NEW DIRECTIONS IN PICTUREBOOK RESEARCH

EDITED BY TERESA COLOMER, BETTINA KÜMMERLING-MEIBAUER, AND CECILIA SILVA-DÍAZ
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Dedicated to furthering original research in children’s literature and culture, the Children’s Literature and Culture series includes monographs on individual authors and illustrators, historical examinations of different periods, literary analyses of genres, and comparative studies on literature and the mass media. The series is international in scope and is intended to encourage innovative research in children’s literature with a focus on interdisciplinary methodology.

Children’s literature and culture are understood in the broadest sense of the term children to encompass the period of childhood up through adolescence. Owing to the fact that the notion of childhood has changed so much since the origination of children’s literature, this Routledge series is particularly concerned with transformations in children’s culture and how they have affected the representation and socialization of children. While the emphasis of the series is on children’s literature, all types of studies that deal with children’s radio, film, television, and art are included in an endeavor to grasp the aesthetics and values of children’s culture. Not only have there been momentous changes in children’s culture in the last fifty years, but there have also been radical shifts in the scholarship that deals with these changes. In this regard, the goal of the Children’s Literature and Culture series is to enhance research in this field and, at the same time, point to new directions that bring together the best scholarly work throughout the world.

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Introduction

Current Trends in Picturebook Research

Teresa Colomer, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, Cecilia Silva-Díaz

Picturebook research underwent considerable changes by the end of the twentieth century. Initially, historical perspective dominated the field: most surveys focused on the emergence and development of picturebooks. In the 1980s they began to be regarded by scholars as either an art form or as educational tools for language acquisition, introduction to literature and visual literacy. However, picturebooks have never received such enthusiastic critical attention as they have in recent years. The number of studies has increased as the artistic effects of picturebooks have developed considerably due to intensive experimentation with the interplay of text and image. Research confirms that, at its best, picturebook illustration is a subtle and complex art form that can communicate on many levels and leave a deep imprint on a child’s consciousness.

The unique character of picturebooks as an art form has been amply described by scholars like Perry Nodelman in *Words About Pictures* (1988) and Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott in *How Picturebooks Work* (2001). They have provided students and scholars who have an interest in narrative, design, and communication with a growing awareness of the opportunities that picturebooks offer. The innovation of modern picturebooks underlines their potential for the development of linguistic, written and visual literacy. These features were already recognized by critics in the 1980s, and new ones have been examined, such as the understanding that reading picturebooks involves complex aesthetic and cognitive processes. For example, some poetic and visual effects tend to interfere with, or, at the very least, delay the process of interpretation, hence affecting the regular course of cognitive processes.
Therefore, our book is mainly aimed at discussing the general aesthetic and
cognitive constraints on which the understanding of picturebooks depends.

This collection seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate on the impor-
tance of picturebook research, focusing on aesthetic and cognitive aspects
of picturebooks. The thirteen articles are revised versions of papers given at
the international conference on “New Impulses in Picturebook Research,”
held at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, Spain, in September 2007,
and organized by Teresa Colomer and Cecilia Silva-Díaz in cooperation with
Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer. Four additional chapters complement these
contributions in order to demonstrate the wide spectrum of the field. Written
by scholars from twelve countries (Canada, Denmark, Finland, France,
Germany, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States,
and Venezuela), the articles clearly suggest that the study of the intersection
of cognitive and aesthetic aspects in picturebook research is a major, widespread
trend. Moreover, they all focus on interdisciplinary approaches that integrate
different disciplines such as literary studies, art history, linguistics, narratol-
ogy, cognitive psychology, sociology, memory studies, and picture theory.

**Picturebooks, Literacy, and Cultural Context**

The first five chapters focus on the relationship between children’s response,
literacy, metaliterary awareness, the values of contemporary societies, the
artistic constructiveness of visual and written text and its implication in cog-
nitive development, thus presenting picturebooks from a multidimensional
perspective. Based on his recently published study, *The Hidden Adult: Char-
acteristics of Children’s Literature* (2008), Perry Nodelman argues that the
picturebook may help scholars to have a better understanding of children’s
literature. In order to build his case, a typical picturebook, Nan Gregory’s
*Amber Waiting* (2002), is thoroughly analysed, thus revealing a paradoxical
dynamic between the somewhat simple texts and the relatively more complex
visual information of the pictures. This article reveals that texts in picture-
books usually purport to be childlike, to represent how adults like to believe
children see and understand the world, while the pictures tend to undercut
that childlike simplicity with a more sophisticated adult view of things. By
considering the implications of the ways in which picturebooks characteristi-
cally create childhood and at the same time undermine it, Nodelman demon-
strates that they give children the adult knowledge they purportedly suppress
while constructing profound paradoxical childhood subjectivity.

The juxtaposition of the concept of the implied reader and the child’s devel-
oping sense of visual literacy and literary competence is the starting point in
Maria Nikolajeva’s thought-provoking article. Based on Roland Barthes’ sem-
inal work on reader-oriented semiotics, *S/Z*, she argues that readers need to
have access to a number of codes (i.e., proairetic, hermeneutic, semic, symbolic,
and referential code) and how these codes become specific in multimodal texts. By emphasizing the impact of these codes for the decoding of the plot, meaning making, the understanding of fictionality, symbolic representation and intervisual/intertextual references, Nikolajeva thoroughly demonstrates that visual and literary decoding must be gradually acquired by children in order to enable the interpretation and appreciation of complex picturebooks. In a last step Nikolajeva draws upon Barthes’ distinction between readerly and writerly texts, applying these categories to picturebooks. She claims that picturebooks belonging to the category of writerly texts stimulate a creative dialogue between text/image and reader/viewer, thus encouraging visual and literary competence.

Teresa Colomer’s article shows that the establishment of new values promoted by children’s books during the 1960s and 1970s became significantly modified by the beginning of the twenty-first century, reflecting a shift towards the social representation of childhood. The comparison between the two periods reveals that, as a consequence of changes in the social context, picturebooks show a particular emphasis on topics that deal with sentimental education, especially in reference to the building-up of personality, as well as complex values of multicultural and social coexistence. In addition, the chapter shows that, ever since modern picturebooks started to develop, they have introduced innovative aspects such as metafiction, irony or the blurring of fictional borders, which raise questions about the understanding children may have of these artistic post-modern forms. These new picturebooks are regarded as the ideal means to explore sentimental questions through the emotive use of illustrations, the text’s proximity to connotative and metaphoric poetic functions, or the possibility of combining codes in order to articulate different levels of comprehension. This new production poses a number of new questions for critics to tackle.

Nina Christensen deals with the differences and similarities between eighteenth-century picturebooks and today’s modern picturebooks with regard to two aspects: One is how the books introduce the child to the process of semiosis—how children are implicitly expected to be able to deduce meaning from language and image. The second aspect is related to the content of the books and is a discussion of how human behavior is discussed in relation to descriptions of vices and virtues. Christensen compares Dorte Karrebaek’s mock-scientific image of creatures representing the seven deadly sins, The Black Book. On the seven Deadly Sins (Den sorte bog. Om de syv dødssynder, 2007), with two books from the eighteenth century: CCLII Udvalde og med 800 Billeder udlagde Bibelske Hoved-Sprog, (252 selected Biblical Proverbs with 800 images. Published anonymously in 1775), Karl Philipp Moritz’s Neues ABC Buch welches zugleich eine Anleitung zum Denken für Kinder (New ABC including an encouragement for children to think, 1790) stresses the changes in the process of meaning-making and in the child’s education.
Based on the findings of a research project, Evelyn Arizpe stresses the importance of picturebooks for primary school children from ethnic minority backgrounds. She investigates how these children responded to two picturebooks set within their new culture: *Traction Man Is Here* (2005) by Mini Grey and *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (2006) by Oliver Jeffers. Her analysis concentrates on the response-inviting structures of the picturebooks selected, which involve some of the “post-modern” aspects of this genre, such as metafiction, fragmentation, intertextuality and non-traditional textual, and spatial arrangements. The implications reveal how the interplay between different literacies and cultures affects and creates metaliterary awareness of verbal and visual texts such as in metafictive picturebooks, thus offering a new perspective for future research in this field.

Sandra L. Beckett stresses that visual allusions to art works are an important trend in contemporary picturebooks. She differentiates between three categories of artistic allusions: a) allusions to the stylistic conventions of an entire genre; b) allusions to the style of a period or movement; and c) reference to the characteristic manner of a particular artist. Since children are more apt to decode allusions to specific works of art than general allusions to an artistic movement, the former are more common in picturebooks. In addition, this article shows that allusions to individual works of art tend quite often to be parodic, thus revealing sophisticated, multi-level parodies. By means of a thorough description of picturebooks by renowned artists from five countries, the influence of artistic allusions on the multi-layered meanings of the respective works is clearly demonstrated. In the final section Beckett discusses under what conditions children might recognize the complex visual allusions and whether the illustrators help them by providing them with some clues to decipher the hidden references to art works.

**Picturebooks and Storytelling**

The next section comprises six articles that focus on the relationship between picturebook research and narratology by investigating such topics as the role of frame-making and frame-breaking, twist endings in picturebooks, narrative constraints of wordless picturebooks, the influence of modernism on the development of new narrative strategies, the mutual relationship between narrative perspectives used in different art forms, and ellipsis and off-screen as narrative devices.

Carole Scott’s article explores the purposes and effects of framing in picturebooks. Besides the aesthetic aspects of graphic design, it considers graphic-narrative metafictive devices as literary constructs; the expressions of social and psychological boundaries and distinctions; psychological states of mind; and the communication of social commentary. Scott alludes to theory about architecture whose structures order our three-dimensional
world as picturebooks reflect it in two dimensions, particularly James Steele’s *Architecture Today* (1997). In this regard, frames in picturebooks are not only aesthetic devices that influence the viewer’s sense of involvement in the action of the work, but also must be considered as the ordered application of a certain belief system. Of particular interest is the consideration of how children’s developing perception might be influenced by their understanding of boundaries and how they may be broken, together with their increasing realization of fictionality—the relationship between creative invention and real-life experience.

The chapter written by Brenda Bellorín and Cecilia Silva-Díaz deals with surprise endings in picturebooks. By means of a thorough study of the forms, effects, and implications of these unexpected endings, the authors show how they create patterns of concealment and revelation, both in their narrative and physical dimensions, and through the interplay of text and image. Considering that twist endings usually surprise readers by concealing an important part of the narrative, Bellorín and Silva-Díaz have analysed and organized some picturebooks according to the type of concealment. Their twist ending classification includes stories with disturbing epilogues, concealed intentions, hidden characters, sneaky narrators, non-explicit turning points, and stories within stories. As a preliminary approach to future research on the subject, the authors have also shared the reading of the books with individual readers and have presented a short report on their reactions.

Isabelle Nières-Chevrel’s chapter focuses on the complexity of the French wordless picturebook *L’Orage* (The Thunderstorm, 1998) by Anne Brouillard. Through a meticulous analysis of the sequence of illustrations, she demonstrates the narrative power of pictures as well as the commitment required by the reader to understand the book. By linking together description and narration in pictures, the artist realizes a visual translation of the different experiences involved by the depicted event. Whereas time is fairly readable because the narrative follows the chronological order of the storm, space is utterly bewildering—half a maze and half a jigsaw. The book requires an active reader: he/she must look for clues, put forward hypotheses about the laying out and the linking of the pictures and elude the traps set by reflections in mirrors. In the final discussion, a genuine investigation of the powers and limits of pictures when used as the only narrative medium is undertaken in order to consider the readability of the mismatch of time, space, and actions in this wordless picturebook.

Elina Druker discusses the conceptual and spatial innovations of the Nordic picturebook during the 1950s, which is deeply influenced by avant-garde and modernist movements. Concentrating on picturebooks by Egon Møller-Nielsen as well as his monumental playground sculptures, it shows that the artists refer to both these artistic movements and attempt to activate the reader’s role by using new spatial concepts, such as holes in the pages, pop-up elements, and a continuous red thread as page turner. This observation refers to
the meta-artistic structure that is either stressed by the Chinese box-principle or by the analogy between book form and architectural design. Through these artistic devices the picturebooks discussed introduce modernist aesthetics into children’s literature, thus anticipating post-modern features.

Tomoko Masaki’s article is a detailed analysis of Susumi Shingu’s first picturebook, *Strawberries* (1975), which stands out for its extraordinary illustrations and plot. This is due to the impact of Shingu’s previous sculptural work on the unusual proportions and dimensions of the illustrations. Moreover, Shingu wishes to involve the viewer/reader in the perception and re-creation of the picturebook’s meaning by referring to different aspects of movement (a main trait in Shingu’s sculptures). Masaki also reports about her reading sessions with Japanese and British children (fourth and sixth grade), which reveal astonishing differences in the way this picturebook is received. These differences are rooted in the diverse cultural assumptions about the role of illustrations and stories, and the children’s varied access to picturebooks.

Dealing with the off-screen, i.e., a spatial ellipsis that omits a scenic portion that is significant for the story, Fernando Zaparain claims that off-screen is a fundamental instrument which an author-illustrator can use in order to introduce gaps into his work. Several types of off-screen are discussed: objective off-screen as representations of those areas that have not entered into the frame but are nevertheless recognized by the viewer; internal off-screen that is represented by different frames, such as windows, doors, books or mirrors; subjective off-screen, produced by the viewpoint of the observer; and *mise en abyme* that occurs when the viewer is placed behind the observer. This special type of off-screen is typical for picturebooks that present the artist in his study creating the work in question, or when the endpapers and back covers give details about the making of the book.

Making Sense Out of Picturebooks

The last five articles deal with the impact of linguistics and psychology on the making and research of modern picturebooks by showing that the inclusion of child psychology, cognitive linguistics, cognitive psychology, and memory research shed new light on both pictorial and linguistic aspects of picturebooks.

Ingeborg Mjor’s chapter is based on empirical studies showing how reading aloud of picturebooks can make a contribution to children’s ability to be involved in meaning making processes, and on the development of literacy, especially visual literacy. Based on semiotics and cognitive psychology this article analyses the challenges parents face when reading a specific picturebook to their toddlers. During reading aloud, parents might analyse the relationship between the real and implied reader to be out of balance. Therefore,
they try to compensate this imbalance through different strategies: adding redundancy, creating a different verbal text, stressing the role of body and gestures, and replacing telling by showing.

Eva Gressnich and Jörg Meibauer attempt to link relevant categories of narrative analysis to deictic categories by pointing out the abilities a child must have in order to understand the deictic references within the text as well as the text-picture relationship, drawing largely on recent research on the acquisition of deixis and discourse strategies. Thus, they show that the interaction between language acquisition and the acquisition of literary competence is a demanding and complex process. In this analysis, the authors concentrate on the use of deictic expressions in picturebooks with a first-person narrator. In this way they show the difficulties children may have when confronted with this specific point of view and how deictic expressions influence the text-picture relationship. Moreover, they establish a typology of different combinations of verbal and visual point of views suggesting varying degrees of complexity as well as a possible order of acquisition.

The article by Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer focuses on picturebooks with first-person narrators that consist of autobiographical stories written and illustrated by the authors. Since the storyteller is also the key figure in the story, the artists have to tackle the representation of their point of view in the pictures. In this regard, a shift between telling and focalization is obvious. The story is told in the first person whereas the pictures are presented in the third person. Confronted by these different points of view, the reader is encouraged to empathize with the narrator on the one hand, and to have a more objective position of distance on the other, thus calling his attention to the different time levels presented in these picturebooks: reminiscences of the past, most often childhood memories, and the present situation of the narrator.

Agnes-Margrethe Bjorvand demonstrates that the presentation of dysfunctional families and complex relationships between adults and children is new for Scandinavian picturebooks. Her article deals with the Norwegian picturebook *Sinna Mann* (Angry Man, 2003) by Gro Dahle and Svein Nyhus, which depicts a disturbing story about a violent father who threatens both his wife and his son. The analysis of the picturebook is based on recent research in child psychology and the concept of multimodal literacy. The juxtaposition of both fields serves as an interdisciplinary approach to investigate the multi-layered structure of *Sinna Mann*. Bjorvand shows that the color scheme, the surrealist surroundings, and the distorted proportions largely contribute to the menacing, even nightmarish atmosphere, whereas the lyrical text builds a contrast to the illustrations. The gaps in text and pictures and the open ending of the narrative leave the final decision about the meaning of the whole story to the reader.

Finally, Anna-Maija Koskimies-Hellman reflects on the motif of mindscapes (as a newly-established term for psychological landscapes) by analysing two picturebooks from Finland and Sweden: *Urhea pikku Memmuli* (Brave
little Memmuli, 2005) by Mervi Lindman and *Hanna huset hunden* (Hanna, the house, the dog, 2004) by Anna-Clara Tidholm. Both books are ambivalent on several levels. Visually they are on the border between imagination or dream and reality. Yet the verbal narrator in both books presents the mindscapes as real, without a didactic comment indicating that the events are dream or fantasy. Therefore the mindscapes also support the characterization of the main protagonists, because the reader is given access to the characters’ inner lives. In addition, the books are ambivalent with regard to the implied reader; both picturebooks address adults and children at the same time on different levels.

In conclusion, the variety of aspects that are analysed and the multiplicity of critical approaches illustrate the complex issues raised when modern picturebooks are approached through different perspectives that come together and tend to interact with each other. These issues link picturebook studies with some of the main trends in social sciences, cognitive studies and literacy such as the reflection on contemporary society, literacy in contemporary cultures, childhood, learning, multimodal communication or artistic interpretation. This anthology by specialists from different countries is also a testimony to the general academic interest in picturebooks as a new artistic form and is therefore representative of the different trends and opportunities for research in this emerging field.
Part I

Picturebooks, Literacy, and Cultural Context
Chapter One
Words Claimed
Picturebook Narratives and the Project of Children’s Literature

Perry Nodelman

There are many kinds of children’s literature. There are novels, stories, poems, and plays. There are texts of science fiction, fantasy, mystery, and adventure. There are domestic stories and stories about animals and stories of life in the wilds. And so on and so on. But as the adaptation theories popular with German and Scandinavian children’s literature theorists suggest, the children’s texts of these sorts have clear connections with the adult ones that, usually, pre-existed them. As Torben Weinreich says, “Writers do not primarily adapt because children have other experiences and other knowledge, but because they lack experience and knowledge” (49)—and so, many conclude, children’s literature can best be understood as consisting of adapted—i.e., usually, simplified—versions of adult literary forms.

But if that is true, then what about picturebooks? The mere fact that they exist makes adaptation theories problematic, simply because there is no equivalent adult form of literature to understand them as adaptations of. Picturebooks either predated or began to be produced around the same time as related forms of literature for adults that combine visual and verbal texts: comic books, graphic novels, newspapers and magazines with lots of photos and drawings in them, coffee-table texts of non-fiction. The picturebook is, I believe, the one form of literature invented specifically for audiences of children—and despite recent claims for a growing adult audience for more sophisticated books,¹ the picturebook remains firmly connected to the idea of an implied child-reader/viewer.
It strikes me, then, that the mere existence of the picturebook and its continuing popularity as the main form of literature produced for young people before they begin to read and in their early experiences of reading on their own might help us to understand a lot about children’s literature generally: what it is, why it exists, why it takes the forms it does. Rather than being an exception to adaptation theory, in fact, it might throw it into question altogether.

I have to be honest and say I hope it does. I spent some years working on a book on the distinguishing characteristics of children literature—published as *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children’s Literature* in 2008. A key assumption of my book is that texts written for children and young adults—indeed, any texts written for an audience understood as being younger than their writers in a central and important way—tend to share characteristic structural and narrative features that make them less adaptive than distinct. Like Weinreich, “I prefer to see children’s literature as a genre and by ‘genre’ I mean here a notion of a group of texts characterised by recurrent features” (34). As it happens, furthermore, I believe those recurrent features are most clearly visible in picturebooks. The one kind of narrative invented specifically for children might then represent the formal characteristics of children’s literature in their most essential and characteristic form, and thus reveal its underpinnings and implications in a particularly explicit way. In what follows, I consider how the form and structure conventional to the picturebook narrative represent what the project of children’s literature essentially is, in order to open some questions about the validity of that project.

So let’s begin with the most obvious question: why picturebooks? What is it about the way adults have conventionally thought about children in the last century or so that has made the production of picturebooks so central to the children’s literature industry world-wide?

Well, what distinguishes picturebooks from other texts is exactly what their name suggests: the presence of pictures. They have pictures because children, people believe, need or are at least greatly benefitted by their presence. Without pictures, people think, children cannot make much sense of words.

But perhaps that is just because the words are so simple that they do not make much sense on their own anyway. Consider the pictures in books for the youngest children—the kind of books that offer images accompanied by one-word labels—“apple,” “ball,” “tree,” etc. On its own, the word “tree” says little. It names an object—but why? Why is the word being said, or written down? Or even more problematic, for those not yet familiar with the language, for foreigners or very young children—what does “tree” mean anyway? We need to know what object this particular conformation of sounds represents before we can even begin to think about why it has been named.

Once a picture is present, however, the answer becomes clearer: the word is there in order to be associated with the object it represents. This word—“tree”—represents this thing you see here. And once that is clear, the reason
for “tree” being uttered is also clear—it is being defined. This is a situation a lot like a dictionary, except that the many words that account for and explain one word in the definitions there are replaced by a picture.

The picture would not be necessary if a lot of other words—the kind of words we find in dictionary definitions—were there. But they are not there. They cannot be there because we believe they are too complicated for the young readers implied as the audience for this sort of book. So they have been replaced by an image.

If we stop just taking this for granted as an obvious thing to do, we can see that it is really pretty strange. There are a number of paradoxes here.

First: simple words, it turns out, are complicated—too complicated, it seems, too mysterious and uncertain, to stand on their own without the support of the picture. Their simplicity makes them difficult. There are two reasons for that. First, written words are what are known as arbitrary signs: they look nothing like the things they represent. Just as someone unfamiliar with, say, Chinese, could not figure out what object a Chinese word might represent merely by looking at the word 榄树, English speakers who cannot read English cannot figure out that the letters T R E E represent the sound “tree,” which represents a certain kind of large plant. So—ironically, perhaps—they cannot figure out a presumably very simple verbal text.

The second reason simple words are difficult is that words always exist and take their meaning within a complex network of other words. The sound “tree” on its own means nothing in particular. “Tree” in relation to a lot of other words—not just its dictionary definition, but also words like “nature,” “seed,” “flower,” “people,” “soil,” “sky,” “growth,” “spring,” “branch,” and so on—has a quite specific meaning. Its meaning emerges from its relationships with the meanings of all those other words.

But only for someone who knows those other words—or if, as in a dictionary, some of those other words are there to explain the first word. In a simple book for young children, those other words are not there—are not there, ironically, because adults assume young readers will not be able to read them or, if adults speak the words, child listeners will not understand them. This is, in fact, exactly why children’s literature exists in the first place: because adults assume children are capable of understanding less than adults—or perhaps because adults want children to understand less, want them not to know certain aspects of the world—children need a literature that says less.

Paradoxically, however, the absence of complicated words makes the simpler words left behind incomplete, mysterious—complicated. At which point, enter pictures. As I have suggested, the picture of the tree is there in place of all the more complex words that might help communicate what the word “tree” signifies. Adults tend to assume that a young person who could not make sense of all those complex words could in fact make sense of a picture. As a system of representation, pictures are, clearly, less arbitrary than words are. They are the kind of sign known as “iconic”—i.e., they do in some ways
resemble the objects they represent. The letters T R E E do not look like a tree. A picture of a tree does.

Or rather, sort of does. Unlike the trees seen even in what most people might consider a very realistic photograph, real trees are significantly larger; have a third dimension, not just two; move and make sounds in the wind rather than being fixed in one place and eternally silent. The trees shown in the simplified outline drawings found in many books for very young children are even more unlike real ones—they tend to have fewer colors and textures, and often exist in a void, not even attached to any depiction of the ground. Even so, people tend to assume that even the very youngest of children can derive the idea of a tree from exactly these kinds of pictures of one. The images that appear in books for the youngest and least experienced readers are either ones that have been simplified to provide a minimal amount of information of how an object looks—simple outline drawings, for instance—or else, they are complexly detailed color photographs that provide enough of that sort of information to seem to be as accurately “realistic” as possible.

The first of these possibilities is interesting because it duplicates the original problem with simple words that it is meant to solve. It provides more information to make up for the absence of more words, but offers very little of that information, and assumes an ability to read more into it—to see the complex tree in the simple outline.

Even so, there is logic to support this—research in picture perception suggests that outline drawings seem to be comprehensible by all sorts of untrained people, including very young children previously unfamiliar with pictures.5 And in any case, even a simple outline picture tends to imply more information than just the word itself. It is not just a tree, but, perhaps, a green tree, a fir tree—always a particular sort and size and shape of tree. There is more information than necessary. The word “tree” can refer to any and all trees. But any picture of a tree, no matter how representative of all trees it is meant to be, can depict nothing more than just one particular tree—never just the idea of “tree,” always just one specific example to represent that idea.

And it always does so more exactly, in a more specific way than just the word itself. Because pictures are, in fact, less arbitrary, easier to understand than words, it seems safe to assume that that extra information will not confuse or upset young viewers. Certainly, the pictures in books for young people do tend to provide a lot more information than a simple text might seem to require. Consider this text:

_Here’s something good about kindergarten. Getting a turn on the swing. Amber swings high. Her toes reach for the roof of the school. She’s almost flying._

The picture accompanying that text, Canadian illustrator Kady Macdonald Denton’s illustration for Canadian author Nan Gregory’s _Amber Waiting_, is drawn in a very simple style, and has little in the way of background detail.
Nevertheless, its excess information includes what Amber looks like, what color her hair is, approximately how old she is, what she is wearing and how that signifies her class and country and lifestyle, the cultural and genetic background of her classmates and herself, the fact that Amber is not alone but with and interacting with others, the existence of other objects in the schoolyard beside the swing, the fact that she is really not reaching the roof or flying as the text claims, the time of year (there is snow on the ground, but no heavy coats, so in Canada that means it’s likely to be late fall or early spring). And so on. The picture tells viewers a lot more than the text manages to say, or that adults would allow it to say in the context of a children’s picturebook.

There is a paradox here. The more detailed words get—the closer they get to being an accurate and complete description of an event or an object—the less child-appropriate adults tend to assume they are. But the more complete and detailed a picture is—the closer it comes to what we conventionally call realistic—then the more appropriate we tend to assume it is for children. A clear, detailed photograph is likely to seem ideal in these circumstances, and I suspect fewer people would imagine young children having trouble with, say a detailed color photograph of a landscape than an impressionistic painting of one. The former seems “real,” while the latter, despite its more simplified shapes and colors, exists within a complex web of assumptions about art that make it seem too sophisticated for the young. When I have asked parents or students in children’s literature classes which kinds of pictures they think young, untrained children have the least trouble understanding, these adults tend to name either simple line drawings or realistic photographs, both of which seem somehow appropriately childlike—like what we tend to believe children themselves see. And they are certain anything more abstract or impressionistic—what, paradoxically, reviewers of adult art call childlike or primitive—simply will not do.6

In any case, the presence of any kind of picture—perhaps the realistic ones more than the outline drawings—signals another key paradox about literature for children. It exists because adults think children can understand less and/or should be prevented from understanding more. But at the same time, we adults we produce books for children seem to harbor a wish, a need to say more anyway—or at least, we are rarely content with saying less. We want to provide simple texts but do so with the understanding that simple texts on their own are never enough—never quite adequate.

In a sense, we cannot avoid doing that—for as I said earlier, simple words can communicate only in terms of their connections to an unspoken network of more complex words that they inevitably imply. But our awareness of that as a problem with simple texts leads us—or perhaps, allows us—to solve the problem by providing a richer source of information in pictures. We can do that in part, I think, because we tend to be unaware of how rich the content is—especially in pictures we consider to be realistic. We tend to see even a picture as simplified as the one of Amber swinging I referred to earlier as a
transparent representation of what is, and do not then notice all the complex information, pictures offer about the things they depict—especially ideological information about the culture illustrators are located in that illustrators tend to take for granted simply as the ways things are.

A picture can convey all this as specific information viewers might learn to be aware of simply because it is a picture—and therefore, the experience of connecting words to it is different from just saying a word like “tree” while pointing to an actual tree. The real tree simply is what it is. It means nothing but itself. But in a picture in a book accompanied by a text, it enters into a complex system of representation with complex meanings and implications. The specific tree depicted represents, not just tree-hood, but also, the tree’s relationship to other objects in the picture and outside it, and to a whole set of values implied by those relationships. A tree in a forest is not there to say, for instance, I am beautiful, or, I represent the bounty of nature or the cycle of ecology or the meaning of life; a tree in a picture often is.

Furthermore, a picture works to claim the world it purports to depict—to be realistic. To say a picture looks like the objects it depicts is to accept the idea that the real things do look like that—do mean that. E.H. Gombrich reports how artists trained in a Chinese style drew English landscapes in a way that might seem curiously alien to viewers who believe a painter like Constable shows things the way they are, but that surely seemed as “realistic” to the artist as Constable seems to those familiar with Constable. Each style claims the landscape in the name of its own truths. A picture of a specific tree accompanied by the word “tree” suggests that the essence of tree-hood—the most representative way of being a tree—is one like the one in the picture. And that representative tree is rarely, for instance, a fallen one, or a dead one—that would significantly change what we usually mean most centrally in using the word “tree.”

That all happens, I think, because, once they are present, pictures tend to claim words. According to Michel Foucault, “Without saying anything, a mute and adequately recognizable figure displays the object in its essence; from the image, a name written below receives its ‘meaning’ or rule for usage” (23). The tree depicted along with the word “tree” is what trees are. The combination does not just say, a tree looks sort of like this thing here does—is somehow more or less similar to this; it says, a tree is this. “Let a figure resemble an object . . . , “ says Foucault, “and that alone is enough for there to slip into the pure play of the painting a statement—obvious, banal, repeated a thousand times yet almost always silent. (It is like an infinite murmur—haunting, enclosing the silence of figures, investing it, mastering it, extricating the silence from itself, and finally reversing it within the domain of things that can be named.) ‘What you see is that’” (34).

Consider, for a different example, the word “pipe.” Place it near an image, and that image becomes what a pipe essentially is—a process the artist René Magritte reveals by denying it in his well-known image of one that includes the words “Ceci n’est pas un pipe.” Magritte is literally correct here—this is
not a pipe, just an image of one—and not any pipe, but just a picture of one pipe that purports to stand for all pipes, to be representative, and thus, to attach all its specific properties, and what they mean, and how they connect to culture, values, ideology, and so on, to the idea of pipes generally. Magritte’s painting points out how fictional are the ways in which pictures represent texts—and how, until something like Magritte’s picture makes us aware of it, reader/viewers tend to accept those fictions as the ways things actually are. The pictures claim the words, and claim them in the name of specific and surprisingly complex views not just of what the words mean, but of what reality is and means in general.

As with pipes, so are the things depicted in the pictures in picturebooks. They work to place child-readers within the complex relationships of the ideologies that adult illustrators and the editors and publishers, librarians, teachers, and parents who make them available to children occupy themselves—and thus, represent in their pictures. They do so in a number of ways.

First, for the reasons I explored earlier, the pictures in picturebooks are almost always more complex, more detailed, more sophisticated than the texts are. Conventions of publishing and assumptions about what is possible that are merely taken for granted by the producers and purchasers of picturebooks allows illustrators a much wider range of sophistication than that available to the writers of texts. And the more sophisticated and the more “real” a picture looks, the more it imposes a cultural order of reality, i.e., the adult world. Texts in picturebooks most usually purport to be childlike—to represent something like how adults like to believe children see and understand the world—or ought to see and understand the world. But the pictures tend characteristically to undercut that childlike simplicity with a more sophisticated adult view of things—a view that place the childlike text firmly in adult culture.

Second, they accomplish that in part by quite literally doing it. Whereas the texts of picturebooks tend conventionally to focalize events through their child protagonist, the pictures usually show that same child as seen from a distance and therefore, presumably, by someone else—someone whom, it seems, has the ability to record all the visual surrounding details the child is not necessarily conscious of (as Amber, swinging, is not conscious of the bare trees behind her). In effect, then, the picture places the child protagonist—and the child-focalized text—in the context of another point of view: the view of a hidden but clearly implied observer who tends to see more details, to be, that is, more adult.

But while the observer seems to be adult, the view offered is there primarily for the pleasure of an implied child viewer. The child viewer is being invited to adopt an adult perspective on the child protagonist he or she reads or hears about and, presumably (since this is how most adults assume child-readers do and should interact with texts), is being invited to identify with. The child viewer is being invited to understand him or herself as adults see and understand him or her.
At the same time, however, the text is inviting an identification with a childlike protagonist who seems unaware of the exterior adult viewpoint on him or herself. Some texts are in the first person: "I went to bed with gum in my mouth," reads the text of Judith Viorst’s *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No-Good Very Bad Day*, “and now I have gum in my hair. . . . and I could tell it was going to be a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day.” The simple language of a text in the third person—”Amber swings high. Her toes reach for the roof of the school”—might imply an adult narrator, but it is one who always at least pretends to adopt a childlike way of seeing, in simple childlike language. Pictures in picturebooks also do sometimes seem to be trying to be childlike—to be in simple cartoon styles like the ones in *Amber Waiting*, for instance; but they always imply an exterior view of their child or childlike characters—a view, I believe that is both adult and meant to be adopted by child-readers at the same time as they relate to, identify with, or in fact adopt the text’s childlike view of the child protagonist.

The central dynamic of the most conventional picturebooks is, then, the relationship between a relatively simple text with a supposedly childlike point of view and a relatively more complex picture offering an adult perspective on the children being depicted—a perspective children are meant to acknowledge and accept. But what they are being asked to accept is an adult view of themselves as being childlike—an understanding of being childlike firmly enmeshed in adult cultural assumptions—and, I think, especially, adult desires—about how to be a child. As a result, the swerve the pictures take through adult perceptions seems to be meant to be forgotten, or simply not acknowledged. It is a hidden adult content. The childlike text is what is acknowledgeably childlike, and an implied reader/viewer learns or already knows how to hide the adult knowledge that allowed an understanding of what being a limited child is—that it is a matter of being limited, being or pretending to be less than you actually are, and that you have to be limited in that way to please adults.

And in this way, I think, picturebooks represent the normal and constant situation of all books produced by adults for people younger than themselves. Indeed, they do so in a number of significant ways:

First, they are inherently and unchangingly double—as, I believe, in its primal scene of an adult choosing to write for a reader conceived as being different from and even, often, opposite to the adult writer, children’s literature generally is. There are two different means of communication: words and pictures. There are two differing focalizations, with two different levels of sophistication.

While none of these qualities is literally true of texts for children without pictures, those texts do represent similar tendencies to doubleness in other, less obvious ways. The always relatively simple texts imply a more complex unwritten repertoire—it is intriguing that as implied readers of texts for children grow older, the number of pictures accompanying them lessens, replaced
by more and more complex language. Picturebooks for the youngest readers are replaced by novels with pictures here and there for slightly older ones, and finally by ones with no pictures except the ones on the cover for yet older children and young adults. There also tends to be, in the most conventional texts, a focalization through a child character, reported by a narrator who is, by implication and conventional understanding, adult. Indeed, adults tend to make a point of that for children—teaching them that the books they read are by adults, including photos of authors on books covers, asking students to do author studies or write letters to writers. It is important for adults that children realize, not just that a book describes childhood, but that it is an adult—i.e., an authorized, culturally sanctioned, desirable—depiction of childhood.

So texts of children’s literature are inherently binary, inherently offering adult views of childhood and inherently inscribing the division between adult and child in doing so, inherently insisting on the division between the two and the importance of one being different from and understanding itself in its difference as that difference is understood by the other. And most conventionally, they do so by offering children access to adult knowledge that implied child-readers are meant to experience and then ignore—keep hidden. These readers are meant to stop being whatever kind of children they already are, learn an adult perspective on what is desirably childlike, accept that adult wisdom and become or more accurately pretend to become childlike, and then hide or perhaps ideally lose their awareness of how this is an adult perception of themselves they have accepted as their own. They are to become appropriately childlike by accepting and then closeting their knowledge of the degree to which this form of childlikeness is imposed upon them from outside by adults—less what they actually are than what adults would like them to be, or at least pretend to be for adults.

I am not saying that some texts do not diverge from these qualities. But they can do so only by fighting against the constrictions and tendencies of the genre. Children’s literature most centrally teaches children how to be childlike, in terms of adult-authorized ideas of childlike-ness. The picturebook’s dynamic is merely the most obvious representation of this central quality of the genre.

As inherently binary, children’s literature exults in two-ness. There is almost always a black and a white, a good and a bad, a true and a false. There is almost always a home and an away, a safe place made secure but constraining by adults and a dangerous but exciting place where children free from adult constraint can have adventures. There is almost always a childlike way of thinking and doing and a more mature one. There is almost always an awareness of the child as significantly less—less wise, less experienced, less mature, and less damaged. In some texts that is cause for celebration, in others, something to be rooted out. In some texts, happy endings emerge from child characters coming to appreciate adult containment (we tend to identify those as the didactic ones). In others, the happy ending is freedom from
oppressive adult unimaginativeness (we tend to see these as the trashy ones designed merely to entertain children). In the most characteristic texts, there is ambivalence, a balance between the two.

In terms of the swerve through adult content, however, texts of children’s literature characteristically work by teaching a child-reader more in order to understand the value of knowing less—accessing adult sophistication in order to understand the appropriate way of being childlike as understood in adult thinking about children. It is, therefore, both conservative of childhood and undercutting of its own conservatism—or, alternately, in conserving the childlike, it is radical, and in hiding but nevertheless reinforcing the adult, it undercuts its own radicalism. It is not so much ambivalent about these matters as it is paradoxical.

As a fairly typical text for children, Amber Waiting can stand as an example. It is an enjoyable book, I think, and an ingenious one; in a review I wrote some years ago of almost eighty Canadian picturebooks, I singled it out as the one I appreciated the most: “Amber Waiting reveals in awareness of a long and noble history of previous picturebooks showing what goes on in children’s minds . . . but offers a subtle and interesting variation on them. It is, quite simply, an excellent picturebook” (123). In other words, my pleasure in it derived less from its uniqueness than from the ways in which it represents, and also, acts as an interesting variation, not just on a certain kind of picturebook—consider Potter’s Tale of Peter Rabbit, Sendak’s Where the Wild Things Are, and many other voyages into imaginary dangerous but exciting places—but also of the characteristics of children’s literature generally.

Like Peter Rabbit and Where the Wild Things Are, Amber Waiting is centrally about the dispute between a young child and her parent, and its story arc takes the child away from a place set up by adults as a safe place for children into a more exotic one adults would not allow the child to go to but where the child solves its problems on its own. Having proven to be mature enough to be more capable than a parent imagined, the child is, paradoxically, rewarded with a return to the safe place and the comforting restrictions of childhood—a safe roof, a soft bed, a hot meal.

Amber Waiting tells that familiar story this way: As Amber sadly waits alone in the school hallway for her tardy father to finally show up and take her home from kindergarten, she imagines herself dropping her dad off to be alone and unhappy on the moon, and then taking herself on a voyage around the world, doing amazing things that impress fathers everywhere. Then she imagines that she returns to her own lonely, deserted father, who now has learned about waiting and will always be there on time ever after—along with all the other late dad and moms in the world. When Amber’s dad does finally really arrive in real life at the end of the book, she is able to communicate enough of what she has imagined to make him understand how unhappy she has been, and she is rewarded by the love and attention she felt lacking before—with a kiss and a ride home on his shoulders.
How, then, does Amber waiting represent the conventions of children’s literature? In *The Hidden Adult*, I develop a definition of children’s literature as a genre that lists a number of its common characteristics. I would like to repeat that definition here, along with some comments on how *Amber Waiting* represents those characteristics.

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<th>Children's literature—the literature published specifically for audiences of children and therefore produced in terms of adult ideas about children, is a distinct and definable genre of literature, with characteristics that emerge from enduring adult ideas about childhood and that have consequently remained stable over the stretch of time in which this literature has been produced. Those ideas are inherently ambivalent, and therefore the literature is ambivalent.</th>
<th>The ambivalence of <em>Amber Waiting</em> resides in the paradox of the situation. Amber imagines herself in control in order to show her father he should be more in control; she is independent in order to achieve a comforting dependency.</th>
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<td>It offers children both what adults think children will like and what adults want them to need, but does so always in order to satisfy adults’ needs in regard to children. It offers what children presumably like by describing characters and telling stories that fulfill theoretically childish wishes for power and independence. It fulfills real adult needs and children’s presumed needs by working to colonize children—imagining a fictional child-reader as a model for actual child-readers to adopt.</td>
<td><em>Amber Waiting</em> offers children a fantasy of empowerment, adults a child who wants and needs adult love and protection.</td>
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<td>But its imagined child-reader is divided, both teachable and incorrigible, savage and innocent—eternally ambivalent. It possesses a double vision of childhood, simultaneously both celebrating and denigrating both childhood desire and adult knowledge, and therefore, simultaneously protecting children from adult knowledge and working to teach it to them.</td>
<td>Amber is always both independent and dependent, always more knowing than her father about love and more innocent than he in her unquestioning acceptance that this man who seems to slide his way thoughtlessly through life by, as the text says, smiling “his famous smile” has actually learned something and changed at the end.</td>
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<td>It is both conservative and subversive, and subverts both its conservatism and its own subversiveness.</td>
<td><em>Amber Waiting</em> allows Amber to imagine her subversion of her father’s authority, but only in the course of establishing her need for his care and attention.</td>
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<td>It finds its models in literary forms of earlier times, especially the fairy tale and the pastoral idyll—sophisticated versions of less sophisticated forms.</td>
<td>As a pastoral idyll makes rural poverty utopian, <em>Amber Waiting</em> offers adult readers the charmingly nostalgic innocence of Amber’s understanding of ideal parenting as established in her fantasy. It presents childhood as a place whose troubles are relatively small ones, relatively easily solved.</td>
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<td>It central characters are children or childlike beings, and its main concern is the meaning and value of being childlike as understood by adults.</td>
<td>Both Amber and her father are childlike—he in a bad but charming way, she in a good and charming way.</td>
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<td>It implies (or hides) a relationship between an adult narrator and a child narratee. It describes events from what purports to be a childlike point of view in order to teach children to occupy or enact that childlike point of view.</td>
<td>The narrator appears to be an adult telling Amber’s story to child-reader/viewers in terms of how Amber herself might understand it. It offer Amber’s point of view, but describes it in language somewhat more organized and sophisticated than we might expect of a kindergartener. The purpose of the story is, clearly, for readers to develop empathy with Amber and thus learn from her imaginative solution to her feeling of being deserted.</td>
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<td>It is an apparently simple literature in which adults leave things out—tell children less than the adults know themselves, especially about sexuality.</td>
<td>For an adult reader, the father’s “famous smile” speaks volumes about his confidence in his own sexuality, and implies a whole subplot about the father’s untrustworthiness and way of handling people generally that Amber herself seems relatively oblivious to.</td>
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<td>It is a plot-oriented literature that shows rather than tells.</td>
<td>As I have argued here, this is particularly true of most picturebooks, with relatively simple texts and relatively complex pictures. Furthermore, <em>Amber Waiting</em> moves forward by means of descriptions of Amber’s real and imagined actions rather than saying much specifically about her feelings.</td>
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<td>But it implies more than it says—sublimates deeper and subtler adult knowledge in an unspoken but clearly present shadow text necessarily available to all its readers, both adults and children.</td>
<td>Amber’s feelings as expressed by the events she experiences and imagines seem fairly obvious to me (there is little subtlety in the image of Amber’s father sitting in the dark of the moon as he observes the warm light of the sun from an isolating distance). It also seems obvious that the author and illustrator believe Amber’s feelings must be clear to child-readers, who could make little sense of the book and its messages for them without being able to interpret the fantasy and the pictures in this way.</td>
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<td>It tends to be utopian in that it imagines childhood innocence as utopian, but its plots tend to place child characters in un-childlike situations that deprive them of their innocence.</td>
<td>In order to get back the security and comfort of her father’s attention, Amber must undergo separation and isolation and imagine an un-childlike circumnavigation of the globe.</td>
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For all its clever inventiveness, its imaginative evocation of strong emotions and its pleasing good spirits, *Amber Waiting* is nevertheless representative of the most typical characteristics of children's literature as a genre. And it is so most essentially because it is a picturebook, telling a story built on binaries by means of two differing media of communication.

What, then, might be learned from that? This, I think: in a sense, children's literature is a doomed project. It exists in confirmation of the adult view that children are different from and less than adults, in need of childlike texts that show them less than adult readers know. But as picturebooks most clearly reveal, and as I believe *Amber Waiting* makes obvious, it can never be adult. It can invite from child-readers a lack of awareness of its adult content, but, as a product of adult minds and dependent on the language children share with adults, it cannot actually eliminate that content. The simplest text, the simplest picture can be meaningful only in terms

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<th>It is nevertheless hopeful and optimistic in tone, and tells stories with what purport to be happy endings, as child or childlike characters purportedly achieve maturity by retreating from adult experience and accepting adult protection and limiting adult ideas about their own childlike-ness. It characters achieve innocence after having experience. It tends to represent visions of childhood pleasing to adults in terms of images and ideas of home, and its happy endings often involves returning to or arriving at what is presented as home.</th>
<th>These are obvious qualities of <em>Amber Waiting</em>. Amber’s desolation is expressed by means of a joyful adventure, and she is merely mature enough to guarantee that her father thinks of her and acts towards her as if she was an innocent child, and to embrace her in his comforting support and carry her back to what readers have to assume is a safely loving home.</th>
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<td>It is binary oppositional in structure and in theme. Its stories tend to have two main settings, each of which represents one of a pair of central opposites. Its protagonists tend to represent combinations of pairs of characteristics that tend more usually in the world of discourse outside these texts to function separately and in opposition to each other.</td>
<td><em>Amber Waiting</em> takes place at school (theoretically safe and familiar but currently devoid of the comforts of parenting) and in the world of Amber’s imagination (theoretically isolating and away from loved ones but allowing control and mastery). Amber is a child wise beyond her years, her father a childish adult—but also, Amber is a needy innocent in search of a safe childhood, and her father a loving parent after all.</td>
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<td>It is ambivalently unable to dismiss either half of each of its pair of binaries. Its texts are internally repetitive and/or variational in form and content, and tend to operate as repetitions and/or variations of other texts in the genre.</td>
<td>I have described how <em>Amber Waiting</em> represents a variation on the plots, characters and themes of central books like <em>Peter Rabbit</em> and <em>Where the Wild Things Are</em>. Its fantasy section, in which deserted Amber deserts her dad, clearly operates as a variation, an inversion of the situation in the real world outside it.</td>
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of its relationship to the entire body of the language it is written in, the
entire complex network of meanings and values of the culture it exists in,
the entire body of adult knowledge that understands and defines children
as lesser and different. For these reasons, children’s literature both creates
childhood—works to make children the children adults want and need—and
at the same time undermines it—gives children the adult knowledge
it purportedly suppresses, in the act of constructing a deeply paradoxical
childhood subjectivity.

And I have to say finally that I think that is a good thing. It means that
even texts that offer the most radical support of the joys of childlike anarchy
are nevertheless enmeshed in adults systems of culture, and even the texts
that work hardest to suppress children are nevertheless offering them ways of
moving beyond the intended suppression. It means that Amber can be adult
enough to teach her childishly irresponsible father to be suitably responsi-
able—and that she can do so, ironically, in support of her need to be child
enough to be able to depend on the security and protection he as an adult is
supposed to offer. Like, I believe, all the most interesting and involving texts
of children’s literature, _Amber Waiting_ is enough at war with itself to offer
its implied reader/viewers an entertainingly unsettling opportunity both to
enter into and to question the values of their elders.

Notes

1. See, for instance, Maria Nikolajeva (1998).
2. For instance, for “tree,” the _Oxford English Dictionary_ offers these words:
   “1. a. A perennial plant having a self-supporting woody main stem or
   trunk (which usually develops woody branches at some distance from
   the ground), and growing to a considerable height and size. (Usually
distinguished from a bush or shrub by size and manner of growth; but cf.
   b.) c825, c890, c897 [see A. 2]. c1000 _ÆLFRIC_ Gen. iii. 6 <Th>æt
treow wæs god to etanne. c1175 Lamb. Hom. 109 Iliche <th>an treo
<th>e bere<edh> lef and blosman. c1290 St. Brendan 41 in S. Eng. Leg.
I. 221 Of treon and herbes, <th>ikke i-nov<ygh>. 1377 LANGL. P. Pl. B.
xv. 327 A forest. .ful of faire trees. 1398 TREVISA Barth. De P.R. XVII.
i. (Tollem. MS.), A tre ha<th>. .<th>e rynde, bowes, twigges, leues,
blosmes, floures and frute. c1400 Destr. Troy 12467 Trees thurgh tem-
pestes tynde hade <th>ere leues. 1481 CAXTON Reynard xii. (Arb.) 28
He brake a rodde of a tree. c1530 R. HILLES Common-Pl. Bk. (1858) 140
Hyt ys a febyll tre thet fallyth at the fyrst strok. 1600 FAIRFAX Tasso
VII. i. Through forrests thicke among the shadie treene. 1635 LAUD
Diary 1 Dec., Many elm leaves yet upon the trees. 1771 Junius Lett.
Ivii. (1820) 298 He or his deputy were authorised to cut down. .trees.
1861 BENTLEY Man. Bot. 540 Cunoniaceæ . . . Nearly allied to Saxifragaceæ, but differing from them in being trees or shrubs. b. Extended to include bushes or shrubs of erect growth and having a single stem; and even some perennial herbaceous plants which grow to a great height, as the banana and plantain. c1340- [see ROSE-TREE]. c1532 [see GOOSEBERRY 7]. 1640 [see PLANTAIN 3 4]. 1649 [see CURRANT 4]. 1697 [see BANANA 1]. 1765 [see RASPBERRY 6]. 1855 BROWNING Women & Roses i, I dream of a red-rose tree. 1858 HOGG Veg. Kingd. 790 As a food, the Plantain is wholesome and agreeable. A tree generally contains three or four clusters.”

3. See Chandler “Semiotics for Beginners,” for an explanation of the difference between “symbols”—arbitrary signs like written language—and “iconic” representations, like pictures, which resemble the objects they refer to.

4. The ways in which words depend on each other for their meanings is a basic principle of the linguistics of de Saussure, which understands language as a system of relationships.


6. For complex art as childlike see Ruskin’s famous comments on the “innocent eye”: “The whole technical power of painting depends on our recovery of what may be called the innocence of the eye; that is to say, of a sort of childish perception of these flat stains of colour, merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify,—as a blind man would see them if suddenly gifted with sight” (2).

7. For a Chinese view of an English landscape, see Chiang Yee’s “Cows in Derwentwater,” reproduced in Gombrich (1961, 84).

Bibliography

Primary Sources


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