J\_\_ but she still doesn't know where she is...  
 195 not taking any notice

196 DL So what's going on  
 197 over here?

198 J\_\_ Er... oh look they've seen the rubber duck

199 DL Oh right

200 J\_\_ Look.. there she is  
 201 DL That's right... what  
 202 do you think they

203 pointing at I wonder?

204 J\_\_ The duck

205 DL Yea?... could be  
206 couldn't they

207 J\_\_ Look.. even the cows are looking at it...  
208 I WISH YOU WOULD LEARN TO FOLD UP YOUR  
209 CLOTHES NICELY... *[laughs]*

210 DL What are they doing  
211 there?

212 J\_\_ They're blowing up ducks.. rubber ducks

213 DL I wonder why?

214 J\_\_ 'Cos they seen... 'cos they're probably  
215 going to get that other one or something

216 DL Shall we see?... yea?

217 J\_\_ Mmm...*[laughs]*... no.. they're boxing each  
218 other... I... I HAVE BETTER THINGS TO DO  
219 THAN RUN AROUND TIDYING UP AFTER YOU (.)

220 DL Hmm...Hmm... I wonder  
221 what will happen

222 J\_\_ *[laughs]*... I'M JUST GOING TO GET YOUR  
223 NIGHTIE... *[snorts]*... got her!... she's  
224 OK if she falls in 'cos she's bare...  
225 nearly bare

226 DL That's right.. yea

227 J\_\_ She's got... just got a towel on.. oh look  
228 there's frogs!

229 DL Mmm.. jumping out of  
230 the way I should think

231 J\_\_ Yea.... That one's knee deep... that one's  
232 got a [ ]... that one's very nearly  
233 [ ] 'cos erm she's just about to fall

234 on them and it just... just in time moved  
 235 out of the way

236 DL That's right

237 J\_\_ 'Cos it probably [ ]

238 DL They have to be very  
 239 quick don't they

240 J\_\_ They are very quick... NOW THERE'S WATER  
 241 EVERYWHERE!... [laughs].. got the king as  
 242 well... [laughs].. boxing gloves on sticks..  
 243 she's got her eyes closed

244 DL Yes she does doesn't  
 245 she... seems to have  
 246 her eyes closed anyway

247 J\_\_ Hmm

248 DL Right.. I think we've  
 249 reached the last page

250 J\_\_ Yea... she's back in her bath again

251 DL Hmm... mmm

252 J\_\_ Wonder how she got there?... just in time  
 253 before her mum notices..

254 DL Hmm... and

255 J\_\_ There's her rub... her little rubber duck

256 DL Her rubber duck's back  
 257 as well.. yes

258 J\_\_ It's only little

259 DL So!... what do you  
 260 think of that then?

261 J\_\_ It's good

262 DL Yea?

263 J\_\_ Yea... I like the bit where... at the first  
264 where she goes in the bath

265 DL What?... that bit?

266 J\_\_ Yea... 'cos she's nearly showing her bottom

267 DL [laughs]

268 J\_\_ And in... and in the.. in another book  
269 there's a little croc(?)... erm... erm...  
270 I've forgotten its name it's about a  
271 little boy and he cries wolf yea.. where  
272 he cries wolf and he actually shows his  
273 bottom it's a funny one ... it's by Tony  
274 Ross

275 DL Oh yes I know Tony  
276 Ross... so what do you  
277 think about... these  
278 pictures and those  
279 pictures... do you  
280 think erm... what do  
281 you think's going on  
282 here?

283 J\_\_ Well she's going... she just about going  
284 into the sewage and she's combing her hair

285 DL Yea?... do you think  
286 she's really gone down  
287 the plughole?

288 J\_\_ (*very quietly*) No I think she's only dreaming  
289 or something... and it's probably only a  
290 little rubber duck... which came up again

291 DL What do you mean?...  
292 you mean her little

293 J\_\_ Yea... she was dreaming... 'cos she saw  
294 it go down the hole and she was dreaming  
295 that she was on it and going down the

296 plughole as well and she met the king and  
297 queen..

298 DL Mmm... if it was a  
299 dream or a daydream it  
300 was certainly a very  
301 strange one wasn't it?

302 J\_\_ Yea!

303 DL A very odd one

304 J\_\_ Going down the plughole!

|     |    |                    |
|-----|----|--------------------|
| 305 | DL | Well... there's    |
| 306 |    | another one like   |
| 307 |    | that.. and it's    |
| 308 |    | called.. Come Away |
| 309 |    | from the Water,    |
| 310 |    | Shirley            |

311 J\_\_ Yea

312 DL Do you know that one?

313 J\_\_ Yea I know that one

314 DL You know that one?...  
315 it's with the same  
316 little girl isn't it

317 J\_\_ Yea

## APPENDIX:

10

CHILDREN'S NAMES: Group of six, including Jane, Nigel, and Martin  
 TITLE OF BOOK: *John Patrick Norman McHennessy - the Boy Who Was Always Late*, by John Burningham  
 ACTIVITY: Sharing an unknown text with group  
 DATE: 23. 05. 1989

## Extract 1

- 1 DL This one, the last one...can you just put your hand up to show  
 2 me if you have seen that one before?... No? Do you recognise  
 3 that one?
- 4 J\_\_ [*other voices in background*] ...John Burningham
- 5 DL Right (.) well I didn't, I didn't think you would have heard it.
- 6 \*\* I've seen that book before but... but I forgot what it has in  
 7 it, so
- 8 DL OK.. well look.. this was the one which I thought we might read  
 9 together [yea] because I didn't think that you would know this  
 10 you see so I thought it would be quite a good one to start  
 11 together. If I sit like this and hold it like that do you think  
 12 you will all be able to see the pictures?
- 13 J\_\_ No.. I can't..
- 14 \*\* I can't even see
- 15 DL Well can you.. what shall we do? Shall I sit a little bit  
 16 further back.. like this.. alright?... [*several voices*]... Oh  
 17 right.. If I sit a little bit further back like that and then  
 18 hold it like that I want you all to be able to see the pictures.
- 19 \*\* OK.. [*several voices*]
- 20 DL Can you do that?
- 21 J\_\_ a bit forward [*laughs*]
- 22 DL OK and first of all shall I tell you the title?

- 23     \*\*     yea
- 24     DL     Anybody think they can read the title?
- 25     J\_\_     Umm.. it's.. [written by John Burningham]
- 26     DL     That's right it's written by John Burningham (.) go on (.) have  
27             a go.. what's the title?
- 28     N\_\_     [*several voices in backg'd*] ..we've had lots of John Burningham
- 29     J\_\_     John Patrick Norman Mac... hen.. sy... the boy who was always  
30             late.
- 31     DL     Right.. [*voices*].. it's.. most of the title is a boy's name..  
32             his name is John Patrick Norman MacHennessy.. the Boy Who Was  
33             Always Late (.) right? so we're going to find out about John  
34             Patrick and see what...
- 35     J\_\_     that's good.. what the boy.. [*several voices*].. how much writing  
36             he had to do.

*[Here I had tried to turn over the endpapers so the children could not see the design showing the 'lines' that JPNM had to write. Jane spotted a fragment and made the comment above]*

- 37     DL     That's right [*turning back*] there's a lot of writing there
- 38     J       He.. umm.. [*several voices*] comes to school really late.
- 39     DL     How do you know he's had to do all that writing?
- 40     \*\*     So he doesn't
- 41     DL     Hmm?..how do know John Patrick had to do it though?
- 42     \*\*     'Cos he's always late.
- 43     DL     'Cos he's always late?
- 44     \*\*     'Cos [            ]
- 45     DL     Let's see what happens to him shall we? let's just read the  
46             story first of all.. we can talk about it as we go but we'll  
47             start the story now JOHN PATRICK NORMAN McHENNESSY SET OFF



48                   ALONG THE ROAD TO LEARN [*turn page*] ON THE WAY [*sniggers*] A  
 49                   CROCODILE CAME OUT OF A DRAIN AND GOT HOLD OF HIS SATCHEL. JOHN  
 50                   PATRICK NORMAN McHENNESSY PULLED AND PULLED THE CROCODILE..  
 51                   sorry.. BUT THE CROCODILE WOULD NOT LET GO

52       \*\*       Crocodiles don't come out of dr.. drains.. they come out of  
 53                   water.

54       DL       (*quietly*) Don't they?

55       \*\*       I know what satchel.. is.. bag.

56       DL       HE THREW A GLOVE INTO THE AIR AND THE CROCODILE SNAPPED AT THE  
 57                   GLOVE AND LET GO OF THE SATCHEL. JOHN PATRICK NORMAN McHENNESSY  
 58                   SET OFF ALONG THE ROAD TO LEARN BUT THE CROCODILE HAD MADE HIM  
 59                   LATE. Where do you think he's going?

60       \*\*       [*everyone*] to school

61       DL       How do you know?

62       \*\*       [*some confused voices*] (*then quietly*) he's got satchel.. he's  
 63                   got a satchel

64       DL       Oh, I see

65       J\_\_       and it said.. he said.. that he's walking along the road to  
 66                   learn

67       DL       Right so you think that might be school (.) right JOHN PATRICK  
 68                   NORMAN McHENNESSY YOU ARE LATE! AND WHERE IS YOUR OTHER GLOVE?  
 69                   I'M LATE SIR BECAUSE ON THE WAY A CROCODILE CAME OUT OF A DRAIN  
 70                   AND GOT HOLD OF MY SATCHEL AND WOULD ONLY LET GO WHEN I THREW MY  
 71                   GLOVE WHICH HE ATE. THERE ARE NO CROCODILES LIVING IN THE  
 72                   DRAINS AROUND HERE. YOU ARE TO STAY IN LATE..

73       \*\*       that

74       DL       ..AND WRITE OUT THREE HUNDRED..

75       \*\*       that

76       DL       ..TIMES..

77       \*\*       that man

- 78 DL I MUST NOT TELL LIES ABOUT CROCODILES AND I MUST NOT LOSE MY  
79 GLOVE.
- 80 N\_\_ [*indicating picture*] The teacher there is different to the back  
81 it looks like
- 82 DL Different to the back?
- 83 N\_\_ Yea
- 84 \*\* Different bit of [ ] say he's got a bigger nose.
- 85 DL Got a bigger nose? Do you think so?
- 86 \*\* [*several voices*] Yea...Sevgi..
- 87 DL Do you think he's the same man then?
- 88 \*\* [*several voices*] He is the same man.. but he looks.. ..he don't  
89 look like it.. ..he looks longer...
- 90 DL Which.. well who's got the bigger nose.. do you think he's got  
91 the bigger nose or he's got the bigger nose?
- 92 \*\* [*several voices*] ..he's got the bigger nose.
- 93 N\_\_ it's big there but on the other side it's quite small.
- 94 DL Right....
-

## Extract 2

- 1 DL Let's see what happens now.
- 2 \*\* He'd miss his playtime.
- 3 DL JOHN PATRICK NORMAN McHENNESSY HURRIED OFF ALONG THE ROAD TO  
4 LEARN (.) there he is, can you see him?
- 5 \*\* [*confused voices*]... a little bit
- 6 DL BUT ON THE WAY A LION CAME OUT OF THE BUSHES AND TORE HIS TROUSERS  
[*laughter*]...
- 7 \*\* I know what happens
- 8 DL You know what happens? what happens?
- 9 \*\* Umm...the teacher tells him off about his trousers [*laughter*]
- 10 DL Well let's.. let's have look and see (.) HE MANAGED TO CLIMB UP  
11 A TREE. HE STAYED UP THE TREE UNTIL THE LION LOST INTEREST IN  
12 HIM AND WENT AWAY (.) Can you see him up there in the tree in  
13 the branches of the tree?
- 14 \*\* [*several different voices*] Yea... ..I can see... ..I think it 15  
happens but I don't know... ..he matches the tree.. ..think
- 16 DL What happens?
- 17 \*\* that umm..*[confused voices]*...that teacher tells...
- 18 DL Oh, I see right.
- 19 \*\* [*several voices*] ...he matches the tree... ..I bet he has to  
20 write...
- 21 DL Right, shall we read on
- 22 \*\* I bet he has to write it three.. four hundred times.
- 23 \*\* He has to write.. er.. four.. can't remember...
- 24 DL Don't.. don't lean forwards because people won't be able to see

- 25           the book will they?
- 26   \*\*       I must not tell lies about lions coming away...coming in from  
27           the... bushes... you must not...
- 28   DL       Well OK let's see... let's see what he has to do (.) JOHN  
29           PATRICK NORMAN McHENNESSY HURRIED OFF ALONG THE ROAD TO LEARN  
30           BUT HE WAS (*emphatically*) LATE BECAUSE OF THE LION [*turn page*]  
31           [*laughter*] YOU ARE LATE AGAIN JOHN PATRICK NORMAN McHENNESSY AND  
32           YOU HAVE TORN YOUR TROUSERS. I WAS LATE SIR BECAUSE ON MY WAY  
33           HERE A LION JUMPED OUT OF THE BUSHES AND TORE MY TROUSERS \_
- 34   J\_\_      (*interrupting*)...Yes four hundred times (.) I was right.

**APPENDIX: 11****CHILD'S NAME:** Nigel**TITLE OF BOOK:** *John Patrick Norman McHennessy - the Boy Who Was Always Late* by John Burningham**ACTIVITY:** Retelling story 16 days after original group story session**DATE:** 08. 06. 1989

1 N\_\_ I can remember the one you read.

2 DL That's right well  
3 that's what I want you  
4 to try and remember  
5 you see.. erm.. 'cos I  
6 asked you to try and  
7 remember it didn't I?

8 N\_\_ I can't remember all of the name but [it was]  
9 the boy who was always late.. for school

10 DL That's right

11 N\_\_ Can't remember his name 'cos it was so  
12 long

13 DL Can you remember any  
14 of his name?.. perhaps  
15 just one part of his

16 N\_\_ John Patrick Norman McHennessy

17 DL Very good.. well  
18 done.. that's.. that's  
19 all of it (.) John  
20 Patrick Norman  
21 McHennessy the boy  
22 (.) who was always  
23 late

24 N\_\_ who was always late for school.

25 DL That's right..  
26 OK.. now.. all I

27 want.. all I want to  
 28 do is to see if you  
 29 can remember as much  
 30 of the story as  
 31 possible.. and see if  
 32 you can tell me the  
 33 story.. you know if  
 34 you had to start at  
 35 the beginning and tell  
 37 me what the story was  
 38 all about how... how  
 39 does the story go?

40 N\_\_ Well he was going to school he... I can't  
 41 remember what he did but he.. but something  
 42 came out to get him then he had to stand  
 43 in the corner and write it all.. and..  
 44 one hundred times

45 DL Mmm

46 N\_\_ And he did it again [but] when he got there  
 47 [it was] something different and it was  
 48 (*emphatic*) two hundred times and when he  
 49 went back to school it was (*emphatic*) three  
 50 hundred times

51 DL Right

52 Nic And then the teacher said [ ].  
 53 he was pretending he had got stuck up there  
 54 a gorilla [was holding him]... John Patrick  
 55 Norman McHennessy said there's no such  
 56 thing as Gorillas and in one bit when John  
 57 Patrick Norman McHennessy was coming to  
 58 school there was a lion.. he tore.. he got  
 59 his trousers caught on the tree so he had  
 60 to wait until the lion went away and.. the  
 61 teacher said there's no such things as  
 62 lions in this country

63 DL That's right.. do you  
 64 remember any more?

65 N\_\_ No

- 66 DL You mentioned the lion  
 67 what.. what.. can you  
 68 remember the other  
 69 things that happened  
 70 to the little boy on  
 71 his way to school?
- 72 N\_\_ He had to throw his glove out to [ ]  
 73 let go of his.. thingy
- 74 DL That's right
- 75 N\_\_ Satchel
- 76 DL Yea
- 77 N\_\_ And the teacher said where's your other  
 78 glove and.. and John Patrick said I threw  
 79 it out so the crocodile [would] stop  
 80 chewing my satchel
- 81 DL Right
- 82 N\_\_ It came out of the drain
- 83 DL Right.. Do you think  
 84 erm.. you said you  
 85 said that the.. the  
 86 teacher pretended he  
 87 was up in the roof  
 88 with the
- 89 N\_\_ yea I don't think he really did that
- 90 DL the gorilla
- 91 N\_\_ I think he was holding on to it
- 92 DL Holding on to what?
- 93 N\_\_ Holding on to the top of the roof
- 94 DL Oh I see.. so erm..  
 95 what about the gorilla

96 in the picture.. you  
 97 think the gorilla was  
 98 just sort of pretend

99 N\_\_ Yea.. I think he was just holding on to it..  
 100 [ ] his glove came off in the  
 101 wind

102 DL Oh I see right..  
 103 right.. so...

104 N\_\_ and the satchel just got caught on something  
 105 that looked like a crocodile

106 DL Right.. so Patrick  
 107 just sort of lost.. he  
 108 lost his glove?

109 N\_\_ Yea

110 DL and tore his trousers  
 111 and things

112 N\_\_ Tore the trousers on a tree going past

113 DL So do you think the  
 114 teacher was right to  
 115 be a bit cross with  
 116 him when he said

117 N\_\_ Yea

118 DL 'I tore my trousers'  
 119 you know 'a crocodile  
 120 got my satchel and a  
 121 lion jumped out at me'

122 N\_\_ Yea

123 DL Yea?.. that's  
 124 interesting.. you  
 125 sound as though you've  
 126 got a terrible cough!



**APPENDIX: 12****CHILD'S NAME:** Jane**TITLE OF BOOK:** *John Patrick Norman McHennessy - the Boy Who Was Always Late* by John Burningham**ACTIVITY:** Retelling story 16 days after original group story session**DATE:** 08. 06. 1989(whole of Jane's retelling hesitant and quiet)

- |    |     |  |                        |
|----|-----|--|------------------------|
| 1  | DL  |  | do you think you can   |
| 2  |     |  | remember it?           |
| 3  | J__ | A little bit                                       |                        |
| 4  | DL  |  | a little bit alright   |
| 5  |     |  | OK... well can you     |
| 6  |     |  | remember what the      |
| 7  |     |  | title was first of     |
| 8  |     |  | all?                   |
| 9  | J__ | Mmm [ <i>long pause</i> ] mmm (.) it's something.. |                        |
| 10 |     | something mmm(.) no I can't                        |                        |
| 11 | DL  |  | Not really? it doesn't |
| 12 |     |  | matter.. it doesn't    |
| 13 |     |  | matter.. I'm not       |
| 14 |     |  | trying to catch you    |
| 15 |     |  | out or anything...     |
| 16 |     |  | don't worry about me   |
| 17 |     |  | writing things         |
| 18 |     |  | down.. mmm.. alright   |
| 19 |     |  | well never mind never  |
| 20 |     |  | mind the title see if  |
| 21 |     |  | you can remember       |
| 22 |     |  | something of the       |
| 23 |     |  | story alright? so see  |
| 24 |     |  | if you can tell me as  |
| 25 |     |  | much as you can of the |
| 26 |     |  | story that we read a   |
| 27 |     |  | couple of weeks ago    |
| 28 | J__ | I remember the bit where the gorilla took the      |                        |

- 29 mm.. the teacher up in the air and I remember  
 30 when the boy had to write out a hun... a  
 31 hundred lines and 500 lines and 400 lines  
 32 and 300 lines
- 33 DL Right so how did it...  
 34 how did it go can you  
 35 remember if you.. you  
 36 know if you tried to  
 37 tell the story from  
 38 the beginning
- 39 J\_\_ 'cos he was always late.
- 40 DL Well OK see if you can  
 41 tell me the story as  
 42 it.. as it goes from  
 43 the beginning as much  
 44 as you can remember
- 45 J\_\_ (*quietly, a little unsure starting*) Well (.)  
 46 one day he.. umm the boy went out to school  
 47 and he.. and he got caught up by a (*hesitantly*)  
 48 croc - o - dile I think
- 49 DL Mmm
- 50 J\_\_ and he bit its satchel and... and he lost  
 51 his glove.. and so he got to school and he  
 52 was late and.. the teacher told him off and  
 53 told him to write a.. a hundred lines of  
 54 "I must not tell lies about crocodiles I  
 55 must not (*hesitantly, quietly*) (.) lose my  
 56 glove" and then the next day he went off  
 57 to school and he.. he met.. mmm (.) mmm
- 58 DL Can you remember  
 59 what.. what the next  
 60 bit was?
- 61 J\_\_ He met something.. I've forgotten what it  
 62 was
- 63 DL Well never mind don't  
 64 worry about the things

65 you can't remember (.)  
66 what other bits can  
67 you remember about the  
68 story?

69 J\_\_ And after that he went to school and he  
70 was late and he had torn trousers and so  
71 he.. he erm (*all very quietly*) had to  
72 write down 200 lines of... I must not tell  
73 lies about (*emphatically*) something.. I  
74 must not get holes in my trousers or something

75 DL Mmm

76 J Mmm

|    |    |                       |
|----|----|-----------------------|
| 77 | DL | What came after that? |
| 78 |    | Do you remember any   |
| 79 |    | more?                 |

80 J\_\_ He went.. got down the road to learn and  
81 (*quietly*) I can't remember what he caught up  
82 with that time.. then after that.. and  
83 then.. I don't.. I don't know what he had  
84 done with [him].. but after all

85 DL Well it doesn't matter  
86 if you can't  
87 remember

88 J after all

89 DL so don't worry about  
90 it

91 J\_\_ After.. after that when he went [forward] to  
92 learn and he saw the teacher was hanging  
93 up [by] the gorilla.. and he said get me  
94 down and.. and he.. and the boy said no  
95 'cos you.. 'cos you made me write and write  
96 or something like that.. and that was the  
97 end of the story

98 DL Right.. well you  
99 actually remembered

100

quite a bit really..

**APPENDIX: 13****CHILD'S NAME:** Nigel**TITLE OF BOOK:** *On The Way Home* by Jill Murphy**ACTIVITY:** Discussion of a known and familiar text, myself reading the words**DATE:** 27. 06. 1989

- 1 DL ...if your teachers  
2 read it to you do you  
3 know
- 4 N\_\_ She makes up stories
- 5 DL Right.. you know the  
6 stories don't you...  
7 can you tell me a bit  
8 about what happens in  
9 it before we have a  
10 look at it
- 11 N\_\_ Well.. she makes up loads of stories.. she  
12 tells her friends about it.. they're all  
13 the things that are in it on the cover
- 14 DL Yea.. oh I see..  
15 right (.) so what..  
16 what.. what are these  
17 stories all about?
- 18 N\_\_ Like that.. that space cruiser thing picks  
19 her up and drops her
- 20 DL Yea..
- 21 N\_\_ that's how she got her cut but she didn't  
22 do that she fell off the swing
- 23 DL Oh.. right.. I see (.)  
24 so she makes up all  
25 these stories about
- 26 N\_\_ is.. yea.. there's one thing.. oh yes the

27            witch is there

28 DL Yea

29 N\_\_ He's saying OK so people go in the road to  
30 my [mum] they say OK

31 DL Oh righ...the ..the  
32 gorilla

33 N OK when to stop

34 DL the gorilla.. the  
35 gorilla's doing  
36 that..yea.. So there's  
37 all those creatures  
38 and things aren't  
39 there

40 N yea

|    |    |                        |
|----|----|------------------------|
| 41 | DL | alright well look      |
| 42 |    | let's.. erm.. just     |
| 43 |    | before playtime let's  |
| 44 |    | try and read a little  |
| 45 |    | bit (.) do you want to |
| 46 |    | read a little bit or   |
| 47 |    | shall I read a little  |
| 48 |    | bit?                   |

49 N You read a little bit

50 DL Alright I'll read a  
51 little bit.. and you  
52 stop me if there's  
53 anything that you want  
54 to say or look at...  
55 I'll hold it up nice  
56 and high so you can  
57 see it (.) CLAIRE HAD  
58 A BAD KNEE SO SHE SET  
59 OFF HOME TO TELL HER  
60 MUM ALL ABOUT IT

61 N In our classroom there's a Claire

- 62 DL Is there?
- 63 N\_\_ Yea
- 64 DL Oh.. I don't know.. I  
65 don't know a Claire in  
66 your classroom (.)  
67 you'll have to point  
68 her out to me one  
69 day... ON THE WAY HOME
- 70 CLAIRE MET HER FRIEND ABIGAIL (.) LOOK AT MY BAD  
71 KNEE SAID CLAIRE (.) HOW DID YOU DO IT SAID ABIGAIL?  
72 (.) WELL SAID CLAIRE THERE WAS A VERY BIG BAD WOLF  
73 AND IT CAME SNEAKING UP BEHIND ME AS I PASSED BY AND  
74 IT TRIED TO TAKE ME HOME FOR ITS TEA BUT I SCREAMED  
75 FOR HELP AND A WOODCUTTER CAME AND CHASED THE WOLF  
76 AWAY AND THE WOLF DROPPED ME AND THAT'S HOW I GOT MY  
77 BAD KNEE
- 78 N\_\_ That's like erm (.) Little Red Riding Hood
- 79 DL Why.. why do you say  
80 that?
- 81 N\_\_ 'Cos.. in.. s.. in one of my stories a  
82 woodcutter comes to help little red riding  
83 hood and
- 84 DL right [ ]
- 85 N\_\_ cuts her up and puts stones in it and he  
86 can't move..
- 87 DL That's right yes  
88 ..you're right (.) Do  
89 you think that's what  
90 Claire was perhaps  
91 thinking of when she
- 92 N\_\_ Yea
- 93 DL told that story?...  
94 Look what Abigail  
95 does.. Claire says THE

96 WOLF DROPPED ME AND THAT'S HOW I GOT MY BAD KNEE (.)  
 97 GOSH! SAID ABIGAIL! (.) cor!

98 N\_\_ That's not really true

99 DL (laughing) how do you  
 100 know it's not true  
 101 though?

102 N\_\_ 'Cos there's no such thing as foxes and wolves

103 DL No?

104 N\_\_ There is but.. you'd never ever see them  
 105 in day.. they only come out in night

106 DL Yea?.. But there are..  
 107 there are sometimes  
 108 wolves and woodcutters  
 109 in stories aren't  
 110 there?

111 N\_\_ Wolves don't live in this country

112 DL No they don't that's

113 N\_\_ foxes sometimes do

114 DL Right.. right... I  
 115 suppose... how.. how  
 116 do you know.. how do  
 117 you know that this all  
 118 takes place in our  
 119 country?

120 N\_\_ She probably makes it up (.) hey what they  
 121 do is some stories they [true].. story on  
 122 the front and they're true like the Pied  
 123 Piper says true story on the front

124 DL Yea?

125 N\_\_ so it's true!..like he says

126 DL so [ ]



- 127 N\_\_ a true story 'cos ..it doesn't say true story  
128 on the front
- 129 DL Oh I see right..  
130 right.. Let's read a  
131 little bit more  
132 anyway... THEN CLAIRE  
133 MET HER FRIEND PAUL..  
134 LOOK AT MY BAD KNEE  
135 SAID CLAIRE
- 136 N\_\_ I've got a friend Paul
- 137 DL Have you?
- 138 N\_\_ But he's not in this class he's in Miss  
139 England's
- 140 DL He's in the school  
141 though is he?  
142 somewhere
- 143 N\_\_ Yea
- 144 DL HOW DID YOU DO IT? ASKED PAUL (.) WELL SAID CLAIRE  
145 THERE WAS A VAST FLYING SAUCER AND IT CAME ZOOMING  
145 OUT OF THE SKY AND TRIED TO CARRY ME OFF TO A  
147 DISTANT PLANET BUT I STRUGGLED FREE JUST IN TIME AND  
148 FELL CRASHING TO THE EARTH FAR BELOW AND THAT'S HOW  
149 I GOT MY BAD KNEE
- 150 N\_\_ Now she's making up another story
- 151 DL Mmm..
- 152 N\_\_ just to make her friends [like] try and laugh
- 153 DL You think so?  
154 N\_\_ Yea
- 155 DL Well none of them do  
156 laugh do they?

- 157 N\_\_ No
- 158 DL They all ermm (.) they  
159 all seem ever so  
160 surprised don't they
- 161 N\_\_ 'Cos to make 'em.. surprised and impressed..
- 162 DL That's right... I  
163 think that's right...  
164 THEN CLAIRE MET HER  
165 FRIEND AMARJIT (.) LOOK AT MY BAD KNEE SAID CLAIRE  
166 (.) HOW DID YOU DO IT? ASKED AMARJIT (.) WELL SAID  
167 CLAIRE THERE WAS A HUGE HUNGRY CROCODILE AND IT CAME  
168 LUMBERING OUT OF THE CANAL AS I PASSED BY AND IT  
169 TRIED TO PULL ME INTO THE WATER BUT I CRAMMED A  
170 PIECE OF WOOD BETWEEN ITS JAWS AND IT WAS SO CROSS  
171 THAT IT KNOCKDE ME OVER WITH ITS TAIL AND THAT'S HOW  
172 I GOT MY BAD KNEE (.) HOW DREADFUL! SAID AMARJIT
- 173 N\_\_ it's like erm.. a midget.. it's like a  
174 midget.. her name.. that girl's name..  
175 a midget instead of Amarjit
- 176 DL Oh I see
- 177 N\_\_ Sounds like a midget
- 178 DL Maybe it's just the  
179 way I say it.. maybe I  
180 don't say it quite  
181 right... look we  
182 haven't really got  
183 time to read the whole  
184 story because it's  
185 nearly playtime now...  
186 let's just turn the  
187 pages over very  
188 quickly.. she tells a  
189 story about a snake  
190 doesn't she?
- 191 N\_\_ She's gone red in the face
- 192 DL she has hasn't she?..

193 she's been squeezed by  
194 the snake

197 N\_\_ She tickles it

198 DL Yea.. I don't know  
199 whether snakes can  
200 laugh

201 N\_\_ No..

202 DL and

203 N\_\_ There's laughing Hyenas though

204 DL There are.. that's  
205 right

206 N\_\_ They go..eee..eee.. sometimes

207 DL And there's a dragon  
208 picks her up

209 N\_\_ purple dragon

210 DL and there she tells a  
211 story about a hairy  
212 gorilla

213 N\_\_ I've got a great..a gr.. a computer game  
214 like that.. a man opens the garage and  
215 tries to kick you down but I turn round  
216 and shoot him in the belly..

218 DL Oh I see.. right

219 N\_\_ and we [fight] and he goes under the  
220 ground

221 DL Huh!.. it's not a  
222 gorilla is it?

223 N\_\_ No.. it's a person

224 DL Can you remember what

225 the other stories  
226 are.. there's a giant

227 N\_\_ Yea..and Jack and the Beanstalk

*[knock at the door.  
tape recorder temporarily switeched off]*

228 DL what are the other  
229 ones there's a giant

230 N\_\_ Jack and the Beanstalk

231 DL Oh!.. what.. you mean  
232 that's where the giant  
233 comes from (.) sort of  
234 thing..yea?

235 N\_\_ There's a story and.. and the giant.. in  
236 Jack and the Beanstalk

237 DL There is isn't there?

238 N\_\_ And there's Jim and the Beanstalk

239 DL That's right.. there  
240 is too

241 N\_\_ But there's not.. I've never seen a giant  
242 like that before

243 DL listen

244 N\_\_ no goofy teeth

245 DL No.. he's.. he has got great big goofy teeth hasn't he? (.) listen shall we stop just for a minute because the other teachers are going to be coming in for playtime in a minute and then after playtime shall we have another five minutes and....

## APPENDIX: 14

CHILD'S NAME: Jane

TITLE OF BOOK: *On The Way Home* by Jill Murphy

ACTIVITY: Discussion of a known and familiar text, Jane and myself sharing the reading of the words

DATE: 27. 06. 1989

## Extract 1: Beginning of conversation.

- 1 DL ...Why do think this  
2 one's a good one?
- 3 J\_\_ 'Cos she lies t... she lies to her friends
- 4 DL Yea?
- 5 J\_\_ but when she gets home she tells her mum  
6 and I like the bits where she lies to her  
7 friends 'cos she does funny ones where she  
8 punch[ed] the giant on the nose and..  
9 [laughs] things like that
- 10 DL That's right
- 11 J\_\_ [laughter]
- 12 DL right.. that's  
13 good (.) Why do you  
14 think she tells all  
15 those lies?
- 16 J\_\_ (hesitantly) S... s... so.. erm.. because..  
17 she doesn't.. say that they think that  
18 things are doing exciting.. that  
19 thing.. she done things exciting (*more*  
20 *confidently*) but I think it would be funny  
21 an.. 'cos if there's going to be a next one  
22 I think it would be funny 'cos when they get  
23 back.. 'cos [ ] when they go back to  
24 school they're going to tell each other what  
25 they... what she said

26 DL That's right and

27 J\_\_ Yea

28 DL and if they told  
29 each other what she'd  
30 said what do you think  
31 they would think?

32 J\_\_ She lied

33 DL Yea they'd know  
34 wouldn't they.. 'cos  
35 they all believe her  
36 don't they when.. when  
37 she tells the stories

38 J\_\_ Yea

39 DL OK look what shall we  
40 do? We'll just read a  
41 tiny little bit of it  
42 not all of it because  
43 you.. you know the  
44 story don't you?

45 J\_\_ Yea

46 DL So shall I read it to  
47 you or will you read  
48 it to me or shall we  
49 do a bit each?

*[Josie decides we shall read a bit each.  
We proceed to read the first four stories  
with me starting.]*

---

**Extract 2:                      End of conversation**

- 1        DL                      Right.. and then of  
2                                  course she gets home  
3                                  doesn't she?
- 4        J\_\_       Starts crying
- 5        DL                      And what happens...  
6                                  yea she starts crying  
7                                  doesn't she
- 8        J\_\_       and she tells.. she tells her mum all  
9                                  the proper thing
- 10       DL                      How do you know.. how  
11                                  do you know it's the  
12                                  proper story though?
- 13       J\_\_       Because it's her mum and her mum would say  
14                                  (.) no you're telling lies because she might..  
15                                  because she might.. she believes in.. that  
16                                  there's no dragons or witches or things  
17                                  [     ]
- 18       DL                      Right.. right
- 19       J\_\_       [                   ]
- 20       DL                      That's right.. what  
21                                  does.. what does she  
22                                  do after she's told  
23                                  her mum and
- 24       J\_\_       I fell off?... and burst into tears
- 25       DL                      Can you remember  
26                                  what.. can you  
27                                  remember what she says  
28                                  at the end?.. I'll  
29                                  tell you what.. I'll  
30                                  read it.. I'll read it  
31                                  and then that'll  
32                                  remind you

33 DL CLAIRE ARRIVED HOME AND HER MUM CAME OUT (.) LOOK AT  
 34 MY BAD KNEE SAID CLAIRE (.) HOW DID YOU DO IT ASKED  
 35 HER MUM (.) WELL SAID CLAIRE I WAS IN THE PLAYGROUND  
 36 AND I WAS HAVING SUCH A NICE TIME ON A SWING WHEN  
 37 SUDDENLY (.) SUDDENLY (.) I FELL OFF (.) CLAIRE  
 38 BURST INTO TEARS (.) NEVER MIND SAID HER MUM (.)  
 39 COME INSIDE AND WE'LL PUT A PLASTER ON IT

40 J\_\_ and said the biggest plaster in

41 DL that's right

42 J\_\_ the biggest plaster in the box?

43 DL A VERY BIG PLASTER?  
 44 ASKED CLAIRE (.) THE  
 45 BIGGEST IN THE WHOLE  
 46 BOX SAID HER MUM

47 J\_\_ That one

48 DL That's right.. look  
 49 what she does with her  
 50 hands... (*whispering*)  
 51 big plaster!

52 J\_\_ And it's only that big

53 DL That's right and  
 54 then.. there's a  
 55 picture at the end  
 56 shows you the plaster

57 J\_\_ cor blimey (.) it is big isn't it?

58 DL It is big isn't it?  
 59 why do you think she  
 60 wants the biggest in  
 61 the whole box?

62 J\_\_ Because she's got a big cut

63 DL Oh right

64 J\_\_ It is big isn't it?



65 DL I suppose it is quite  
 66 big on her knee isn't  
 67 it? She's got a  
 68 graze.. a grazed  
 69 knee... Right I like  
 70 that story as well I  
 71 think that's really  
 72 good... Where do you  
 73 think she gets her  
 74 stories from? I mean  
 75 she makes up lots of  
 76 stories doesn't she?

77 J\_\_ 'Cos the swing sort of did drop her didn't  
 78 it and [hey] the swing did drop her because  
 79 she fell off and... in all the stories it's  
 80 dropping isn't it

81 DL Oh I see right she  
 82 gets dropped every  
 83 time doesn't she?

84 J\_\_ Yea

85 DL That's right.. but I  
 86 mean.. I just wondered  
 87 why she chose things  
 88 like wolves and  
 89 woodcutters and  
 90 witches and ghosts..  
 91 and things like that

92 J\_\_ Because.. because they're sort of.. because  
 93 they're exciting and she wants to tell her  
 94 friends exciting things

95 DL Certainly more  
 96 exciting than just  
 97 dropping off the swing  
 98 isn't it

99 J\_\_ Yea

100 DL Right and you like

101 that one do you?

102 J\_ Yea

103 DL

104 you think that's a  
good one? Yea I like

105 that too...

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