

THE THIRD STORY: AN EXPLORATION OF INTEGRATING IRONIC
COUNTERPOINT INTO THE MULTIMODAL TEXT-IMAGE
RELATIONSHIP OF CHILDREN'S PICTUREBOOKS

By
Yuqiao Zheng

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

University of the Arts London
London College of Communication
May 2025

Acknowledgement

I want to convey my deepest gratitude to my exceptional supervisors, Dr Ian Horton, and Dr Alexandra Antonopoulou, whose guidance has been invaluable throughout my PhD journey. As my lead supervisor, Ian has played a crucial role in my development as both a researcher and a creative practitioner. His profound insights and encouragement to engage in reflective practice have inspired me to deepen my exploration of picturebook narratives. Alexandra's thoughtful critiques and constructive suggestions have helped me achieve a more precise and more nuanced presentation of my research.

In addition to my academic supervisors, I am profoundly thankful to my family in China. Their steadfast love and encouragement have been a guiding light in my pursuit of artistic expression. They have always believed in my passion and potential, providing me with the support necessary to navigate this challenging journey.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my uncle's whole family. Their warmth and hospitality have provided me with a sense of comfort and stability. Their kindness and support helped me ease the transition and have contributed significantly to making my experience here more enriching and fulfilling.

Furthermore, I want to convey my sincere gratitude to all my friends for their unwavering support. Their encouragement and support have made this process more enjoyable and meaningful, significantly contributing to my growth and experiences.

Thank you all for being part of my journey. Your encouragement and belief in me have been vital to the successful completion of my doctoral research.

Abstract

This research investigates the intricate multimodal interactions between text and image in children's picturebooks, with a particular emphasis on the implementation of "ironic counterpoint" as a narrative device. Recognizing the complexity inherent in multimodal narratives, this study aims to clarify how the interplay of verbal and visual modes not only creates meaning but also fosters reader engagement. Building on the framework established by previous scholars, the research identifies key objectives, including the production of multimodal interactions, testing the concept of a "third story" that arises from the incongruity of text and image, and examining how ironic counterpoint can evolve narrative functions within contemporary picturebooks.

Through a practice-based approach, the author has developed three original picturebooks—*Responsible Me* (2021), *The Guardian Angel* (2022), and *The Way to Happiness* (2024)—each manifesting the principles of ironic counterpoint. These works serve as case studies in exploring how discrepancies between text and image contribute to layered storytelling, prompting readers to actively participate in meaning-making. Moreover, the study seeks to delineate new subcategories of ironic counterpoint and analyses the effects of typographical changes, pictorial changes, visual metaphors, and symbolic representations on narrative developed through multimodal theory.

The findings indicate that the dynamics of text and image relations in picturebooks not only enrich the narrative but also cultivate a deeper understanding of cultural significance and visual literacy among audiences. Emerging from this research is a contextualized theoretical framework that equips picturebook creators, illustrators, and educators with innovative approaches to multimodal storytelling. By advancing the discourse on multimodal analysis, this study not only contributes to the academic literature but also serves as a valuable resource for practitioners engaged in the creation of complex narratives.

Keywords: picturebook, multimodality, the relationship between text and image, visual metaphor, symbol

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction	1
1. 1 Main Research Question.....	1
1.2 Research Aims and Objectives	3
1.3 Terms and Definitions	5
1.4 Theoretical Framework for Understanding Narratives in Children’s Picturebooks	7
1.5 Practice as An Illustrator Outside of PhD	9
1.6 Three Experimental Picturebooks created during PhD	11
1.7 Contribution to The Area.....	13
1.8 Structure of Thesis	16
Chapter 2. Multimodality, Ironic Counterpoint and Narrative	19
2.1 The Function of Text Modality	19
2.2 The Role of Visual Modality.....	20
2.3 Multimodal Word and Image Combinations in Children Picturebooks	20
2.4 Ironic Counterpoint: Irony and Counterpointing Text-Image Relationships.....	21
2.5 The Characteristics of Postmodern Children’s Picturebooks and Their Relation with Ironic Counterpoint	35
2.5.1 The Concept of Postmodern Picturebooks.....	35
2.5.2 The Feature of Postmodern Picturebooks and Its relationship with Ironic Counterpoint.....	37
2.5.3 The Significance of Postmodern Picturebooks	41
2.6 The Research on the Function and Approaches of the Narrative	42
2.6.1 The Concept and the Significance of Narrative	42
2.6.2 The Approaches and Function of Narrative.....	47
2.6.3 The Minimal Story	54
2.7 Conclusion	57
Chapter 3. Methodology	60
3.1 Practice-based Research.....	60

3.2 Action Research	61
3.3 Visual Analysis and Reflective Practice of Picturebooks in Different Narratives	63
3.3.1 Visual Analysis	63
3.3.2 Reflexivity	65
3.4 Case Study as Method: Using Postmodern Picturebooks as a Lens and Interdependent Storytelling in Children Picturebooks	72
<i>Chapter 4. Experimental Typography through Picturebook 1- Responsible Me</i>	88
4.1 Theories in Experimental Typography.....	89
4.1.1 The Concept of Experimental Typography	89
4.1.2 Potential Aspects of Visual Experiments in Experimental Typography.....	91
4.1.3 The Significance of Experimental Typography.....	95
4.2 Case Study: Experimental Typography in Postmodern Picturebooks	95
4.3 Examining Ironic Counterpoint through Experimental Typography in <i>Responsible Me</i>	109
4.4 Analysis and Reflections of Final Output of <i>Responsible Me</i>	122
4.5 Conclusion	132
<i>Chapter 5. Pictorial Experiments through Picturebook 2 - The Guardian Angel</i>	133
5.1 Pictorial Theories in Visual Metaphor and Semiotics	134
5.1.1 The Concepts of the Sign.....	135
5.1.2 Signifier and Signified	139
5.1.3 Sign Structure	140
5.1.4 Connotation, Denotation and Exemplification	141
5.1.5 The Notion of Metaphors	143
5.1.6 The Way that Metaphor Functions.....	145
5.1.7 Incongruity and Ambiguity in Visual Metaphor.....	152
5.1.8 Significance of Visual Metaphor	153
5.2 Case Study: Pictorial Function in Postmodern Picturebooks.....	154
5.3 Examining the Changes of Pictorial Elements to the Meaning of Narrative in Picturebook <i>The Guardian Angel</i>.....	163
5.3.1 Theories in the Visual Experiments of in <i>The Guardian Angel</i>	164
5.3.2 The Changes of the Scale of the Characters in <i>The Guardian Angel</i>	165
5.3.3 The Variations of Position of the Characters	170
5.3.4 The Different Directions of the Characters	182

5.3.5 The Changes of Size of Scenes.....	184
5.3.6 The Changes of Location of Scenes	185
5.4 Analysis and Reflections of Final Images of <i>The Guardian Angel</i>	189
5.5 Visual Metaphor in Narratives of Loneliness and Loss in Picturebooks.....	200
5.6 Conclusion	203
Chapter 6. The Application of Symbol in the Multimodal Text and Image Relation in Picturebook 3 - <i>The Way to Happiness</i>	205
6.1 The Embodiment of Symbols in Fairytales	206
6.1.1 The Concept of Fairytales	206
6.1.2 Archetypes and Universal Themes in Fairytales	208
6.1.3 Symbolism and Functions of Fairytales	212
6.2 Case Study: Symbols in Postmodern Picturebooks	214
6.3 Comparative Analysis of Use of Symbols in Picturebooks 1 <i>Responsible Me</i> and 2 <i>The Guardian Angel</i>.....	223
6.4 The Utilization of Symbols: Creating Ironic Counterpoint through Picturebook 3 <i>The Way to Happiness</i>	225
6.4.1 A Practice of Symbols and New Ideas for Creating a Third Picturebook	226
6.4.2 The Natural Elements as Symbols in the Picturebook ' <i>I' Searcher</i>	227
6.5 The Analysis of Symbols in Picturebook 3 <i>The Way to Happiness</i>.....	234
6.6 A Comprehensive Analysis and Reflections of Multimodal Text and Image Relationship of <i>The Way to Happiness</i>	246
6.6.1 Typographic Experiments for <i>The Way to Happiness</i>	246
6.6.2 A Comprehensive Analysis	260
6.7 Conclusion	263
Chapter 7. Conclusion.....	265
7.1 Revisiting Research Questions, Aims and Objectives.....	265
7.2 The Comparison of Narrative Approach, Cultural significance, Symbols, and Experimentation in Three Picturebook Projects during PhD study.....	268
7.2.1 Narrative Approaches in Three Picturebook Projects.....	268
7.2.2 Cultural Significance in Three Picturebook Projects	269
7.2.3 The Employment of Symbols in Three Picturebook Projects.....	270

7.2.4 Typographic and Pictorial Experiments in Three Picturebook Projects	271
7.3 Contribution to Knowledge	272
7.4 Testing Work in Conferences and Illustration Awards.....	273
7.5 Future Work and Research	274
<i>Bibliography</i>	276

Chapter 1. Introduction

This chapter states the main research question of the thesis and gives a detailed brief of the primary research aims and objectives, the terms and definitions of key concepts, and the contribution to the potential fields and groups. Meanwhile, three experimental picturebooks produced during this PhD are introduced, and the three picturebook practices, together with diverse experimentation for each picturebook, constitute the core of the PhD project, responding to and extending to the existing theories. Additionally, practice outside of my PhD has been included here to provide context and explain how this connects to the PhD. To present a clearer picture of the key concepts of the narratives in children's picturebooks and the organization of the PhD thesis, a framework and a structure have been drawn to illustrate both points.

1. 1 Main Research Question

The multimodal relationship between text and image is a crucial consideration when examining narrative in children's picturebooks. Each mode plays its own role – images depict what would take too long to read via text, and text could convey what might be too laborious to visualize via images (Kress, 2010). Irony can be used in a text to tell a story where pictures portray another different narrative, meaning that a third story is formed to maximize the engagement and imagination of readers. In this study, the “ironic counterpoint,” first stressed by Nodelman (1988), will be highlighted to examine this interplay between text and image. The field of multimodal text and image relationships in picturebooks requires further research. While existing studies highlight diverse interactions between verbal and visual modes, they also emphasise that the counterpoint reflects their interdependence—where both elements mutually enhance storytelling (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006). Understanding these dynamics can provide deeper insights into how picturebooks convey meaning and emotional resonance through their integrated use of words and visuals. In addition, there is a lack of theoretical study on the text and image interactions of picturebooks based on multimodal analysis (Wu, 2014). Furthermore, exploring picture books that highlight the relationship between text and images can provide

insights into how young readers enhance their “visual literacy” (Debes, 1968) and open a gate of highly valued research on literature for those young audiences. (Meek, 1988). Therefore, the research question for this project focuses on the effect of integrating ironic counterpoint into the multimodal text-image relationship of children’s picture books.

As a practice-based researcher I primarily examine ironic counterpoint using the picturebooks I create myself with a connection to the related theories as an approach to explore multimodal relationships. For my own picturebook practice, three picturebooks were created to examine the different functions of narrative – picturebook 1 *Responsible Me* (2021) is about a character who fails to fulfil a promise in the picture while the situation in the texts describes the opposite, picturebook 2 *The Guardian Angel* (2022) depicts the passing of a grandfather who protects his granddaughter as angel and is an experiment examining pictorial changes and impact to the meaning of the narrative. Picturebook 3 *The Way to Happiness* (2024) adopting symbols from various perspectives tells of positive ways to be happy while the image shows the opposite generating an ironic effect. These practical approaches construct new methods based on observation and reflection through experiments and practice related to multimodal text and image interactions. These constructed methods as the results of this research project can be considered as a contextualized theoretical reference point and a practical framework for picturebook makers, illustrators, and other creators working with multimodality.

Despite the growing body of research by academics and practitioners exploring the narratives of picturebooks and the intricate relationship between text and images, a significant gap persists in the academic discourse regarding practice-based investigations into how typographical and pictorial elements specifically contribute to ironic counterpoint. While the concept of ironic counterpoint, articulated by Perry Nodelman, has been noted in scholarly discussions, it remains largely theoretical, with insufficient empirical validation through creative practice.

Current literature primarily reflects on the roles that words and images play individually within narratives, celebrating their interplay but neglecting a rigorous examination of the mechanisms by which visual components can construct and enhance ironic counterpoint.

This is particularly pivotal given that each element—textual or pictorial—functions in a unique capacity that cannot be interchanged or wholly captured by the other. Moreover, current studies have largely failed to investigate the subcategories of ironic counterpoint, which represent essential facets of how visual storytelling can engage readers through nuanced contrasts. Although there are insights into how text-image relations create meaning, few studies delve into the practical applications of these insights, specifically through the lens of visual experiments designed to test their efficacy in narrative storytelling.

This research aims to fill that gap by conducting a series of visual experiments across different narrative settings to investigate the ways in which changes in typographical and pictorial elements influence the construction of ironic counterpoint in picturebooks. By establishing a framework for understanding these interactions, this study not only contributes to academic discourse but also offers practical guidance for picturebook creators, designers, and researchers. Exploring how specific visual decisions can evoke nuanced layers of meaning and engage readers through ironic contrast remains uncharted territory, highlighting the necessity for a focused, practice-based inquiry into this domain. This means that while the relationship between words and images in picturebook narratives is recognised and celebrated, a critical need exists for dedicated research investigating how typographical and pictorial elements uniquely facilitate and amplify ironic counterpoint, thereby enriching the narrative experience in picturebooks.

1.2 Research Aims and Objectives

This research project within multimodal interaction highlights the ways of achieving the effect of ironic counterpoint and deals with the following objectives:

1. Produce multimodal interplay between the textual mode and visual mode in examples of picturebook narratives.

The richness of a multimodal narrative comes from the interaction of several different systems of meaning (Painter and Martin, 2013). Besides, picturebooks combining textual and

visual modality are complicated in generating unity, which is worthy of further investigation (Sipe, 2012).

2. Test the concept of the third story in my research.

The third story can be considered meaningful as a result of synergy in the multimodal text and image relationship of interdependent storytelling, in which neither the visual nor the verbal mode captures the entire meaning or fully enhances the enjoyment of the story. This demands bridging the gap between the two modalities, resulting in the emergence of new meaning (Painter and Martin, 2013).

3. Examine the application of ironic counterpoint in the narrative of picturebooks.

It is worthwhile exploring how both the writing and illustrating of picturebooks advance and mature continually. As a result, illustrators and authors can evolve new functions for the two modes and develop new ways in which text and image can share the role of storyteller (Agosto, 1999). In these books, modern readers are required to take both modes into consideration concurrently to comprehend the third story in picturebooks.

4. Identify new subcategories of ironic counterpoint through analysing text and image relations in existing picturebooks and apply them in my own practice.

Identify new subcategories of ironic counterpoint through picture books concerning text/image relations and personal practices. Irony can be created within the arrangement of sequence order in the counterpoint relationship between words and pictures; the metaphor/symbol between the text and the image produces an ironic counterpoint; irony can lie in the difference between the contents from the text and the fact from the image; the ambiguity between character's perspective in text and the real situation in picture results in irony; ironic counterpoint can be achieved through ordinary text and exceptional image combinations.

5. Analyse how changes to elements in picturebooks contribute to the meaning of the narrative using multimodal theories.

Analyse the influence of the change of typography to the meaning of the narrative; position changes: close to the object or character/ graphic typography/ across the whole spread / text hidden behind the objects; shape changes: the change of key word/ the change of the whole sentence (Colour changes); analyse the influence of the change of elements in picture to the meaning of the narrative; analyse the influence of emotion and gesture character in picture to the meaning of the narrative; analyse the change of sequence/ storyboard to the meaning of the narrative; analyse the change of background to the meaning of the narrative.

6. Construct new approaches base on observation and reflection through experiments and practice related to multimodal text and image interactions. As the results of this research project, these constructed methods can be used as a contextualized theoretical reference point and a practical framework for picturebook makers, illustrators, and other creators working with multimodality.

1.3 Terms and Definitions

Picturebooks are a mixed narrative form in which pictorial modality as an independent semiotic system does not necessarily concur with the verbal modality (Wu, 2014, p. 1419). Sometimes, creating a picturebook, instead of an illustrated book, also means "delicately rendering word and image as a unified whole ... rather than assigning distinct roles of 'writer' and 'illustrator' or 'artist'." (Salisbury, 2022). The interanimation of multimodal text and image creates spaces where readers can enter and expand their visual imagination through minimal text and spare image combinations (Clement, 2013). To some extent, "words became fewer as an understanding of the potential of the page as a multimodal visual stage grew." (Salisbury and Styles, 2012, p. 29). In picturebooks, the "added" effect of image to text has been stressed, and the functions of text have also been highlighted (Agosto, 1999, Golden, 1990). However, if we aim to consider the equal effect of words-on-pictures and images-on-text, both dynamics need to be critiqued since both modes are equally important (Agosto, 1999). At this point, the counterpointing relationship between

text and image appears to reflect the inherent nature of the interaction between the words and images in picturebooks, where they coexist as interdependent narratives that enhance one another (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006).

Research on the functions of images and texts is useful because texts and images cannot merely replicate nor mirror with one another due to the fundamental distinctions between verbal and visual forms of communication (Nodelman, 1988). It is also the complex interactions between the verbal modality and the visual modality that constitutes the unique form of picturebooks. The picturebook functions as a unified whole that encompasses two forms of communication: text and imagery (Lewis, 2001). This suggests that a picturebook contains two distinct languages: one associated with the sequence of text and the other linked to the sequence of images (Sipe, 2012), with the words and pictures being dependent on each other (Salisbury, 2004, p.94).

From the perspective of semiotics, the two modalities, texts and images, can be considered as systems of “signs” in picturebooks with sub-sign systems (Sipe, 2012). For instance, there is the sign system of colours as a sub-sign system of the sign system of visual images. There may be the sign system of emotions within the sign system of colour. How these sign systems are interconnected with one another generates the diversity of multimodal text and image relationships. This research will shed light on the text and image relationship in the multimodal context and develop theoretical frameworks to understand multimodal semiosis (Wu, 2014).

According to the ecological perspective of picturebooks, words do not exist in isolation, and they are influenced by pictures, and the other way around (Lewis, 2001). Therefore, the texts or images in picturebooks on their own are always partial. With this ecological perspective, a more nuanced text and image relationship can be observed in the picturebook as a mini-ecosystem. Separate pages naturally present various relations with readers as the indispensable part of this ecosystem.

The term “third story” was brought to prominence by Perry Nodelman in *The Pleasures of Children’s Literature* (1992, p. 154), although the concept of the “third story” emerged

earlier as a “third rhythm” in *Words About Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books* (1988, p. 244). In his analysis, Nodelman posits that the interplay between text and image in picturebooks cultivates an additional narrative layer that does not exist when text or images are considered in isolation. This original use establishes the foundational understanding of how multimodal narratives function within picturebooks, highlighting the importance of examining the relationship between verbal and visual elements. The “third story” concept is directly linked to the notion of ironic counterpoint, which occurs when text and imagery present contrasting or contradictory narratives simultaneously. This dynamic encourages readers to engage actively with the material, as they must reconcile the differences to uncover the deeper meanings that the “third story” offers. Ironic counterpoint enriches the narrative experience by adding complexity and depth, reinforcing that the incongruity between text and image creates a multifaceted understanding of the story.

In the context of this research, exploring the “third story” concerning ironic counterpoint is essential as it lays the theoretical groundwork for understanding multimodal interactions within picturebooks. The “third story” serves as a lens through which the integration of text and image is examined. Focusing on the “third story,” this study underscores that the interplay between text and image not merely enhance storytelling but also fosters critical engagement and creativity in interpretation, contributing to a richer, more dynamic storytelling experience.

1.4 Theoretical Framework for Understanding Narratives in Children’s Picturebooks

Picturebooks unfold narrative through “‘multimodal’ texts that contain a mixture of verbal and visual elements” (Salisbury and Styles, 2012, p. 77). In most picturebooks, the same story is usually told twice through the text and image individually and readers are consequently able to comprehend such stories either by texts or images. These types of picturebooks have been called “twice-told tales” (Vandergrift, 1987), and adopt parallel storytelling in their narrative approach. Unlike this type of picturebooks in my research I focus on the word and image interactions in the type of picturebooks which contains three stories where texts narrate one story, pictures indicate another and the third story is a combination of them as a result (Nodelman, 1988). This means producing picturebooks

where interdependent storytelling creates a third story compared with the twice-told tales in which text and image indicate a similar story. In picturebooks with interdependent storytelling, it is necessary to work in the spaces between the story told by texts and the story suggested by images if readers hope to gain what the picturebooks provide (Lewis, 2001).

This interdependent storytelling is especially worthy of further examination as it is the third story—the unexpressed component that allows readers to imagine scenes (Iser, 1972). Interdependent storytelling also breaks the limits that conventional picturebooks impose by creating words and pictures that disrupt boundaries. It is also a way of creating dynamic and engaging liminal spaces between text and images that can spark readers' visual imagination (Clement, 2013). In picturebooks with interdependent storytelling, clear differences are evident between the information conveyed through words and that showcased in images, requiring readers to consider texts and images together to grasp the stories conveyed in these picturebooks (Agosto, 1999).

The interplay between text and image in interdependent storytelling has been called “synergy” (Sipe, 1998). This type of interplay synergy distinguishes the interdependent storytelling from traditional twice-told tales as synergy plays a central role in these interdependent stories (Agosto, 1999). This can reveal the third story—a story that offers deeper meaning than just the mirroring of the story expressed through words and the one illustrated by images. On the one hand, readers may not be able to discern a third story—the core story of the picturebook if not considering the synergy between words and pictures. On another hand, modern readers might develop increased visual acuity allowing modern picturebook creators to use the distinguished narrative role of text and image.

The instability resulting from multimodal word and image interaction is another core difference compared with earlier traditional picturebooks (Clement, 2013). Besides, “double orientation” in these interdependent stories enables picturebooks to look in two directions simultaneously, thereby allowing picturebook creators to play off one perspective against the other (Lewis, 2001). The multiple perspectives in this type of picturebooks can collapse boundaries between fiction and reality (Clement, 2013).

The theoretical framework (fig.1.4) used in this PhD to comprehend narratives in children's picturebooks is explained below. Ironic counterpoint is relevant to narrative, multimodality, and pictorial theories. Interdependent storytelling, narratology, and characteristics of postmodern picturebooks are associated with both narrative and multimodality, which are concerned with symbolism, visual metaphor, semiotics, and the function of pictures.

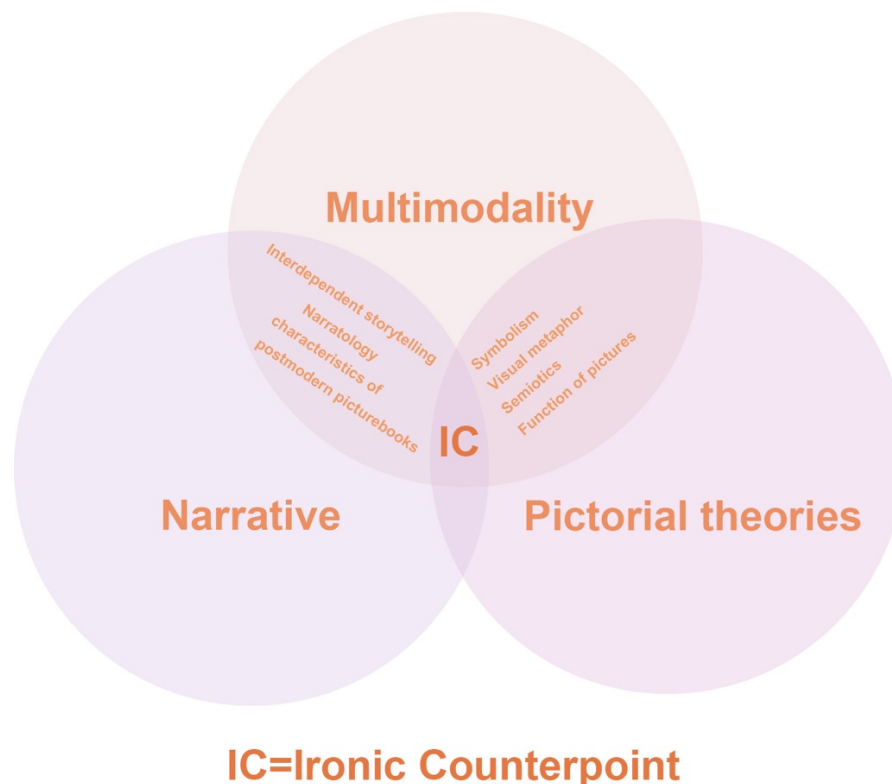


Fig.1.4 Yuqiao, Z. (2023) Theoretical Framework for Understanding Narratives in Children's Picturebooks

1.5 Practice as An Illustrator Outside of PhD

This research project focuses on exploring text and image relationships in picturebooks, emphasising how the changes in textual or pictorial elements influence the meaning of narrative in picturebooks. Prior to the PhD study, I have continued to develop my arts and illustration practice since my MA at Camberwell College of Arts. During this MA, I aimed to

establish my own visual language as it is crucial for illustrators to refine their approach to visual communication and storytelling. After experimenting with various materials, including printmaking, mineral painting, egg tempera, charcoal, and pencil drawing, I eventually decided to focus on digital drawing due to its distinct advantages over traditional techniques. While the tactile qualities and rich textures of conventional mediums are appealing, digital drawing offers flexibility, immediacy and convenience that fundamentally reshaped my creative process.

The primary rationale for choosing digital drawing lies in its versatility. Unlike traditional painting, which often requires a commitment to a specific composition before the paint is applied, digital drawing allows for rapid alterations and experimentation. An artist can easily manipulate layers, adjust colours, and experiment with forms without the irreversible consequences often associated with physical mediums. This adaptability fosters creativity and accelerates the ideation process, enabling artists to refine concepts swiftly and accurately.

Furthermore, digital drawing excels in merging text and images in innovative ways. The medium facilitates the fluid movement of visual elements across the canvas, enabling artists to experiment with composition and positioning effectively. This is particularly crucial for exploring narratives where the interaction between text and image plays a vital role. By repositioning these elements quickly, artists can test various relationships and layouts, uncovering new meanings and enhancing the overall impact of their work. This iterative process deepens engagement with ideas and cultivates a richer narrative experience for the viewer.

While I value the texture of traditional drawings and paintings, the time-consuming nature of these methods can make editing inconvenient. To balance this paradox, my solution is to combine the intriguing texture of hand-drawn elements with digital techniques. This can be achieved in two ways: using actual texture on paper or employing digital brushes that mimic texture. During my master's study, I primarily focused on integrating actual texture into my work.

My pursuit of digital drawing notwithstanding, I also used my MA to develop style and topic, two equally essential aspects of an illustrator's visual language. After reviewing traditional artists, predominately painters, I resonated most with the works of the Pre-Raphaelites. I interpreted the style, combined with my background in oriental ink painting. Informed by these two artistic traditions, I adopted and adapted elements from each, culminating a distinctive style demonstrated in my graduation work '*I' Searcher* (2020). The development of my aesthetic and formalistic elements was accompanied by a search for themes, topics, and iconographies through which I would explore illustration as a storytelling medium. I found the objects that attracted me were always plants and animals. In the meantime, I was also interested in storytelling, and I thought that a simple story could deliver a philosophical message where readers would empathise with the story in their own lives. As a result, the animals and plants shown in the story function as symbols in my final graduation works. It communicates a narrative that one should stick to one's dream and follow one's path without being affected by others or the environment.

During my PhD, I found time to experiment and accept commercial collaborations beyond my research. For example, I was commissioned by The Forbidden City Culture Development as an illustrator for a series of commercial picturebooks, *Visit the Forbidden City to See China* (2022). The three picturebooks involve traditional Chinese culture and painting. I have learned that plants and animals have different meanings in traditional cultures and can be utilized as symbols. The importance of symbols was also embodied in three experimental picturebooks during my PhD. I have also illustrated wrapping paper and greeting cards for a UK brand selling at Amazon. This experience expanded my drawing range of the objects as it involves not only plants and flowers but also cars, architecture, jewellery etc. It also built my skills in drawing quickly and in detail when I am not writing my PhD thesis.

1.6 Three Experimental Picturebooks created during PhD

In the context of creative practice, an experiment is a devised process or method used to explore, test, or innovate within a particular artistic or design framework. Such experiments emphasise systematic engagement with diverse elements like form, medium, and techniques to reveal their potential impacts on creative outcomes. Experiments are driven

by the designer's intention to discover new ways of expression, challenge existing norms, or solve specific artistic problems rather than focusing on audience reception or interpretation. An experimental picturebook emerges from this practice, characterised by its non-traditional narrative structures and innovative interactions between text and image. By challenging conventional storytelling, these picturebooks foster a re-examination of how visual and verbal components coexist and influence each other, ultimately enhancing the reading experience.

During the PhD study, I made three picturebooks as the practice aspect of the research project that highlighted how different factors that can affect the meaning of the story. My experiment within this context is considered a designed process to explore and innovate visual expression about ironic counterpoint, utilising various narrative elements to uncover new meanings. I explore ironic counterpoint through these experimental picturebooks I create, intentionally linking my creative processes with theoretical frameworks. The three picturebooks examining different narrative functions. *Responsible Me* (2021) contrasts visual information and textual promises, *The Guardian Angel* (2022) investigates pictorial changes regarding a protective grandfather, and *The Way to Happiness* (2024) plays with symbols to convey ironic messages.

The first picturebook *Responsible Me* (2021) tells the story of a character who made a promise to protect an egg that she actually fails to fulfil. The interesting point about the first picturebook practice is that the texts keep telling the readers how well she has done in order to protect the egg, yet the pictures expose her actual and opposite actions. Additionally, this picturebook is inspired from the Children's Day from various countries that is thought to be cultural components along the main plot. As this was the first experimental practice in the whole research project and the main objective of this study is to explore how text interact with image to generate ironic counterpoint, I selected typography as a beginning point to conduct experiments. To examine how the change of typography can have an influence on the meaning of the narrative, I made over 100 examples to consider the factors that affect the meaning of the narrative. The factors include the change of position, the change of colour and the change of size etc.

The idea of making the second picturebook arises from the process of making the first picturebook, as the following *The Guardian Angel* (2022) examines how visual changes can have an influence on the meaning of the storytelling. The second picturebook depicts an imaginary grandfather who takes care of a little girl in the form of an angel. This practice, focusing on the visual experiments of pictorial change, examines how those changes can affect the narrative differently. These changes include the position of the character, the direction, the scale, and the colour. Visual metaphors created by the pictorial changes are used as an approach to communicate key concepts. When creating this picturebook, some symbols start to emerge during the process of narrating which inspires the creation of the third picturebook.

As the use of symbols becomes crucial in revealing meaning in the narrative, the last picturebook focuses on the utilization of symbols and seeks the cultural significance behind the symbols. The third picturebook *The Way to Happiness* (2024) utilizes symbols from different sources and cultures. The inspiration ranges from the symbols in traditional Chinese culture, Greek Aesop's Fables, western fairytales, and symbols that are used in Renaissance paintings. The texts in the story suggest the pathways to be happy while the pictures present a contrasting situation. Ironic counterpoint is produced from the incongruity between the words and the image.

1.7 Contribution to The Area

Traditionally, illustrations help to explain the written text (Bodmer, 1992), or images play a more distinctive role with the function of words being ignored. This may not be a trend in contemporary picturebooks, highlighting the functions of both images and words. While there is research by academics and practitioners on picturebook narratives and the interplay between words and images, there appears to be a lack of practice-based research examining how typographical and pictorial elements contribute to ironic counterpoint. Existing studies reveal that words rely on images for their meaning (Colomer, Kummerling-Meibauer and Silva-Daz, 2010, p. 13). This highlights the essential relationship between text and illustration in creating a holistic narrative experience. Furthermore, Kummerling-Meibauer (2014, p. 12) discusses the shifting borders between representation and narration in picturebooks,

indicating the dynamic interplay of visual and verbal storytelling. As Evans (2015, p. 6) asserts, these narratives often echo real-life situations, either directly or through allusions woven into the story.

Despite the depth of these insights, practitioner research remains relatively underrepresented in the field of picturebook studies, as noted by Palmer (2016, p. 1). This research strives to tap into the unique knowledge shaped by practical experience. Dolan (2020, p. 9) highlights the effectiveness of practice research as a method for obtaining such understanding, presenting a significant opportunity for further exploration, particularly in how typographical and pictorial elements can enhance narrative complexity and irony.

There is still lack of theoretic study on the interactions between words and pictures in picturebooks based on multimodal analysis (Wu, 2014), even though increasing academic concerns manifest in terms of the relationships between picture and text in children's literature. Researching the multimodal text and image relationship will also contribute to the wider realm of multimodal discourse analysis (O'Halloran, 2004; Jewitt, 2009).

Studying the multimodal text and image relationship of picturebooks could open a gate of highly valued research on literature for young audiences (Meek, 1988). Through this complex but dynamic relation, picturebooks allow children to continuously engage in meaning-making, as each rereading offers new perspectives on the texts and images. This process enables children to have varied experiences while they participate in crafting new meanings and creating different worlds (Sipe, 1998). Besides, researching picturebooks featuring the text and image interaction will help understand how young readers develop their visual literacy (Debes, 1968) – an ability to discriminate visible actions, symbols and objects, both natural and man-made.

Salisbury and Styles stressed the importance of utilizing multimodal texts and how this will affect the reading process of children:

While children enjoy a good story, most look for more than that in a picturebook. So, it is not surprising that, when faced with complex multimodal texts, they puzzle over what the pictures might symbolize or how words and images together construct meaning. Without knowing the vocabulary,

or understanding terms such as visual metaphor, they nonetheless interpret visual symbols, sometimes with extraordinary aplomb. (Salisbury and Styles, 2012, p. 81)

This research examines how pictorial theories, visual metaphors, and semiotics can innovatively be applied to the narrative in picturebooks. It can inspire creators that the change of pictorial components can influence the narrative of picturebooks. Potential variations include position, colour, scale, direction, etc. Experimental practice focusing on this aspect can give readers a direct visual effect. Demonstrating these visual experiments is also easier for them to comprehend and utilize later. Visual metaphor is an effective method of unveiling the creator's intended meaning and is also used in visual experiments. Both practitioners and audiences can learn how visual metaphors are used in the narrative of the picturebooks.

Embedding cultural significance through intended symbols is another creative approach adopted in the research, which shows the possibility of presenting multiculturalism through symbolic elements. Tales from different cultural backgrounds, visual objects from various countries, and symbolic components from a certain kind of paintings are all sources to nurture the storytelling of the picturebook practice. Using these stimulates a deeper understanding of the culture behind the elements of the story on the surface and exhibits a richer form of narrating.

1.8 Structure of Thesis

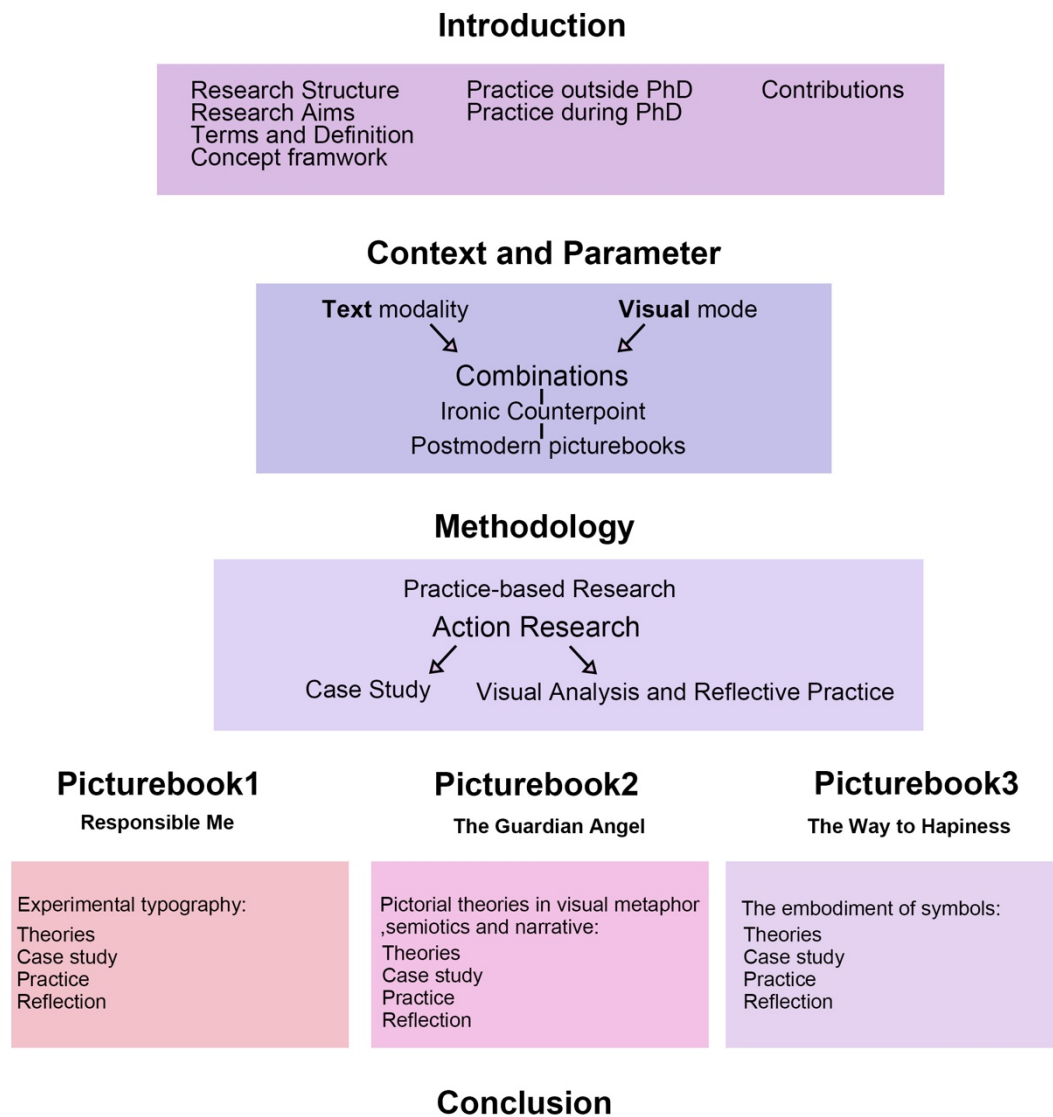


Fig.1.8 Yuqiao, Z. (2023) The Conceptual Framework of The Whole Thesis

A conceptual framework of the whole thesis (fig.1.8) makes the thesis structure evident as each chapter and section plays a role to support the thesis. Specifically, chapter 1 introduces the focus of the thesis, including its aims and objectives presenting a clear path and structure of the research journey. Both the framework for the core concepts and the framework for the thesis are demonstrated in the introduction section. These frameworks

contain an overview of my three experimental picturebook practices during my PhD and my illustration practice outside my PhD.

Chapter 2 mainly provides theoretical context and parameters regarding multimodality, ironic counterpoint, and narrative. The chapter covers the function of text mode and image mode, respectively, considering how the two modalities work concurrently to narrate a story in children's picturebooks. Additionally, this chapter stresses the importance of ironic counterpoint as an approach to interdependent storytelling in text-image relations and how the characteristics of postmodern picturebooks can contribute to the storytelling of contemporary picturebooks.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology adopted for this research. It comprises practice-based research, action research, visual analysis, reflective practice, and a case study. Specifically, practice-based research in this research relates to the theoretical study and practice experiments happening simultaneously; action research is interpreted in a clear demonstration by action research cycles – planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, visual analysis and reflective practice includes reflecting-on-action and reflecting-for-action, and case study involves the identification of potential sub-categories of ironic counterpoint as crucial storytelling devices.

Chapter 4, as the first experimental practice of the whole PhD, is the starting point of exploring the direction of practice and identifying relevant and suitable theories. Theories of experimental typography and an in-depth analysis of a related picturebook example, *I Love You More Than All the Stars* (2021), are the content of this chapter, combined with my first experimental picturebook, *Responsible Me* (2021), highlighting typography practice and dealing with how the change of typographical components can influence the narrative of the picturebook, and how the experimental typography together with the images of the spreads in the picturebook can contribute to the ironic counterpoint.

Chapter 5 derives from the experimental practice of the first picturebook. This chapter addresses mainly how pictorial changes can affect the meaning of the narrative in my other experimental picturebook, *The Guardian Angel*, with relevant theories and a case study.

Visual metaphors and semiotics embodied in picturebooks are also analysed in this chapter as the research developed and evolved. To conclude, reflections are made on related theories, the experiments, and a case study.

Chapter 6 was inspired by the research process during the second PhD study project, as the significance of symbols became visible as the exploration continued. The chapter contains theories related to symbols and the embodiment of symbols in children's picturebooks. Furthermore, this chapter compares the use of symbols in the picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), and picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), along with the production of the third picturebook, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), which utilises symbols from various resources. This third and final experimental picturebook comprehensively employs text and image relation through visual metaphor and symbols.

Chapter 7 concludes the main findings of this research project and what can be helpful to practitioners and researchers in similar fields. This chapter summarises critical discoveries of the factors affecting narrative from the three experimental picturebooks, highlighting experimental typography, pictorial changes, visual metaphor, semiotics, and symbols. It also outlines the original reflections from the context of essential theories that lead to or are inspired by these practices, combined with relevant case studies.

Chapter 2. Multimodality, Ironic Counterpoint and Narrative

This chapter illustrates the crucial concepts around the research questions outlined in chapter 1. The roles of both text mode and visual mode have been clarified. Following the context of the two modes, the application of multimodal text and image relationship in the children's picturebooks manifests through the existing picturebooks. Moreover, the concept of ironic counterpoint, a significant sub-category of multimodal text and image relations in children's picturebook, has been interpreted. Furthermore, the characteristics of postmodern picturebooks are essentially in line with the features of ironic counterpoints, so the definition and features of postmodern picturebooks are investigated in this chapter, along with their relationship with ironic counterpoints. More importantly, the concept, the significance, and the methods of narrative have been introduced in this chapter as it is not merely helpful in understanding each picturebook project conducted in this PhD study but also in comprehending theories that concern multimodal text and image function, as all the efforts direct to or serve to develop narratives.

2.1 The Function of Text Modality

Text modality, as the graphic expression of language, can carry its meaning and is affected by the size, type, weight, and colour of letterforms (Van Leeuwen, 2005b). When the verbal text is a graphic phenomenon shown in picturebooks, it is necessary to consider whether it is literally "part of the picture" (Painter and Martin, 2013, p. 92), specifically, whether the text, functioning as a visual unit, overlays on the image itself or separates into its own recognizable space in the picturebook's layout. Painter and Martin also suggest words can be integrated into the images instead of having pictures and texts on separate pages or in differentiated parts of the single page, in which case the text modality and the image modality exist in a more unified arrangement with the words within the image or its background. That means the two modalities may occur as one modality when the text is overlaid onto the image and becomes part of the image itself. This integration can create the most potent fusion between the texts and images, leading readers to observe words and pictures as an integral whole.

2.2 The Role of Visual Modality

Visual mode is of equal importance as the verbal mode in picturebooks in creating meaning (Anstey and Bull, 2000; Arizpe and Styles, 2003; Kiefer, 1995; Lewis, 2001; Nodelman, 1988; Schwarcz, 1982; Serafini, 2010; Unsworth and Wheeler, 2002; Painter and Martin, 2013).

Most studies of picturebooks have focused on the visual mode rather than the multimodal. Notably, “pictures are not there to reiterate or clarify the words.” (Salisbury, 2004, p.95).

Fang (1996) proposed that images have various functions in picturebooks. Images could establish setting which establishes a tale’s location in time and place or emphasize symbolic meaning in picturebooks (Norton, 1987); pictures could offer a different viewpoint in which images show a different or even contradictory story to the texts; Images can aid in achieving textual coherence, which refers to how the arrangement or sequence of ideas in a text resonates with its intended audience. (Tannen, 1984), by effectively integrating with words or offering referential cues; pictures can extend or develop the plot of a story (Fang, 1996).

2.3 Multimodal Word and Image Combinations in Children Picturebooks

Multimodality here refers to all narratives integrating diverse modalities. “Multimodal in the context of the picturebook, is a term used to describe the plurality of modes of communication: e.g., words and pictures.” (Salisbury and Styles, 2012, p. 189) This suggests that “words and pictures interact to form a multimodal text, incorporating the visual and verbal mode.” (Manolessou, 2012, p. 108). The interaction between the words and the pictures generates meaning in the multimodal context, and therefore, meaning is created through the selections of verbal and visual modalities by creators (Wu, 2014). Wu also proposed that picturebooks are a mixed genre with innately visual and verbal modalities where picturebook creators could freely make use of the verbal and visual potentials, creatively weaving text and image together to create narratives. Thus, the multimodal communicative acts in picturebooks are created by combining of linguistic and non-linguistic features.

There are several terms to describe picturebooks based on their interactive feature of words and images. A Swedish scholar, Kristin Hallberg (1982), coined “iconotext” to highlight the relationship between text and image. Mitchell uses the concept of “imagetext,”:

the relation of words and image seems exactly analogous to the relation of words and verbal representation. The imagetext reinscribes, within the worlds of visual and verbal representation, the shifting relations of names and things... (Mitchell, 1995, p. 241)

The term I adopt in this research is “picturebook,” as David Lewis (2001) points out, “the compound nature of the artefact itself” (Lewis, 2001, p. 25). The compound form “picturebook” precisely reflects the dualistic nature of the word and picture instead of the hyphenated, or two-word versions (Rudd, 2003).

There are many ways of combining words and images. These combinations are primarily employed in the two significant categories of storytelling (Agosto, 1999) – parallel storytelling and interdependent storytelling that can enhance the examination of composite narratives (Pantaleo, 2005). Concretely, parallel storytelling is more associated with “congruency” (Schwarcz, 1982), and “symmetrical” (Golden, 1990), in its verbal and visual interactions. In comparison, we could then consider that interdependent storytelling is more related to “incongruency” because of its counterpointing nature. The word and image relationship in interdependent storytelling can be regarded as “deviation” (Schwarcz, 1982), or “divergence” influencing the book's effect and the reader's involvement in interpreting it (Wu, 2014). In the counterpointing relations of the interdependent narrative, words and pictures are often “antiphonal” (Moss, 1990), and sometimes, the two modes directly “contradict” one another (Doonan, 1993).

2.4 Ironic Counterpoint: Irony and Counterpointing Text-Image Relationships

“Ironic counterpoint,” was first highlighted by Nodelman (1988) when discussing narrative in children’s picturebooks. This is when a text using irony narrates a story where the picture presents another, forming a third story to maximize readers’ engagement and imagination. Counterpoint involves the text and image in my research, as analogous to two separate melodies in a musical composition – the method of blending two or more melodic lines to

form a harmonic connection while maintaining their distinct linear identities, where one instrument plays the main melody and another contributes the counterpoint (Cech, 1983; Pullman, 1989). Counterpoint in text and image relationships has been noticed by many scholars (Schwarcz, 1982; Nodelman, 1988; Pullman, 1989; Sipe, 1998; Nikolajeva and Scott, 2000) as a type of interdependent storytelling (McCloud, 1994; Agosto, 1999; Marsh and White, 2003).

Explicitly, a counterpointing relationship, influenced by the degree of distinct information presented, can emerge in which texts and images collaborate to convey meanings that extend beyond what either mode could express on its own. Sometimes, text and image can oppose one another in contradictory interaction as an extreme form of counterpointing. The ambiguity in the counterpointing relationship challenges readers to mediate between the text and image to properly understand what is being depicted in the picturebooks (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2000). In this counterpointing relationship, “transmediation” (Sipe, 1998) can be viewed as the primary process since transmediation stresses that visual images are of equal importance to verbal texts.

The term counterpoint in the text/image relations of picturebooks proves comparatively slippery in its definition. Even though it is suggested that the words and pictures present two different but related stories (Schwarcz, 1982), we could also consider that words and images provide the same tales but through two different perspectives, and thus the term’s use requires examined and explicated (Sipe, 2012). However, text and image in picturebooks may not combine positively together and even contradict each other, similar to how melodic lines in music can produce unexpected or dissonant juxtapositions (Sipe, 2012), and the “disharmony” or “dissonance” (Massey, 1980) results from the various lines appearing in tension or conflict with each other can also be possible in the interaction between words and pictures of picturebooks. Counterpoint, as one type of deviation opposite to congruency in picturebooks, means words and images tell two different but related stories. The “linear individuality” of words and images demonstrates that they narrate “two entirely separate stories,” At the same time, the text and the image are also paradoxically interdependent on each other concurrently for readers’ total meaning-making (Schwarcz, 1982). Counterpoint in my study stresses the counterpointing relationship between words and images of

picturebooks in which each mode narrates individually and emphasizes the third story appearing when words and images interact together as a result of ironic counterpoint.

The concept of irony in picturebooks has developed comparatively slowly in past research. Thus, there remains ample space for picture book theorists and practitioners to investigate further. Regarding to the definition of irony – it denotes a gap between expectations and results, between how things appear and their true nature, between assertions and their underlying implications, as well as between misconceptions and genuine understanding. As a result, viewers are encouraged to recognise differences that may not be clearly expressed. (Stott, 1982). Texts and their corresponding images can often engage in an ironic relationship, where each element reveals dimensions that the other may omit. Words can provide information absent from the images, while images can illustrate concepts that the text fails to capture. This dynamic frequently creates an ironic interplay between the text and illustrations in picturebooks (Nodelman, 1988). Regarding “relaying” (Barthes, 1978) – texts and images take on a meaning neither possesses without completing the other by limiting each other. Irony, due to its dual nature, can also manifest in the duality of words and images in picturebooks. This contrast reveals a distinction between the explicit meaning conveyed by the text and the implicit, unspoken meanings that reflect the ironic content. Such irony is often stressed through the complementary relationship between the verbal and visual elements in which words play a part of the “said” and images utilise the role of the “unsaid”, sometimes, pictures are in opposition to words (Kummerling-Meibauer, 1999).

Irony, belonging to the subcategory of augmentation (Stott, 1982), can also be achieved through contradiction in counterpointing text and image relationships in picturebooks. Contradiction occurs when words and images provide conflicting information, and the humour, arising from irony, of the book lies in the relation of words and images (Agosto, 1999). Irony and humour seem to be blended in children’s picturebooks since the irony in picturebooks is usually humorous (Sipe, 2012). Words and pictures that are humorously opposed to one another (Fang, 1996) can create ironic effects in picturebooks. In this research, irony, together with humour, implies the effect resulting from the incongruous or contradicting text and image relationship, which belongs to interdependent storytelling in picture books rather than any implications of literary satire and sarcasm (Lewis, 2001), as It

is essential to have in mind that various subcategories are not mutually exclusive – irony can serve to imbue a picturebook with humour through contradiction (Agosto, 1999).

- Examples of Ironic Counterpoint

Kummerling-Meibauer (1999) believes there exist four types of aspects/effects of the ironic relationship between words and pictures. The first one is a semantic gap which means there is an essential message missing from the words that is provided by the images. For example, in *I Want My Hat Back* (2012) (fig.2.4.1), ironic counterpoint arises from the contrast between the contradictory statement in the text and the hidden fact in the image. In the text, the bear asked the rabbit if it saw a hat and the rabbit answered said “I haven’t seen it,” “I haven’t seen any hats anywhere,” and “I would not steal a hat.” Ironically, in the image, the rabbit obviously wears a red and pointed hat which reveal the fact through images. Counterpointing to the text, the image indicates the rabbit has seen a hat and stolen the hat. What the text offers noticeably contradict with what the image demonstrates.



Fig.2.4.1 Klassen, J. (2012) *I Want My Hat Back*. London: Walker Books.

Contrasts in artistic style are usually exemplified by books in the way the words are dull and ordinary while they are associated with vigorous and humorous pictures. For instance, in *Rosie's Walk* (1967) (fig.2.4.2), the text narrates an ordinary thing – Rosie, a hen, goes to walk, while the image shows an extraordinary scene – a fox lurks closely and tries to catch the Rosie but with no luck all the time. The ironic counterpoint is created from the contrast between a safe and daily action in the text and dangerous but also amusing information in the image, the contrast between direct and apparent information in words and the hidden and implied message in pictures.

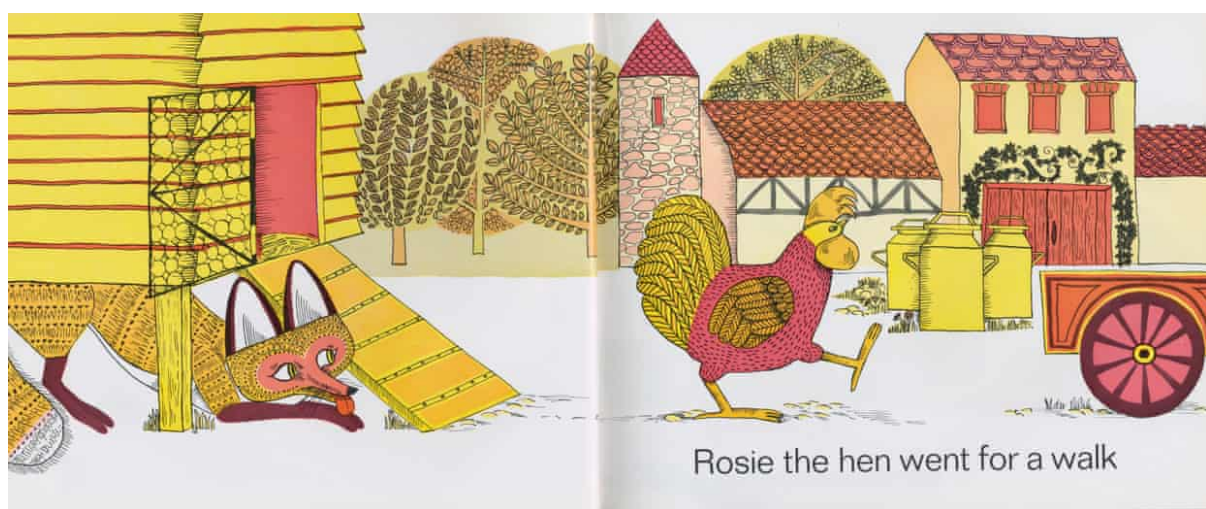


Fig.2.4.2 Hutchins, P. (1967) *Rosie's Walk*. London: Red Fox Picture Books.

Diverse counterpointing relationships exist between the text and image in picture books (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006). Counterpoint exists in modality where the text is realistic when the image is fanciful, or the other way around. For example, in *Come Away from the Water, Shirley* (1977) (fig.2.4.3), an ironic counterpoint arises from the contrast between fantasy and reality. The text and image on the left page describe the actions between Shirley's father and Shirley in reality. However, the image shows a fictional world that Shirley imagines.

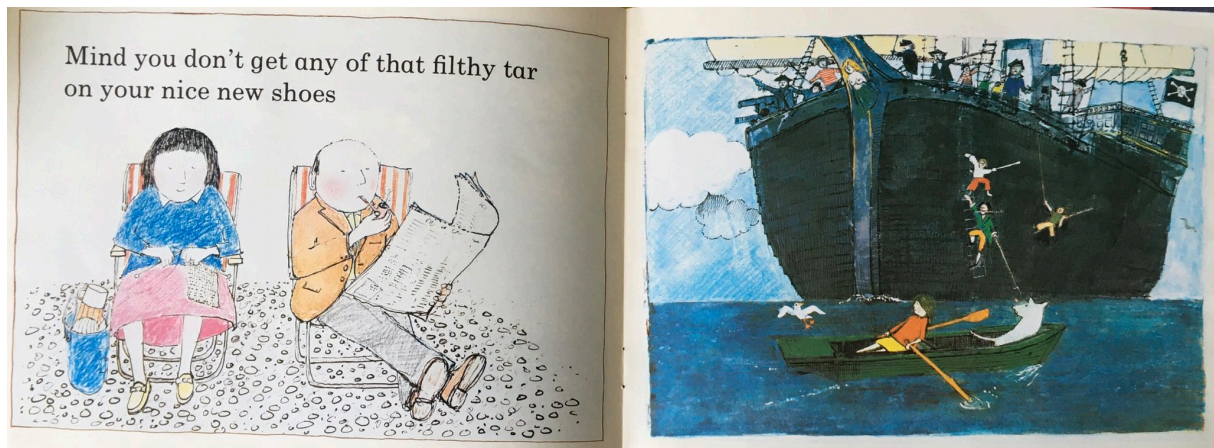


Fig.2.4.3 Burningham, J. (1977) *Come Away from the Water, Shirley*. London: Red Fox.

The sequential structure, characterised by repetition and parallelism in events, aids readers in identifying the ironic relationship that exists between words and images. For example, in *I Want My Hat Back* (2012) (fig.2.4.1), the bear asked repeatedly whether other animals have seen its hat. Most animals denied it, but the rabbit gave a strange and suspicious answer, distinct from the other animals. The unusual answer in the text and the revealed truth in the image generate the ironic counterpoint in the repetition structure. Also, in *A Perfect Day* (2017) (fig.2.4.4), the same text appears twice, but with different images, the meaning can be vastly different and even totally reversed. When the text appears for the first time, “It was a perfect day for squirrel,” the image shows the squirrel receiving a corncob, which is in line with the text. However, when the text “It was a perfect day for squirrel” is displayed again, the images demonstrate that a big bear takes away the precious corncob from the squirrel and eats it, which is a terrible day. This time, the typography of the word ‘was’ is stressed by bold and bigger font to strengthen the ironic effect.

Counterpoint in perspective is also important; the person viewing may not be the same as the person talking, thus symbolising at least two different perspectives on the same or series of events. For instance, in *They All Saw a Cat* (2016) (fig.2.4.5, fig.2.4.6, fig.2.4.7, fig.2.4.8 and fig.2.4.9), the text in the book shows the same action “saw a cat” from the perspective of a fish, mouse, bee, dog, snake, skunk and so on, but the pictures show the cat looks different from these different perspectives. For example, when the text describes “the fish saw a cat” (fig.2.4.5), the image presents a huge and blurry cat head, implying what the cat’s

appearance would be for a tiny fish looking through water; when the text mentions “the mouse saw a cat” (fig.2.4.6), the picture demonstrates a monster-like cat with a horrifying expression and sharp teeth exposed in its open mouth within a red and black background, obviously, from the mouse’s perspective, cat is a dangerous predator. When the text describes the same action, “saw a cat”, from a bee’s perspective, the image shows a cat constituted of dots of various sizes (fig.2.4.7). The different visual styles of the same cat presented in each spread also plays an important role forming a counterpointing relationship with words.



Fig.2.4.4 Smith, L. (2017) *A Perfect Day*. New York: Roaring Brook Press.



Fig.2.4.5 Brendan, W. (2016) *They All Saw a Cat*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.



Fig.2.4.6 Brendan, W. (2016) *They All Saw a Cat*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

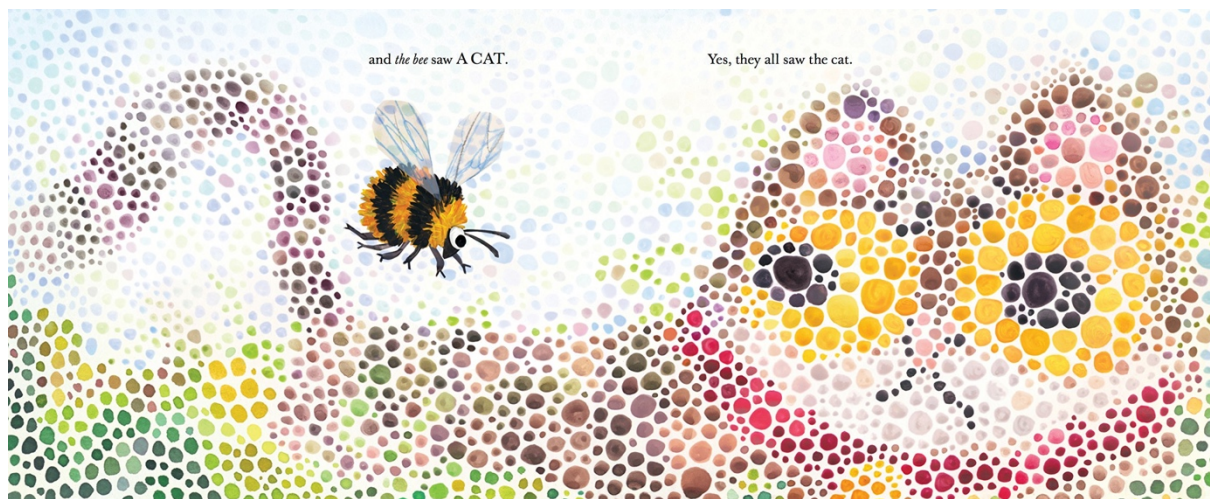


Fig.2.4.7 Brendan, W. (2016) *They All Saw a Cat*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

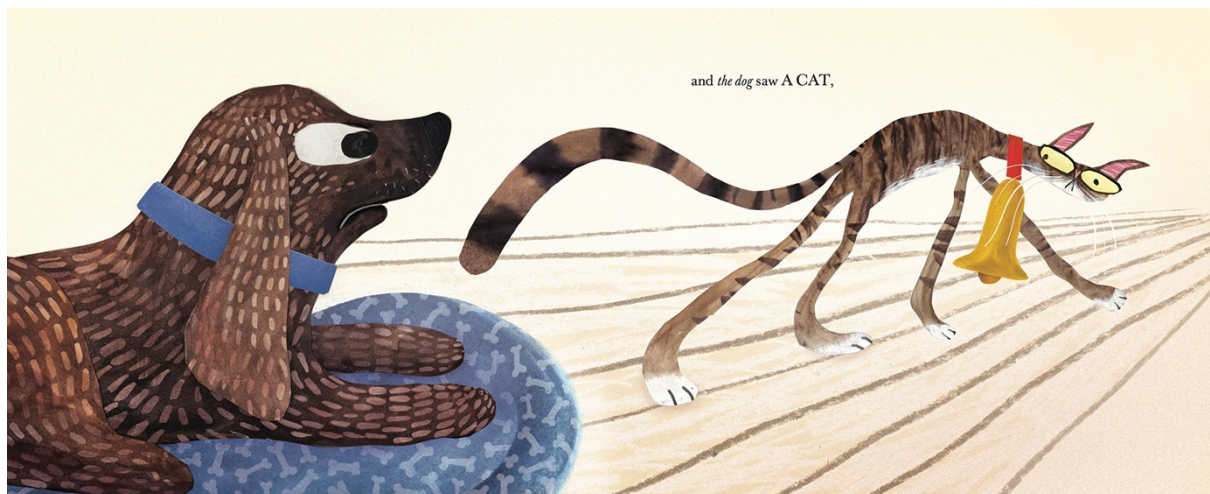


Fig. 2.4.8 Brendan, W. (2016) *They All Saw a Cat*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.



Fig. 2.4.9 Brendan, W. (2016) *They All Saw a Cat*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Counterpoint in perspective, the person viewing may not be the same as the person talking, thus symbolising at least two different perspectives upon the same or series of events. For instance, in the text of *Another Book about Bears* (2020) (fig.2.4.10), there are two voices – one from the creator of the book and one from the bear character in the book. When the bear's voice from the main text describes its opinion that there are many books about bears, the author's voice from the background text conveys the bear interrupts his speech. The ironic counterpoint is generated as the picture shows the bear has no idea that another voice is behind it. The counterpoint of two perspectives produces irony. In addition, ironic counterpoint can be constructed from various perspectives in words and images.



Fig.2.4.10 Bunting, L. (2020) *Another Book about Bears*.

Counterpoint in characterization. It means the text and picture may show characters in different or contradictory manners, generating irony and ambiguity. For example, in *I Want My Hat Back* (2012) (fig.2.4.1), an ironic counterpoint is created by contrasting what the character says in the text and what the character does in the image. In the text, the rabbit answered the bear that it did not see a hat, but in the image, the rabbit wears the bear's hat, which is different from its statement. The irony and ambiguity are generated because what the text offers noticeably contradicts what the image demonstrates.

Counterpoint in style, in which the text can be considered ironic with images being nonironic, and vice versa. For example, in *If at First You Do not See* (Ruth, 1983), the picture at first shows a scene that a caterpillar attempting to eat vegetables, but led by the text in the reverse position. The picture shows the caterpillar tries to eat a man consisted of vegetables when you turn the picture upside down. It is ironic if you only know the information from the description of texts – a caterpillar is eating a man's ear. The ironic text and nonironic pictures generate a strong irony counterpoint. Besides, the text and image could also be in relation to serious and humorous, naive and realistic, artistic and popular, historical and anachronistic, or other binaries.

The effect of ironic counterpoint could be achieved in several ways (Clement, 2013), either blurring or collapsing some boundaries conventionally imposed between the daily experience and the created world and between creators and readers. For example, ironic counterpoint can be achieved through ordinary text and exceptional images. In *The Odd Egg* (Gravett, 2011), the text describes a very usual and ordinary thing – a duck finds an egg and takes care of it until the baby from the egg comes out, while the image shows at the end the baby coming from the egg is an enormous crocodile. The counterpoint between the unexceptional words and unexpected images surprises readers with irony.

Compositional strategies embedding pictures within words, inserting words within pictures, or conflating text and image with the intention that text and image are indistinguishable. For instance, in *When Sophie Gets Angry--Really, Really Angry* (1999) (fig.2.4.11), the red fire from the mouth of angry Sophie is presented in the shape of “Roar” – a graphic shape of the word. There is ambiguity between its image and text nature, and the text is inserted in the image in an indistinguishable way, which generates ironic counterpoint.



Fig.2.4.11 Molly, B. (1999) *When Sophie Gets Angry--Really, Really Angry*. New York: Scholastic.

After closely observing of text and image relationships in picturebooks, I have identified some potential aspects that may create ironic counterpoint. Irony can be created within the arrangement of sequence order in the counterpoint relationship between words and pictures. In *Spring is Here* (1999) (fig.2.4.12), the text says, “The earth is fresh”, but readers may find it hard to understand as the image still presents the cow with white and black colour instead of the actual earth. After seeing the next page, readers would then understand that the black area on the last page symbolises the earth as the grass sprouts from the black area in the body of the cow on the next page. On the following page, the text and image seemingly describe the same element of flowers, so if you only see images without the previous pages, you will not know that “The flowers bloom” happened on the body of the cow. The hidden counterpoint text and image relationship requires readers to discern the sequence order in picture books.

The metaphor/symbol between the text and the image produces an ironic counterpoint. For instance, in *Spring is Here* (Gomi, 1999), the text shows, “The snow melts,” but in the image, snow-shaped elements are absent except for a cow in white and black. As snow is also white, we assume the white space in the body of cow symbolises the snow. The metaphorical combination of the weather element in the text and the animal body in the picture produces irony.

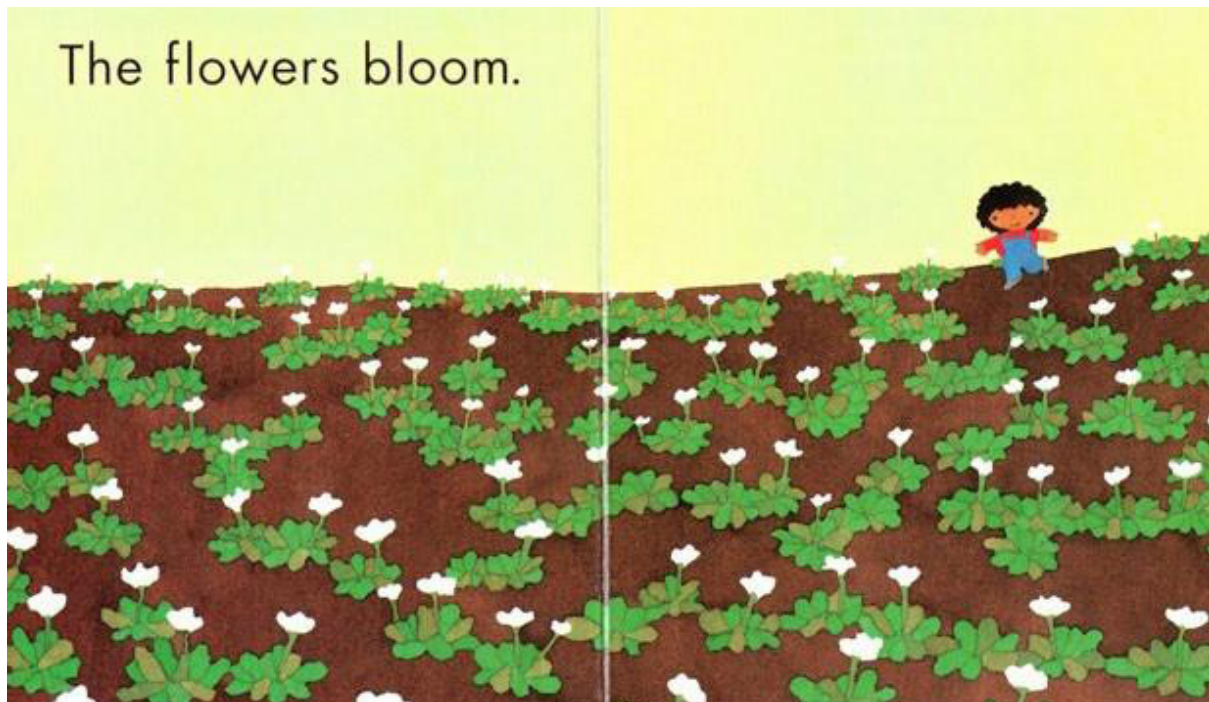


Fig.2.4.12 Gomi, T. (1999) *Spring Is Here*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Irony can lie in the difference between the contents of the text and the information from the image. For example, in *Minerva Louise* (Stoeke, 2012), the ironic contrast happens between the objects from the hen's perspective in texts and what the objects are in images. When the text says, "tasty foods," the image shows a string of pearls. The hen sees the pearls from its own perspective and regards them as food on the farm. When the text says, "friendly cows," the image demonstrates it is a cat. When the text shows "a meadow of flowers," the image presents a floral print quilt. It shows that the hen from the farm views everything inside the house as familiar with the things it knows on the farm. In this situation, readers know more than the character on the page through pictures. It is the contrast between the texts from the character's perspective and the actual content from pictures that generates an ironic effect.

The ambiguity between character's perspective in the text and the actual situation in the picture results in irony. In *Matilda's Cat* (2013) (fig.2.4.13), the text says, "Matilda's cat likes playing with wool," and the image shows a cat hiding from wool and a girl in a cat costume playing with the wools. Then, who the cat is in the text could be confused as the cat in the

image does not show interest in wool while the girl with a cat costume does the action mentioned in the text. The identity of Matilda seems to be either the cat or the girl with a cat costume which constitutes the ambiguity of two different interpretations, and thus producing irony.

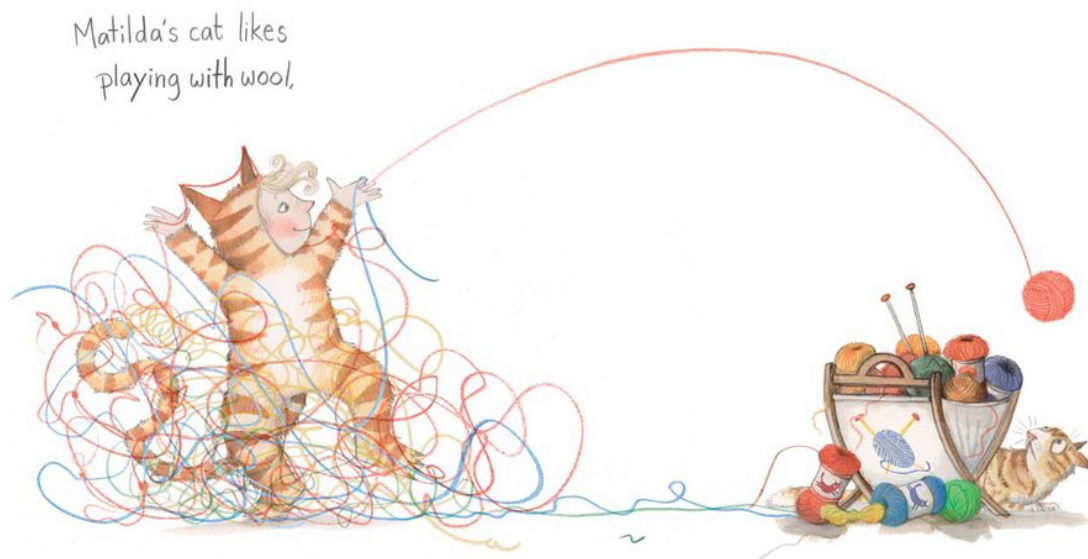


Fig.2.4.13 Gravett, E. (2013) *Matilda's Cat*. London: Two Hoots.

2.5 The Characteristics of Postmodern Children's Picturebooks and Their Relation with Ironic Counterpoint

This chapter displays the definition, characteristics, and significance of the narrative approach in the postmodern picturebooks. Playing with the relation between text and image in storytelling is the main feature of postmodern picturebooks, with irony and counterpointing.

2.5.1 The Concept of Postmodern Picturebooks

Postmodern picturebooks tend to be “increasingly experimental, with thematic complexities and sophisticated artistry that have entirely changed their look” (Mikkelsen, 2000, p. 31). Postmodern picturebooks align with the concept of being experimental and employing complex devices. In the postmodern picturebooks, “playfulness, rule-breaking,

fragmentation and uncertainty are commonplace.” (Salisbury and Styles, 2012, p. 75) In terms of the definition of this picturebook genre, Ann Grieve states in clearly:

There is a growing body of picture books which utilise their complex pluralistic nature and their unique physical qualities to present self-conscious, parodic, intertextual, interrogative texts that can be described as postmodernist. Such picture books allow young readers to question conventional aspects of narrative and challenge an unthinking empathy with what they read in various discourses. A theory of the postmodernist picture book offers a new critical discourse for exploring how literature can continually shape and reshape itself. (Grieve, 1993, p. 24)

Innovate narrative modes are shown in postmodern picturebooks because of the parodic and intertextual features, leading readers to conduct deeper thinking during the reading process. In fact, all picturebooks are naturally separated with words and pictures as two codes of signification – the difference is that the two codes incline to complement each other, forming a homogeneous text in the traditional ones, and the gaps between the two codes are widened in the postmodern picturebooks which require the readers to fill the gaps:

The postmodern devices most often employed in postmodern picture books are the use of metafiction, parody, intertextuality, indeterminacy, a playful manipulation of perspective, a resistance to closure, an interrogation of the "grand narrative", and a questioning of fixed meaning. The reader is required to do some work; and become an active participant in (at least some part) of the construction of the text. (Siddall, 1997, p. 5)

Siddall lists eight features that frequently show up in postmodern picturebooks. Metafiction, parody, intertextuality, and the manipulation of perspective can be the four devices that generate ironic counterpoint in picturebooks. These four approaches relate to text, image or multimodal relations between words and pictures.

The other four characteristics, indeterminacy, resistance to closure, an interrogation of the “grand narrative,” and a questioning of fixed meaning, are naturally the results, goals, or the effect of the employments of the former methods producing ironic and counterpointing relationships in picturebooks. Therefore, the “translation” of this kind of story is not a linear and direct process for the readers. Being active to fill the gaps may become a requirement for the audience.

2.5.2 The Feature of Postmodern Picturebooks and Its relationship with Ironic Counterpoint

The concept of the postmodern picturebooks presents an overview of how postmodern picturebooks work, the main characteristics of this type of book, and the requirements for the readers. It is vital to observe each characteristic in depth and specifically to engage readers by using these approaches. For these characteristics, experimenting with multimodal text and image relations is in accordance with the concept of ironic counterpoint, in terms of methods and results.

It is the irony and contradiction that drive human motivation, which is one of the characteristics of postmodernism (Lucy, 1997). It demonstrates that postmodern picturebooks have irony and contradiction as qualities. This concept is presented through the story threads and themes in either words or pictures contradicting the main plot (Goldstone, 2004). Then, the effect of ironic counterpoint arises from the texts or the pictures contradicting the picturebook's primary narrative. This multimodal contradiction generates "postmodern irony and subtle references that keep the parent reader amused and entertained." (Salisbury and Styles, 2012, p. 44) However, it may rely more on the multimodal text and image contradictions than the dependence on the words or pictures as the sole mode.

A counterpointing relationship in terms of the text and the image is another characteristic of the postmodern picturebooks:

by now, a solid ground has been set up for investigations of picturebook aesthetics, the most essential premise of which is the synergy of word and image in decoding the iconotext. In the process, the crucial distinction between true picturebooks and illustrated books has been acknowledged...Yet the counterpoint of word and image, inherent to postmodern picturebooks, is in itself a playful element. (Nikolajeva, 2008, p. 55)

For a postmodern picturebook, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (1989), Salisbury and Styles commented that "not to believe a word written by the so-called author (Alexander T. Wolf) as everything he says is undermined by surrounding, counterpointing, images." (2012, p. 44) This shows the nature of the postmodern picturebooks is the counterpoint produced by the words and pictures. It not only embeds intriguing components into the narrative of

the picturebook but also acts as a symbol that distinguishes picturebooks from illustrated books. The ways to achieve the counterpointing relations between the texts and the images are areas that creators can play with.

Then, the main feature of postmodern picture books involves utilizing words or images to place the readers, concentrating on ideas through the perspective of a character, the structure of a non-linear plot, the reader's construction of meaning as well as intertextual reference (Nalkara, 2018). It involves the impact of visual information in framing the narrative and the use of typography in creating meaning as well. Postmodern picturebooks highlight the employment of text and images to shape the narrative. Within multimodal words and image relations, the non-linear way of storytelling and intertextual reference combined with visual cues and typographic information leads to a counterpointing relationship with the ironic component.

In metafictional picturebooks, the self-referentiality is double-layered – the verbal and the pictorial and there are three characteristics manifest on the levels of the verbal and pictorial with diverse metafiction strategies:

1. Self-referencing: The text references itself as text/illustration, other texts/illustrations, or forms of storytelling and their conventions. 2. Reader Involvement: The text accentuates the reader's presence and makes the reading process salient. 3. A Tag: The text presupposes that it is delivered through a medium; its "reality" is understood as mediated by another reality lurking beyond itself ...recurrent metafictional techniques include: polyphonic and manifold narratives, intertextuality and parody, framing devices, disruptions of time and space, typographical and paratextual experimentations, and metalepsis. (Athanasίου-Krikelis, 2020, p. 357)

In fact, the application of referential elements is threefold, either in text, image, or multimodal text and image relationship, rather than a single approach. However, the source of the textual references can be diverse, including the text and image in the picturebook itself, other potential words, or pictures, and traditional storytelling method.

Within multimodal text and image relations, the postmodern picturebook also leaves a prominent position for its readers by inviting them to actively participate in the picturebook's narrative creation through the choice of multiple meanings. Moreover, the

choices lay in the gaps from counterpointing relationships in words and pictures. The final understating and story concept rely largely on how the audience interprets those codes, either visible or hidden in the narrative of the picturebook, and the interpretations are usually closely related to the reader's own experience and knowledge.

Among the diverse approaches that can potentially create ironic counterpoint in postmodern picturebooks, some techniques appear more often in postmodern storytelling, including polyphonic and manifold narratives, intertextuality, and parody, typographical and paratextual experimentations. Polyphonic and manifold in picturebooks involves the interplay between the text and the image; the intertextuality in texts or images can produce ironic and parodic effects; the experimental typography in picturebooks brings various possibilities in terms of interpretation for narrative when combined with images.

In particular, the type of narrative showing up in postmodern picturebooks can be regarded as a "visual manifold narratives" (Trites, 1994) – the narrative structure develops by "multiple planes of signification" repeatedly appearing on most spreads in the book. In addition, picturebooks can be nonlinear, with either multiple storylines unfolding concurrently or multiple perspectives, which means one of the features of the postmodern picturebook involves nonlinearity occurring in the storyline, multiple narrators, and irony (Goldstone, 2004). From my perspective, the multiple narratives with multi-layer significance primarily result from the multimodal text and image relationship, thus producing ironic and counterpointing relationships. Notably, in multimodal and counterpointing relations between the text and the image, this structure of storytelling in picturebooks links "multi-narrative" to "multi-signification," connects "multi-meanings" with "multi-interpretations," relates "multi-narrators" to "multi-perspective," combines "multi-storyline" with "multi-decoding." The irony is easily observed in this manifold narrative constructed by a counterpointing association of words and pictures in picturebooks.

The approach of creating ironic counterpoint in the multimodal interaction between words and images also employs of intertextual elements. Intertextuality, as one of the features of the postmodern picturebook, means a text either makes references or allusions to the other; Nalkara claimed that "visual intertextuality is applied in terms of picture books, where

images refer to other images to fulfil the purpose.” (2018, p. 92). Salisbury also pointed out that “in the Postmodern picturebook subtle references abound and can be read on many levels...” (2007, p. 83). Interestingly, it illustrates that some pictorial components can function as symbols within pictures in postmodern picturebooks. These symbolic visual elements, which refer to another visual object, carry specific meanings to suggest the intended concept during the process of narrating. Visual intertextuality creates counterpointing relations in text-image interaction and in the image itself. In this way, the effect of irony and parody happens through the counterpointing relationship generated by the visual presentation of intertextual elements.

Furthermore, Jane Doonan (1993) claimed two fundamental modes in referring to things in pictures: “denotation and exemplification.” Exemplification is one of the characteristics in the narrative of postmodern picturebooks:

Moreover, postmodern picture books tend to display characteristics of exemplification. The exemplifying symbol, with its open nature, allows for multiple interpretation. There is no single precise reading which allows fixed definition of what is being pictorially represented. The reader is able to construct a variety of meanings based on how the individual decodes the visual cues. (Siddall, 1997, p. 9)

Exemplification is one of the characteristics of postmodern picturebooks, enabling readers to conduct a multi-perspective analysis employing the exemplifying symbol. The fascinating part of reading postmodern picturebooks is their variability, where different readers can decode the information generated by the multimodal text and image relationship distinctively, subject to diverse personal experiences.

Another feature of the postmodern picturebooks demonstrates “ambiguity and incertitude” (Siddall, 1997), which results from a self-conscious reworking of familiar texts. The cultural codes and conventions in the texts are often subverted, employing parody and irony. Its ambiguous feature offers an opportunity for multiple interpretations to child readers (Nalkara, 2018, p. 94). From my point of view, that means that the ambiguity and indeterminacy in postmodern picturebooks are constructed by a self-conscious adaption of a text that we have already been familiar with, such as classic myth, fairytales, folktales, or fables. Moreover, parody and irony can be viewed not merely as vehicles to subvert the

cultural codes and conventions in the texts but also as tools to engage the readers, create entertainment while reading, and provide open interpretations. The contribution of ambiguity and uncertainty make the ironic counterpoint realisable in the image and text interaction.

2.5.3 The Significance of Postmodern Picturebooks

Through the inspection of the characteristics of the postmodern picturebook, the storytelling approaches in postmodern picturebooks significantly break the limit of singular fact and embrace multiple truths:

Underpinning many traditional picture books is the assumption that there is a unitary truth rather than pluralistic truths. (Lonsdale, 1993, p. 26)

It means the readers are required to consider multiple interpretations of the signs as the information is not presented linearly, which provides a chance to concentrate on the multiple differences to the readers who are empowered to be active participants in the creation of the storytelling (Siddall, 1997), and the process would be more mysterious and intriguing if the visuals open to diverse possibilities instead of resembling the written narrative. Also, the metafiction shown in postmodern picturebooks can engage the readers in actively constructing of meaning (McCallum, 1996). The postmodern devices in picturebooks engage the readers by setting open interpretations and leaving spaces for multiple comprehension.

In addition, Ryan and Anstey (2003) recognize that postmodern picturebooks can increase children's "self-knowledge about reading", which can be used in strategically during the reading process. Metafictional texts can not only develop skills of critical thinking and visual literacy but also interpretive strategies (Pantaleo, 2005). Postmodern picturebooks, with their unique narrative strategies, encourage readers to apply a critical thinking to pluralistic facts.

In summary, with complex narrative devices, postmodern picturebooks transcend conventional storytelling limitations that often appear in picturebooks.

The characteristics of postmodern picturebooks include utilising the counterpointing word-image relationship, irony and contradiction, referentiality and intertextuality, exemplification, ambiguity and uncertainty, and manifold narratives. The main feature of postmodern picturebooks is the multimodal relationships between the text and the image. The effect of the ironic counterpoint can be achieved through the specific approaches that frequently appear in postmodern picturebooks: intertextual references, exemplifying symbols, ambiguous incertitude, and multi-layered narratives.

Therefore, picturebooks with these postmodern characteristics exceed the constraints in various aspects and adhere more closely to the nature of picturebooks. With multiple narratives and signification in picturebooks, active and critical readers are required and encouraged to decode the rich information in postmodern storytelling.

2.6 The Research on the Function and Approaches of the Narrative

This section is divided into five parts. The first part explains narratology and narrative and their significance. The second part focuses on how narrative works and introduces several narrative methods. The third part highlights a concept called 'the minimal story,' which is very useful for understanding the structure of stories.

2.6.1 The Concept and the Significance of Narrative

Narrative, as one of the approaches we use to comprehend the world promptly, integrates how we observe (Abbott, 2002, p. 6). Various ways of narrating reflect the diverse perspectives of observation. The French literary theorist and semiotician Roland Barthes claimed that narrative is also countless in the world and exists in various media:

The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres...Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think of Carpaccio's Saint

Ursula), stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative...Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (Barthes, 1978, p. 79)

This demonstrates that the form of narratives is diverse, and the media carrying it is also various. Moreover, narratives can transcend the limits of time and place with transcultural characteristics. It shows that studying it can benefit creators involved in communicating stories to audiences in a broader range. For visual narratives in books, the significance of narratives exists in all graphic novels, comics, picturebooks. The ways of storytelling can determine if the work succeeds or not in terms of narrative. Furthermore, narrative is everywhere in history and contemporary daily life. Numerous narratives suggest the richness of culture and the diversity of perspectives. The term narrative belongs to the more extended field of narratology, and a Dutch cultural theorist, Mieke Bal defined narratology:

Narratology as a field of study is the ensemble of theories of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events – of cultural artefacts that tell a story. Such theory helps us understand, analyse, and evaluate narratives. (Bal, 2017, p. 3)

It suggests that narratology is a composite of theories and cultural products that communicates stories. Theories regarding narratology offer a profound understanding of narratives that may have been exhibited in diverse media. Another supplementary factor of narratology is that it “has as its object the narrative aspects of a narrative text” (Bal, 2017, p. 61).

The central concern of narratology is narrative, which manifests itself in any possible narrative text. Narrative texts do not necessarily present as linguistic text, as non-linguistic sign systems are used in comic strips, where narrative texts can appear as visual images (Bal, 2017, p. 4). The narrative texts are also evident in picturebooks, or any other book forms as long as they involve storytelling.

Studying narrative opens a gate to the comprehension of the substance of culture:

Culture encompasses many different productions and organizations of utterances in language, images, sounds, gestures. These cannot stand on their own. Included in culture is theoretical

reflection, narratological and otherwise. This reflection is itself part of the substance of culture; indeed, narrative artefacts are full of it, too. (Bal, 2017, P. xx)

Seemingly, culture has a composite feature embodied in the representation of words, images, and gestures. It contains theoretical reflection and narratology. Narrative is potentially considered a reflection of culture, and conversely, culture is filled with narrative in various media. Comprehending narrative means exploring the significance of the related culture, so there is a tight bond between the narrative and culture.

A story is “neither words, nor images, nor gestures, but the events, situations, and behaviours signified by the words, images, and gestures” (Chatman, 1980). That means words, images, and gestures only make sense when they present events, situations, and behaviours as they cannot stand for narrative alone. In addition, according to American film and literary critic Seymour Chatman, a story can be perceived as “the continuum of events” (Chatman, 1980, p. 28). It indicates that a story involves a series of events. Hence, the ways of using words and pictures in terms of presenting the events or situations, as well as the ways of connecting the separate events, become crucial.

W.T.J. Mitchell, a professor of English and Art History at the University of Chicago, stated that narrative is also perceived as “a manner of speaking about events” rather than a form of representation, whether real or fictional (Mitchell, 1981). It stresses that the narrative can be considered as a way of storytelling. That is to say, the narrative determines how the events of the story are represented, arranged, and embodied. The distinction between events and their representation is thought of as “the difference between story (the event or sequence of events) and narrative discourse (how the story is conveyed)” (Abbott, 2002, p13). Unlike the representation as a formal media in the previous statement, the events’ representation here signifies the ways of storytelling. To make it clear, the story consists of a range of events. Comparatively, narrative, storytelling, or narrative discourse often represents how the story is shown and appears to its audience, even though narrative is sometimes directly perceived as the story itself. According to Abbott, the distinction between narrative, story and narrative discourse is:

narrative is the representation of events, consisting of story and narrative discourse, story is an event or sequence of events (the action), and narrative discourse is those events as represented. (Abbott, 2002, p16)

The American academic and literary theoretician Gerald Prince provided a further observation that a narrative is a representation communicated by narrators:

The representation (as product and process, object and act, structure and structuration) of one or more real or fictive EVENTS Communicated by one, two, or several (more or less overt) NARRATORS to one, two, or several (more or less overt) NARRATEES. (Prince, 2003, p. 58)

From this definition of narrative, it is assumable that there are no constraints in terms of the number of events or the narrators in a story, which opens the possibilities of creative space for practitioners. The way of embodiment of the events constituting stories contains product, object, and act. Accordingly, these three factors are crucial in creating stories – the representation of events, narrators and narratees.

Another similar statement regarding the components of a narrative is based on structuralist theory:

a story (histoire), the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting); and a discourse (discours), that is, the expression, the means by which the content is communicated. (Chatman, 1980, p. 19)

This declaration primarily divides the narrative into two parts, as the previous definition did. A slight difference is that the former part further explains what constitutes a story, as it not only contains the actions, but also includes the characters and settings. This is not to say that the other statement ignores the characters and backgrounds that may have been included in the events and not mentioned directly. Comparatively, this statement highlights the elements of the structure of a story in a more extended and specific way.

Additionally, the definition of narrative text and its components was considered by Bal in some detail:

A narrative text is a text in which an agent or subject conveys to an addressee (“tells” the reader, viewer, or listener) a story in a medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof. A story is the content of that text and produces a particular manifestation, inflection, and “colouring” of a fabula. A fabula is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors...These key concepts imply other ones. Take the last one, the fabula, for example. Its definition contains the elements “event” and “actor.” An event is

the transition from one state to another state. Actors are agents that perform actions. They are not necessarily human. To act is defined here as to cause or to experience an event... Narrative texts differ from one another even if the related story is more or less the same. (Bal, 2017, p. 5)

This shows that a story, despite its representative media, is the content of a narrative text with characteristics of a fabula, which means fable. Notably, a fable consists of a sequence of events and actors, with the core concepts indicating the others. Specifically, in fable, events mean a shift from one circumstance to another situation, and actors, either human or not, are perceived as agents for conducting actions that may result in an event or involved in an event. Furthermore, a fabula comprises narrative elements, including “events, actors, time, and location” (Bal, 2017, p. 7). Due to these variable elements of a narrative text, diversity is generated despite the story appearing similarly. The complexities of narrative rely on the reader’s capability to interpret the perspective (Bal, 2017, p. 146). It is inevitable for the readers to be aware of the related elements that constitute a narrative and how to present those narrative components. Moreover, the stories told frequently “connect vitally with our deepest values, wishes, and fears” (Abbott, 2002, p. 42). My interpretation is that the audience of specific stories can relate their own experience to the events, actors, and concepts expressed in the story.

In short, a story can be viewed as the “content of the narrative expression,” but the discourse is the “form of that expression” (Chatman, 1980, p. 23). Then, to examine the narrative discourse with a closer look, the narrative can be reconstructed and formed a new order of incidents through multiple ways:

narrative discourse is infinitely malleable. It can expand and contract, leap backward and forward, but as we take in information from the discourse we sort it out in our minds, reconstructing an order of events that we call the story. (Abbott, 2002, p. 15)

The importance of the narrative discourse becomes obvious as the narratees comprehend the order of the events and logically organize them through the ways that narrative discourse works, no matter if it changes in length or in time. Presumptively, the narrative discourse requires the creators to conduct a well-considered design and a thoughtful construction because it is vital for the audience to grasp the essence the creators intend to convey.

Furthermore, the French literary theorist Gérard Genette, who contributed to the structuralist movement and linked with Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss, asserted that story and narrating occur only “by means of the intermediary of the narrative” (Genette, 1983, p29), which means we understand a story through narrative discourse rather than viewing it directly and the story, to some extent, is what we construct. It emphasizes that a story “only comes to life when it is narrativized,” and narrative discourse is more important than the story itself as it “gives a work its power and significance” (Abbott, 2002). It shows that the narrative discourse is directly associated with the reader’s reading experience and understanding. Narrative discourse functions as an intermediary between stories and narratees, and the narratees, as the audience, construct stories with the help of narrative discourse. More importantly, the life of a story is, to a large extent, determined by the design of narrative discourse. In this sense, the narrative discourse is more essential than the content of the story because the narrative discourse empowers the energy and meaning of a story.

2.6.2 The Approaches and Function of Narrative

As one of the elements constituting a story, an actor functions as an agent in a narrative text. From the perspective of Joanne M. Golden, professor of language and literacy education at the University of Delaware, the agent is the character who carries out “the act according to some motivation” (Golden, 1990, p. 33). The agent “responds to or performs an act” based on motivation. The specific goals of the agent can be “revealed explicitly or implicitly” in a story or “hidden from the reader.” The sets of goals on the basis of motivation, to some extent, construct the agents as characters in the narrative. Most actions that the characters conduct centre around the intention, so the objective of the agents is vital in unfolding the following events in a narrative text. Agents can be perceived in “relationships to other agents in terms of shared or contrastive motivations” (Burke, 1969) – if they have similar goals, one agent is consequently “consubstantial” with the other agent. If they are not the same in terms of purposes, one agent becomes “an adversary” to another agent. Therefore, the different motivations divide the distinguished group of actors. The characters with mutual aims are perceived as consubstantial due to the same core objectives. However, one character is an opponent to the other only when their motivations

are incompatible. When the agents' purposes differ but not the opposite, they are disconnected because of different properties.

In addition, a character is "a composite of traits" due to "complexity, development and inner life" (Golden, 1990, p. 35). The traits of the character are constructed by several "cohesive devices, including repetition of the same trait; similarity between traits; contrast between traits; and by implication" (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983). Also, the characters are defined primarily by their actions or words (Prince, 1982, p. 72). Therefore, characters consist of a series of traits, no matter whether these traits are similar or contrast with each other. The character's inherent attributes manifest in the means of actions they conduct and words they speak in a narrative text. Accordingly, it is possible to assume that the interaction with other characters shows one character's qualities and responsibilities to events or surroundings.

There are four key factors "repetition, accumulation, relations to other characters, and transformations" to construct a character:

When a character appears for the first time, we do not yet know very much about it. The qualities that are implied in that first presentation are not all grasped by the reader. In the course of the narrative the relevant characteristics are repeated so often that they emerge more and more clearly. Repetition is thus an important principle of the construction of the image of a character. Along with repetition, the piling up of data fulfils a function in the construction of an image. The accumulation of characteristics causes odd facts to coalesce, complement one another, and form a whole: the image of a character. Relations with others also help build the image of a character. The character's relation to itself in an earlier phase also belongs to this category. These relations tend to be processed into similarities and contrasts...Finally, characters change. The changes or transformations that a character undergoes sometimes alter the entire configuration of character as it looked during the analysis of mutual relations. Once a character's most important characteristics have been selected, it is easier to trace transformations and to describe them clearly. Repetition, accumulation, relations to other characters, and transformations are four different principles that work together to construct the image of a character. (Bal, 2017, p. 113-114)

The plot connects events to tell a story, and a fable is "the set of events tied together which are communicated to us in the course of the work" for formalists in which events are discrete while the narrative is a "sequential composite" (Chatman, 1980, p. 20). Plots are hubs of separate events, and it is the plot that gives a reasonable order for the events in a

narrative so the readers can comprehend the concept shown during the process of narrating.

Plots comprise “important events and participants identified in time and place” (van Dijk, 1982). This outlines the crucial elements of plots to present them clearly, which requires the creator to set a specific time and location and identify the key events and the characters related to the events. Moreover, episodes, like actions, are considered “goal-oriented structures,” featuring “the agent's goal, an attempt to achieve the goal, and an outcome of the attempt” (Golden, 1990, p. 19). This means the plots are concentrated on the motivation, such as the content of the aim, actions that are conducted for the purpose and the consequence of the objectives. It can be vital to show the plot clearly and make it understandable, which requires the goal to be clear and the actions of the agents as characters are closely related to the intended motivation.

Similarly, the plot is considered “the dynamic, sequential element in narrative” (Scholes and Kellogg, 1966), and plots are determined by tension and resolution and involve a beginning, a middle and an end. The characteristics of plots are consistency, wholeness, tension, and resolution. Specifically, the plots are coherent and contribute to the integrity of a story. There is a reason for starting the plot: events that form an intense atmosphere and an ending resulting from the actions around motivation. The interaction between opposing components can lead to a climax and resolution, thus creating tension (Golden, 1990, p. 16), and the plot is employed to arrange events through “selection, emphasis, focus, commentary and inference.” As a necessary component in a plot, tension is produced through elements that contradict each other. Regarding the relation between plots and events, plots aim to select and highlight crucial events that help interpret the concepts that the authors intend to convey. Moreover, “non-linguistic cues” offer the most outstanding cues for spotting plots (Kintsch, 1977). Visual cues not explained in the text can still be perceived as devices to suggest plots. Additionally, description is a place of focalization that:

help the imagined world of the fabula become visible and concrete...fabula elements need to be described so that their functions make sense. Narratology, therefore, must take these segments of the text into account. (Bal, 2017, p. 26)

This demonstrates the significance of focalisation by the agency of description, which aids in presenting a more concrete and tangible story. Focalisation also means to perceive things from a particular perspective:

Whenever events are presented, it is from within a certain vision. A point of view is chosen, a certain way of seeing or otherwise perceiving things, a certain angle, whether real historical facts or fictitious events are concerned. (Bal, 2017, p. 132)

As a result, the selection of focalisation is not random but an elaborate choice. The focused demonstration of the events in a narrative text embodies perspectives or views of observing things. When it comes to the approaches utilised in the narrative, ellipsis is employed to change the rhythm of the narrative:

The tools of narrative to vary its overall rhythm are the figures of ellipsis, the elision of events we expect, summary, the quick enumeration of events that take a much longer time...the linearity that suggests a complete rendering of the sequence of events while such completeness would make the narrative unbearably slow. (Bal, 2017, p. 96)

For that reason, ellipsis plays an essential role in providing a reasonable rhythm of a narrative. Narratees can comprehend the narrative by the key plots in an event instead of a complete series of events. Unnecessary segments in a complete event may reduce audience's interest. Moreover, the factor that can affect the rhythm of the narrative is the proportion in terms of episodes and events:

The proportion of episodes and events in a story is clearly one of the factors determining the pace at which that story unfolds in time. The greater the proportion of episodes, the more quickly the story moves forward. Moreover, by changing the proportion of episodes and events at various points in a given story, a storyteller would be capable of giving that story a specific rhythm and of underlining the importance of some passages rather than others. (Prince, 1973, p. 47)

This clarifies that the story's rhythm will be fast if more episodes occur in an event, so the choice of putting the episodes in different locations and adding or deleting episodes in a story determines the pace of the narrative. More episodes are needed to explain a crucial part of the story explicitly. Conversely, unimportant episodes can be removed to accelerate the rhythm of a story. Likewise, flashback is another approach in the process of storytelling:

Story order and chronological order often do not coincide. Thus, one of the favourite devices of storytellers is the flashback: through an associative process breaking up chronological sequence, a series of events having occurred in the past is telescoped into a series of events occurring in the present. Another popular device breaking up chronological sequence is the flash-forward, which may

be defined as the opposite of the flashback. By using flashbacks and flash-forwards, and more generally by not presenting events in their chronological sequence, a storyteller is not only able to draw striking parallels between different situations or to reveal the future of his protagonists for purposes of irony, but he is also able to vary the mode of development of his story. (Prince, 1973, p. 57)

Apparently, both flashback and flash-forward break chronological order in a story. Flashback presents events happening in the past in a condensed way. On the contrary, flash-forward displays things in the future via a compressed approach. In comparison, similarity is revealed in these ways of breaking sequences and the fate of the characters is presented ironically. Moreover, flashbacks demonstrate the actions of the characters in previous events, suggesting the traits of the characters together with the actions occurring in the present events.

However, whether the story order differs from chronological order depends on the storyteller's intention (Prince, 1973). Suppose the storyteller intends to eliminate the suspense of a story to focus the reader's concern on other aspects instead of the plot. In that case, he will present the result of his story before the events reveal it. However, if a storyteller hopes to obstruct his audience, he continually introduces events rather than directly uncover the outcome. This means the creator's focus decides whether there is suspense in the narrative text. Suspense is embedded in the narrative only when the creator thinks the suspense helps convey the story's core concept, so the creator may set some devices to hinder a direct understanding of the audience and expose the outcome implicitly. Time is another approach to link incidents:

Analepses occur when an event takes place earlier than the point in the story where the reader is at a particular moment. If the event occurs prior to the beginning point of the story told, it is an external analepsis and if it occurs after the story begins, it is an internal analepsis. Conversely, prolepsis involves narrating or eliciting in advance an event that will take place later. If the event occurs after the story ends, it is external and could take the form of an epilogue as one. (Golden, 1990, p. 17)

Analepses happen before a particular time in a story that the narratees locate.

External analepsis occurs when events show up earlier than the start of a story, and internal analepsis appears when events occur later than the beginning of the story. Prolepsis indicates an event that will happen soon, and the epilogue usually shows up after the end of the story. Besides the causal and temporal relations mentioned above, events have different

importance (Golden, 1990). “Kernels” (Chatman, 1980), as the important events represent “the nodes or hinges” of a story that should not be deleted if not affecting the narrative, and “satellite events” function as minor events that supplement, extend, or elaborate the kernel events. These minor events can add texture to the story and be deleted if they do not affect the narrative. The important events can be considered as constituent events that are vital to the order of the incidents in a story, while the minor events as supplementary incidents enhance the meaning of the story:

Constituent events are only necessarily more important than supplementary events insofar as we are concerned with the sequence of events constitute the story itself. But supplementary events can be very important for the meaning and overall impact of the narrative. (Abbott, 2002, p. 20)

Kernel events as constituent events refer to key events in a narrative text, and satellite events as supplementary events are minor events expanding or complementing the kernel events. Also, kernel events play a crucial role in the sequence of events in a story, which should not be omitted. Although it is possible to remove the minor events in the story, the supplementary events remain meaningful concerning its significance. Inversion is also one of the features of narrative:

Several detailed studies of specific corpora of stories show that the inversion of an event is one of the essential features of a story. (Prince, 1973, p. 28)

It suggests that inversion as an approach is crucial in a story. Using inversion can break the conventional expectation of a certain event for the audience, which can bring surprises and engage the audience. Cohesiveness can be achieved by adding more “clusters of conjunctive features”:

The proportion of clusters of conjunctive features in a story is one of the main factors contributing to the uniqueness of that story. All other things being equal, a story containing five clusters would achieve more cohesiveness than one containing two clusters. (Prince, 1973, p. 48)

The arrangement of these clusters is also crucial because it is also a factor that enables a story to be more cohesive than others (Prince, 1973). Avoiding clusters at the beginning of a story and presenting more gradually is a method in a narrative in that a person whose life seems meaningless at first then becomes meaningful step by step.

Through the clusters of conjunctive features, a story can be cohesive and distinctive. As a result, the greater the quantity of clusters, the more cohesive and unique the story becomes. The order of the clusters is another factor that affects interconnection. An inappropriate arrangement can impede a story's coherence and the reader's understanding of the narrative.

Also, the narrative "lack of closure" is called suspense (Abbott, 2002). Although suspense is "a curious mixture of pain and pleasure" and results from "foreshadowing-hints of what is to come" depends mainly on suspense instead of surprise (Chatman, 1980, p. 59), the suspense, together with surprise, constitutes the two things which "above everything else give the narrative its life," and all the fantastic stories, whether the length long or short, are a series of suspense and surprise, putting us in "a fluctuating state of impatience, wonderment, and partial gratification." (Abbott, 2002, p. 53). Suspense and surprise are interrelated:

Suspense and surprise are complementary, not contradictory terms. The two can work together in narratives in complex ways: a chain of events may start out as a surprise, work into a pattern of suspense, and then end with a "twist," that is, the frustration of the expected result-another surprise. (Chatman, 1980, p. 60)

From this perspective, when the narrative presents open results, the suspense begins. Compared with surprise, suspense is essential in offering a hint of an event happening soon. Nevertheless, the suspense and the surprise are key elements in vivifying a story. A sequence of suspense and surprise are indispensable parts of intriguing narratives. In terms of the relationship between suspense and surprise, they are interconnected and complemented. With this synergic relationship, suspense and surprise can create a rhythm by demonstrating in turns. In addition, Bal explained "embedded narrative texts" (Bal, 2017, p. 52):

When the primary fabula and the embedded fabula can be paraphrased so that both paraphrases have one or more elements in common, the subtext is a sign of the primary text. The place of the embedded text – the mirror-text – in the primary text determines its function for the reader. When the mirror-text occurs near the beginning, the reader may, on the basis of the mirror-text, predict the end of the primary fabula...The embedded text will be interpreted as mirror-text and "give away" the outcome only when the reader is able to capture the partial resemblance through abstraction...When a mirror-text has been added more towards the end of the primary text...the function of the mirror-text is no longer predictive, but retrospective...Its function is mostly to

enhance or inflect significance. The paraphrase of the primary and of the embedded text that we have made in order to infer resemblance will have a more general meaning. This more general sense...lifts the whole narration to another level...The mirror-text serves as directions for use: the embedded story contains a suggestion of how the text should be read. Even in this case, the embedded text functions as a sign to the reader. (Bal, 2017, p. 57-p. 58)

First, a subtext is perceived as a sign of the main narrative text if the primary and the embedded stories have one or more shared components. Then, the position of the embedded text as a mirror text in the main story decides how the embedded text will be used. If the position of the embedded text is close to the start of the story, the mirror text projects and reveals the result of the main narrative text. However, if the embedded text has been put near the end of the main text, it plays a role in retrospection, either enhancing or impeding its meaning. The embedded texts also hint at how the readers can read the narrative texts.

In narratives, events are often “correlative, enchainning, entailing,” and their sequence is “not simply linear but causative” in which the causation can be “overt, that is, explicit, or covert, implicit” (Chatman, 1980, p. 45). Therefore, it is crucial to consider “how the events are connected or the causal relations between events” (Golden, 1990), and these events are often connected through one of four causality relations in a narrative:

The causality concepts are: 1) cause (one event causes another event); 2) enablement (one event creates the sufficient, though not the necessary condition for the other); 3) reason (one event is the reason for another event); and 4) purpose (one event is planned for the purpose of another event). (Golden, 1990, p. 17)

The four causality relations “concern how one situation or event affects the condition for some other one” (de Beaugrande and Dressier, 1981, p. 4). Clearly, connecting events in a narrative text is essential as they may affect the reader’s understanding of the narrative. Notably, the order of the events can be causative, and the causation is either apparent or implied. In addition, four causative connections are listed – cause, enablement, reason, and purpose. Moreover, these relations involve one situation influencing on the other.

2.6.3 The Minimal Story

A complex story is a story that contains more than one simple story, and simple stories constituting a complex story are component stories (Prince, 1973, p. 72). As a result, finding

the most minor units in a narrative text is crucial because a complex story consists of a series of simple stories as small narrative units. Analysing a complex story, means deconstructing it into component stories. Furthermore, three is the smallest number for “conjoined events” to form a story (Prince, 1973, p. 20):

A minimal story as consisting of three events conjoined in such a way that the first is joined to the second by one conjunctive feature and the second is joined to the third by two conjunctive features, one of which is identical to the first conjunctive feature. (Prince, 1973, p. 22)

This means any narrative text contains at least three conjoined events. In these three conjoined events of the minimal narrative text, the first one links with the second through a conjunct characteristic, and the second relates to the third through two united characteristics, with one being similar to the first combined characteristic. Consequently, it is essential to define the most minor units in the narrative:

Any system being the combination of units of known classes, the first task is to divide up narrative and determine the segments of narrative discourse that can be distributed into a limited number of classes. In a word, we have to define the smallest narrative units. (Barthes, 1978, p. 88)

Various complex stories result from the simple stories presented in three combinations: conjoining, alternation, and embedding:

Different combinational patterns of simple stories produce different kinds of complex stories. Scholars generally distinguish three fundamental types of combination: conjoining, alternation, and embedding. In conjoining, a simple story may be conjoined with another story by means of a conjunctive feature or a cluster of conjunctive features ... in alternation, a narrative section of a component simple story A would be followed by a narrative section of a component simple story B, which in turn would be followed by a narrative section of A, and so on and so forth... As for embedding, it is a device by means of which an entire simple story is placed between the first and the second narrative section of another simple story. (Prince, 1973, p. 72-p. 73)

The statement exhibits three approaches to combining simple stories: conjoining, alternation and embedding. Concretely, one simple narrative text is connected with another through a united feature in conjoining; narrative fragments of simple story A and simple story B appear alternately in alternation; selected narrative sections are inserted in the place between the fragments of two simple stories in embedding. Consequently, the conjunctive modes of simple stories determine the various kinds of complex stories.

Moreover, the cohesiveness of a complex story depends on whether simple stories have enough shared narrative events:

In general, the more narrative events component simple stories have in common, the more a complex story tends to be cohesive. (Prince, 1973, p. 74)

It is crucial to design shared features among simple stories, as the common characteristics play a vital role in connecting the simple stories as components of a complex story in a close way.

This section illustrated the definition and significance of the narrative. Narrative has both transmedia and transcultural features. Different manners of connecting events constitute narrative, and these diverse narrative ways suggest different viewing perspectives. Three crucial factors in creating stories include depicting events, narrators and narratees. A story is the content of the narrative text that consists of events, actors, time, and location. These components constitute narrative, and how they represent these narrative elements decide how readers interpret what they have read. Popular stories can continue to exist because these narratives resonate with readers. Readers can relate their experience to the events, actors, and concepts in the stories, which meet their deeply spiritual needs.

Primarily, this section introduced how narratives operate and some practical narrative approaches. In a narrative text, characters, as agents, conduct actions due to some motivation. Different motivations of characters determine the relationships between characters, either in the same group because of shared goals or in the adversarial groups due to opposite motivations. Plots, as a sequential composite, organize discrete events through focalization and selecting key events so readers can comprehend the concept of the story. Tension arises from the opposing elements and is crucial in plots. Notably, as important events, kernel events are supplemented, extended, or elaborated by satellite events. Cohesiveness, another important factor, affects the reader's understanding of the narrative: the more conjunctive features, the more cohesive the story.

Also, while narrating, inversion can break readers' conventional expectations bring surprises and engage them. Suspense, resulting from a lack of closure, is key in providing a hint of a

coming event. In terms of the embedded narrative texts, explained by Bal, it can be perceived as a sign of the main text. The position of the embedded subtexts determines the function of the texts, either as a predicting role or a retrospective role when being put near the beginning or the end. Furthermore, being aware of the minimal story is important because any complex story comprises these small narrative units. Three conjoined events can form the simplest story. These simple stories gather to construct complex stories through conjoining, alternation, and embedding.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter mainly explained the key concepts and relevant theories regarding multimodality, ironic counterpoint, and narrative. In text modality, a graphic text is sometimes part of the picture, functioning as a visual unit through integration into the pictures. Pictures have several functions as a visual modality for picturebooks. Pictures can highlight the symbolic meaning of the picturebook; pictures can offer a distinct story compared to texts; pictures offer textual coherence in the visual representation; pictures can extend the plot of a story.

The interaction between the text and image generates new meaning. The concepts iconotext, imagetext, and picturebook highlight multimodal text and image combinations. In the multimodal text and image combinations in picturebooks, parallel storytelling and interdependent storytelling demonstrate different ways of storytelling in the narrative of picturebooks. Parallel storytelling tends to be symmetrical with congruency, whereas the features of interdependent storytelling contain incongruency, deviation or divergence. Antiphonal and contradictory can be borrowed to describe a counterpointing text and image relationship in interdependent narratives. In the text/image relationship of ironic counterpoint, irony happens when the text is incongruent with the image, and counterpoint forms when the text and the image interact concurrently to generate new meaning while retaining their individuality.

Being aware of the characteristics of metafictional postmodern picturebooks can help the understanding of ironic counterpoint because the interactive feature generated through

multimodal communicative acts between textual and visual modality is perceived as a prominent feature of postmodern picturebooks. In general, postmodern picturebooks tend to be experimental, challenging readers' conventional expectations of comprehending picturebooks. The parodic and intertextual features constitute its unique narrative mode, with the words and the images being double-layered self-referentiality, spotlighting visual intertextuality; gaps between the words and pictures as two codes of signification, are evidence of the characteristic of postmodern picturebooks, where the readers are invited to actively participant in filling the gaps through interpreting the two modalities among multiple meanings.

Meanwhile, the gaps resulting from polyphonic interaction can contribute to manifold narratives, forming the third story; irony and contradiction are qualities of postmodern picturebooks that depend primarily on the multimodal text and image counterpoints instead of relying on either the text or the image a sole mode; counterpointing text and image relationship can be perceived as a playful symbol in distinguishing true picturebooks and illustrated books; indeterminacy is another prominent feature of postmodern picturebooks, deriving from the incongruous text and image relationships that can result ambiguity, disruptions of time and space, or paratextual experimentations; a resistance to closure, a suspense, or a questioning of a fixed meaning, stemming from a playful manipulation of perspective, brings multiple choices in defining the significance of the concept of a story. Notably, denotation and exemplification are two basic modes of pictures, and the exemplifying symbol in postmodern picturebooks opens multiple interpretations for its implied readers.

The definition of the narrative and ways of storytelling are essential in story creation. With the transcultural and transmedia features, narrative refers to events signified by words and images. Narratives can also be viewed as a way of representing or arranging events. To be more precise, narrative, discourse, narrative discourse, narrative expression, or storytelling concerns more with the embodied approaches of a story. In contrast, as a narrative text, a story relates more to content consisting of an event or a range of events. Narrative components generally involve events, actors, time, and location.

Well-considered design of an objective is essential in a narrative text because a goal is vital in unfolding events connected through plots, as most actions of characters perceived as a composite of qualities revolve around the goal. Among the characters, whether one character is an ally or an adversary to the other character is whether they share the same aim. Inversion as a narrative approach breaks the conventional expectation of the readers, and suspense is another technique that engages the readers in the story. Additionally, kernel events are the core events in a narrative text and satellite events expand or supplement the kernel events. Likewise, the relationship between the subtext and the main text follows a similar rule, with the subtext offering more clues for readers to comprehend the main narrative text and reflecting it in different aspects depending on its position in the story. Cohesiveness arises from conjunctive clusters that connect events, so adequate conjunctive elements guarantee the story being cohesive and distinctive. Moreover, to deconstruct a complex story means to resolve its component stories. The minimal narrative text equals three conjoined events. Defining the smallest units will help the readers understand the narrative clearly.

Chapter 3. Methodology

This chapter outlines practice-based research as this PhD's overarching methodology, through which relevant research methods were undertaken: action research, visual analysis, reflexivity, and case study. Action research cycles involve planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Therefore, the progress of this practice-based research is presented in a reflective spiral instead of a linear development. Visual analysis and reflexivity played crucial roles during research cycles because they review the finished practice in connection with related theories and generate new insights concerning theory and practice. Case studies were selected from many existing picturebooks to explore the operation of multimodal text and image relationships.

3.1 Practice-based Research

This research project was undertaken through practice-based research. Although similar, there are distinctions between practice-led and practice-based research. For practice-led researchers, the formation of problems does not happen predictably. Instead, problems can emerge over time based on the practice's requirements and practitioners' evolving purposes (Gray, 1996). For practice-based research, although it can also be viewed as an approach to research through practice (Candy, Edmonds and Vear, 2021), the difference is:

the research and the practice operate as interdependent and complementary processes leading to new and original forms of knowledge. (Candy, Edmonds and Vear, 2021, p. 2)

That means for practice-led research, your direction and focus are primarily led by your practice and less theoretical concerns. In contrast, theory and practice research will happen concurrently for practice-based research.

Nelson (2013) proposes the term "praxis" be used to indicate the possibility of thought within both theory and practice in a repetitive process of "doing-reflecting-reading-articulating-doing." My research explored ironic counterpoint in picturebook storytelling using the research methods of action research, visual analysis, case studies, and reflexivity.

3.2 Action Research

Action research considers actions and testing of their effectiveness by collecting, presenting, and interpreting evidence, as well as determining how those actions have affected and motivated subsequent actions. After achieving substantial progress in one area, you can then shift your focus to other facets that have the potential to develop into new research projects (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002). Also, it raises further questions about the content, the way, the reason, and the intention of the research actions (McIntosh, 2010).

This method was used to explore ironic counterpoint from different perspectives. At first, I identified and gathered existing picture books that potentially adopted ironic counterpoint. On the other hand, I then gathered practice evidence by making different versions of the interaction between text and image for picture books. Then, I interpreted the visual evidence with related theories. At each stage, I select one issue to explore at the start of the process. For example, analysing the influence of changes made by experimenting with typography and how these have impacted the meaning of the narrative. Also, examining positional changes in which the typography is close to the object or character, is spread across the whole page, hides behind the objects, displays as graphic typography, etc. Reflecting on this process, I found even more ways to change typography, such as using colour and shape, changing keywords, and changing whole sentences.

To review current practice, the key is to identify an area for improvement, formulate a plan for advancement, implement the chosen aspect, refine the approach based on our findings and persist with the “action,” evaluate the adjusted actions and continued this process until we achieve satisfaction with that particular element of our work (McNiff et al., 1996). Four proposed stages can be used in action research – do, reflect, summarize and test (Kolb, 1984). Similarly, learning can be progressed by acting and making mistakes in a “self-reflective spiral” of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and replanning, and the action-reflection cycle containing planning, acting, observing, and reflecting can be continued (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002). This action-reflection cycle (fig. 3.2) has been adopted for my research project due to the nature of practice-based research:

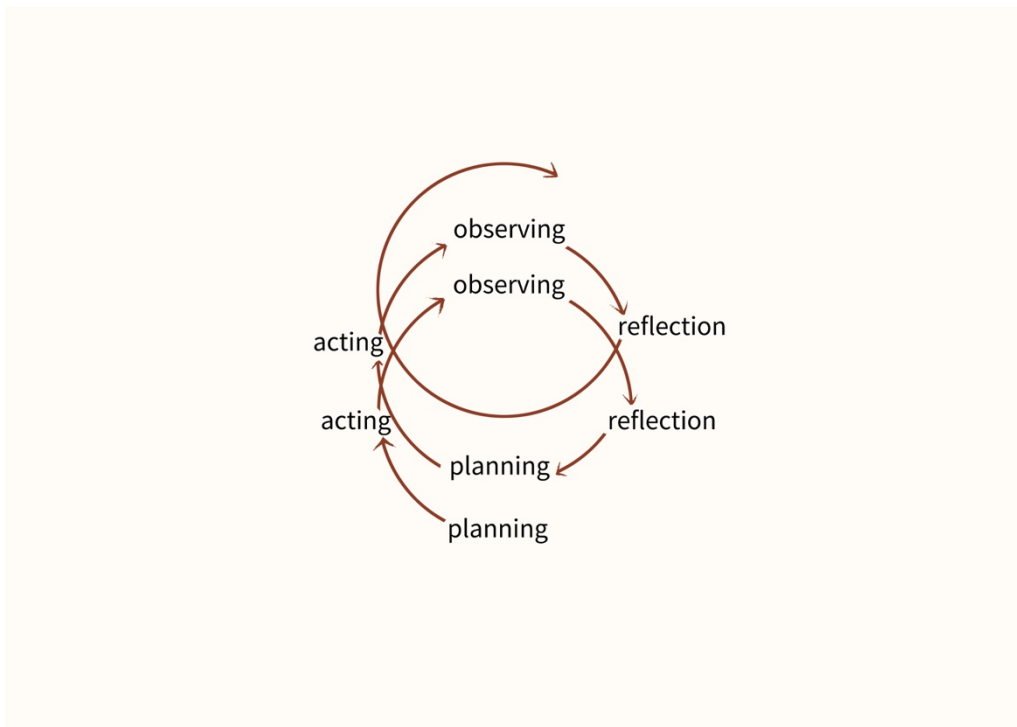


Fig.3.2 Yuqiao, Z. (2020) My interpretation of action research cycles - building on the thoughts of Jean McNiff

- Planning

I began my research with plans to explore ironic counterpoint through experimenting with typography, creating my first experimental picturebook, *Responsible Me* (2021). Experimenting with just typography was more efficient and allowed me to test how the changes of typography could influence the narrative of picturebooks. This focus shifted to images in my second experimental Picturebook, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), at which point I also began to examine how variations in pictorial elements can affect the meaning of the narrative. This evolution was informed by previous case studies and theories as my practice continued to develop.

- Acting

The acting part for picturebooks involves constructing storyboards, developing characters and backgrounds, testing materials, colours, and compositions. After observing the visual drafts of Picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), I selected three pictures to experiment with 60

variations of text. These experiments were helpful for later observing the potential innovation and creativity contributing to the narrative in picturebooks.

- Observing

At this stage, I looked at existing cases closely relating to ironic counterpoint to capture the ways and characteristics constructed in those picturebooks. In the meantime, visual outcomes completed from the research practices of ironic counterpoint were checked in preparation for the following reflection.

- Reflecting

Reflect on the research practices of ironic counterpoint from the previous observation by examining if my visual outcomes could meet the research intention of exploring the ironic counterpoint. For example, whether the change of typography position changes the meaning of the narrative in a picturebook.

Evaluating the level of its contribution to the narrative in picturebooks, critiquing its strengths and areas that need to be improved by additional actions. For example, the efficiency of the element's changes to ironic counterpoint in picturebooks and potential improvements. Then, I continued to experiment after re-examining theories and case studies on how multimodal image/word relationships can operate in the narrative of picture books.

Because action research integrates research and action, it involves the development of knowledge, and involves a high level of reflexivity, the methods of visual analysis and reflexivity, particularly, will be highlighted in the next cycle (Somekh, 2006, p. 6-p. 8).

3.3 Visual Analysis and Reflective Practice of Picturebooks in Different Narratives

3.3.1 Visual Analysis

Three activities were adopted for data analysis, which are data reduction, data display and drawing conclusions (Miles and Huberman, 1994) – data reduction can construct a structure to sort and simplify data, data display can demonstrate links between concepts and drawing

conclusions is designed to examine the kind of patterns, to check if the results show apparent themes and connect with existing concepts, to search the potential relationships. In my research, data can be considered explicitly as visual evidence.

The visual practice exploring ironic counterpoint as data of my picturebook project can use the method for analysis:

- Visual Evidence Reduction

In my project, a selection of the produced visual materials examining ironic counterpoints was made at the beginning of the visual analysis.

- Visual Evidence Display

Visual presentation could reveal possible connections in my visual practices of exploring ironic counterpoint. It is also a preparation of the relevant visual materials for the later conclusions.

- Drawing Conclusions

Summary the connections of the categorized visual practices relating to ironic counterpoint based on examining of the existing theories of multimodality and ironic counterpoint.

Notably, the conclusions would be tentative at the beginning and should remain flexible, meaning visual evidence in my research will likely be revisited and modified (Gray and Malins, 2004). Purposeful sampling can be used to search for the best cases to produce the best visual evidence, and research results are directly linked with the cases sampled (Patton, 2015). Once new perceptions have been generated from the visual evidence analysis of my picturebook practices, the following reflection of the visual practice about ironic counterpoint based on the multimodal text and image interactions can be crucial. The successful application of an ironic counterpoint depends on the efficiency of changing the meaning of the narrative by comparing different versions.

3.3.2 Reflexivity

A reflexive researcher engages with the necessary research material to create new content that, in turn, influences the practitioner, prompting them to develop a subsequent response (Smith and Dean, 2009). It means reflecting on whether the research outputs demonstrate new knowledge, skills, and practices developed through the research. Two reflection modes, 'reflecting-on-action and reflecting-for-action' (Gray and Malins, 2004), can be used in the process of reflection as both are comparatively more in-depth and constructed. The former mode involves description, evaluation, and summarization, and the latter one concerns the declaration of the research intentions, the proposal of a way to gain solutions to questions and an identification of the most important following step with a feature of refinement and focus (Gray and Malins, 2004). My reflection on visual practices concerning ironic counterpoint would use these modes: reflecting-on-action and reflecting-for-action.

- Reflecting-on-action

(1) Picturebook 1 - *Responsible Me*

Responsible Me (2021) uses text to depict a girl who found an egg and tries to take the responsibility as 'a good chicken mom', where the ironic counterpoint emerged from her not fulfilling her promise in the imagery. To examine the ironic counterpoint in-depth, I tested the potential variables that could influenced the meaning of the narrative.

Text, mainly hand lettering, as one of the key elements, was selected as the focus to test what changes would influence the narrative in a picture book. To conduct it effectively, I first selected three completed pictures from the first picture book *Responsible Me* (2021) of my research projects by making 60 different versions in total, including traditional and innovative ways, after finishing the storyboards, material experiments, several complete pictures, and texts of picture books. The change of hand-lettered text included the change of position, the change of size, the change of colour, the change of shape and the change of keywords. Through the 60 versions of text changes, I observed that some versions were beneficial to the narrative of picture books and could be categorized.

·Position Change

Although text showing in front of and behind the character or objects can add depth of space, they still demonstrate different visual effects that affect the visual experience of ironic counterpoint as one of the narrative ways. For example, the words “not leave” (fig. 3.3.2.1) with “not” in front of the objects fish flags to some extent disturb the viewing of the picture and the word “waves” (fig. 3.3.2.2) positioning behind the character little girl with hen costume highlighted the girl as one of the visual elements and give a better balance of the whole visual effect. However, the effect of ironic counterpoint seems more obvious with texts in front of the objects as it builds a stronger contrast between words saying “not leave” on the surface and the image displaying the real situation – leave.



Fig.3.3.2.1 Yuqiao, Z. (2021) Typography test No.11 of picture 1



Fig.3.3.2.2 Yuqiao, Z. (2021) Typography test No.20 of picture 1

Position change can also be made by moving the texts close to the character and far from the character in the picture. The effect of this type of position change seems more apparent, which would enhance the effect of ironic counterpoint. For instance, the sentence “I am not afraid at all” (fig. 3.3.2.3) scattering in different positions in the spread looks less focused, and the ironic effect is weakened due to the dispersion of visual attention. In contrast, the effect of ironic comparison (fig. 3.3.2.4) can be more evident by the same sentence surrounding the character in the picture, as a direct feel could be gained with the text location. So, the text close to the character could generate a more substantial ironic effect.



Fig.3.3.2.3 Yuqiao, Z. (2021) Typography test No.5 of picture 2



Fig.3.3.2.4 Yuqiao, Z. (2021) Typography test No.2 of picture 2

Text on the body of the character and the background would result in a different visual effect influencing our understanding of the narrative of the picture book. To give an example, the words “I will join them” (fig. 3.3.2.6) from the sentence “There is no chance I will join them” are key parts that generate ironic counterpoint in this image as the words stand out when positioned on the body of the character – in this case, on the dress of the characters. The information that the girl will not join the group, conveyed from the highlighted words, makes the narrative of the picturebook look ironic as the picture tells us the opposite by displaying the girl with a similar dress and a suitable position – already joined the group. Comparatively, words in the background (fig. 3.3.2.5) look more general and unsurprising. It is consequently less interesting, and the degree of irony can be undermined.



Fig.3.3.2.5 Yuqiao, Z. (2021) Typography test No.16 of picture 3



Fig.3.3.2.6 Yuqiao, Z. (2021) Typography test No.16 of picture 3

(2) Picturebook 2 - *The Guardian Angel*

As symbols can be crucial in revealing meaning in the narrative, the last picturebook focuses on using symbols and seeks the cultural significance behind the symbols. For the picturebook *The Guardian Angel* (2022), I have made 100 experimental images to examine the pictorial variations in depth. The focus points include the changes in the scale of the characters, the variations of the position of the characters, the different directions of the characters, the changes in the size of scenes, and the changes in the location of scenes:

· The Changes of the Scale of the Characters

In this picturebook, three spreads show how scale changes affect narrative meaning – spread 6, spread 7, and spread 8. When the angel character shows up in a larger size, the protective power of the angel character is visually greater through the comparison between the two experimental images of spread 8.

· The Variations of Position of the Characters

Position is one factor that can indicate the relationship between characters in pictures. In the experiments of the first spread, characters staying closer show stronger relationships

than the ones with a further distance. It appears that the distance decides the degree of the relationship. Except for the comparisons of the positions on the horizontal line level, up and down in a picture have an influence in terms of meaning.

·The Different Directions of the Characters

Direction plays a crucial role in this picturebook and has an extended function – direction enhances the atmosphere in the storytelling, and the effect is evident in a dangerous situation; the effective way of using direction is to put the protector and the dangerous factor in close interaction with a direction face to face.

· The Changes of Size and Location of Scenes

Other factors that can affect meaning are the variation in the size and position of the scenes in the story. For picturebook 4 of this picturebook, the change in scale of scenes is key in affecting the communication of the intended meaning; the experiments in second spread of this picturebook present the changes of position in scenes and how they influence the narrative of the picturebook.

(3) Picturebook 3 - *The Way to Happiness*

The last picturebook of the PhD study, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), comprehensively uses the text and the visual components and was built on the exploration in Picturebook 1 and Picturebook 2. It highlights the use of symbols, which are derived from various cultural contexts. It includes traditional Chinese tales, Greek Aesop fables, and Renaissance paintings.

- Reflecting-for-action

The visual outputs of my research project from the reflecting-on-action mode can also be used for this reflecting-for-action mode. After focusing on the first attempts of experimenting with the change of positions, other possible changes, such as size, colour,

shape, and keywords of typography, have become apparent gradually as the research practices evolve and develop.

Through the practice-based methodology, the methods can be adopted effectively – action research containing planning, acting, observing, and reflecting; visual analysis including data reduction, data display and drawing conclusions; Reflexivity that includes two modes, reflecting-on-action and reflecting-for-action. With these methods, it is possible to demonstrate originality, including re-interpretation, making new connections, building new levels on existing research, capturing additional evidence, or extending under-researched areas (Wakeford, 2002). Although the methods seem to be adopted separately to conduct the visual practice examining the use of ironic counterpoint in the narrative of a picturebook, overlaps can also happen between approaches (Leavy, 2017), and the overlaps of analysis upon the existing practice work as evidence can also happen during the development of research. My research intends to examine the effectiveness of ironic counterpoint within the narrative. The change of elements constituting the text or picture of a picture book seems practical and valuable, according to the first visual experiments – element changes in text. Next, an ironic counterpoint could be explored by focusing on the changes of elements of another aspect of picture books – element changes in pictures.

3.4 Case Study as Method: Using Postmodern Picturebooks as a Lens and Interdependent Storytelling in Children Picturebooks

One of my contributions to the picturebook research during my PhD period could be identifying potential sub-categories of ironic counterpoint to open the creator's mind to exploring innovative narrative approaches. I have identified eight possible sub-categories of ironic counterpoint in postmodern picturebooks, so I suppose these sub-divisions can be helpful as more concrete demonstrations of comprehending ironic counterpoint. The sub-groups I proposed are multi-perspective, anthropomorphic objects, silent clues, space manipulation, reversal plot, abstract and figurative contrast, parallel worlds-actual and imaged, and fairy-tale adaptations. These branches can also be viewed as the specific approaches to achieving the effect of ironic counterpoint.

According to Gray and Malins (2004, p. 30), case study, as an “in-depth study of relevant examples,” “in Art and Design research where the case may be ... a project ...” (2004, p. 134). Thus, in this PhD research, case study means conducting a deep analysis of a picturebook project to gain constructive reflections supporting theories or practices. Because of the resemblance between the effect of ironic counterpoint and the characteristics of postmodern picturebooks, the cases analysed in the thesis consist of postmodern picturebooks or picturebooks with the characteristics of postmodern picturebooks.

In this PhD research, the selection criteria for the case study of postmodern picturebooks and picturebooks with postmodern characteristics are based on three pivotal features that collectively contribute to a deeper understanding of the form. Firstly, the presence of ironic counterpoint is essential. This device juxtaposes contrasting ideas or themes to highlight absurdities within the narrative, engaging readers on a critical level. Picturebooks showcasing this feature often encourage readers to question the reliability of the narrative voice and to grapple with varying interpretations. By selecting examples that exemplify ironic counterpoint, the research aims to explore how such dynamics enrich the reading experience and challenge traditional notions of storytelling.

Secondly, the integration of metafictional elements plays a crucial role in the selection process. These elements invite readers to reflect on the nature of picturebook itself, often prompting discussions on the author’s craft. Picturebooks that engage with metafiction not only entertain but also stimulate cognitive and emotional engagement, fostering a reflective reading experience. Lastly, innovative visual aesthetics serve as a defining criterion. The chosen case studies must include artworks that push the boundaries of traditional illustration, incorporating unconventional layouts, colours, or styles that enhance the narrative context. Together, these criteria ensure that the selected picturebooks serve as rich sources for analysis, leading to insights that contribute meaningfully to the broader discourse on contemporary picturebook practices.

Accordingly, ways of generating the effect of postmodern picturebooks can be studied, and the manners of creating picturebooks with the effect of ironic counterpoint can be inspired.

A classic example of an ironic counterpoint in picturebooks is *Rosie's Walk* (1967), which is due to the incongruity between text and image. In a similar example, *Minerva Louise* (2012), ironic counterpoint manifests from the mistaken recognition of objects in incongruous text and image communications. Ambiguity is another major factor creating a counterpointing text/image relationship ironically. In the example of *Matilda's Cat* (2013), the text introduced the hobbies of Matilda's cat. Nevertheless, the image shows a girl in a cat costume conducting all the actions of those hobbies. Therefore, either the girl in a cat costume or the cat is the cat mentioned in the text is ambiguous, forming an ironically counterpointing relationship between the text and image modality.

The eight sub-categories identified in this study are methods for potentially creating a counterpointing text and image relationship ironically. Resistance to closure corresponds to the open ending of using the multi-perspective narrative approach. Various possibilities for the result of a story emerge from this method, so that readers can interpret the real meaning of the story according to the holistic view of all the angles embedded as well as their own experience. For example, in *Voices in the Park* (1977) (fig. 3.4.1), four voices narrating the same sequence of events have been shown to the readers – a boy character, a father character, a mother character and a girl character. In *They All Saw a Cat*, created by Brendan Wenzel (2016) (see fig.2.4.5), a cat was seen from twelve perspectives – a child, a dog, a fox, a fish, a mouse, a bee, a bird, a flea, a snake, a skunk, a worm, a bat, showing how perspectives can shape the viewers' observations. In *Another Book about Bears* (2020) (see fig.2.4.10), a counterpointing irony emerges from the voice of a narrator describing things about a bear and the voice of a bear denying what the narrator says. In *—半? —半!* (2019), *half? half!* in English, different attitudes toward the same mountain arise from different perspectives – climbers' perspective and a bird's perspective, generating a philosophical insight that there is no absolute standard of defining things, such as high or low, beautiful or ugly, big or small, due to diverse positions existing in the world.

In anthropomorphic objects, sadness becomes an anthropomorphic figure interacting with a character in *When Sadness Comes to Call* (2019); the protagonist's feeling of worrying is embodied in horrifying anthropomorphic objects in *Changes* (2008), such as a sofa with

hands. A dog's fear turns a tree into an anthropomorphic figure smiling strangely in *Lily Takes a Walk* (2021). There are also two sub-categories of silent clues: silent clues in the pictures and silent clues in the texts. In silent clues in the pictures, a bird laying eggs in the TV show suggests a new baby is coming in *Changes* (2008); the objects that the dog sees turn into monsters in *Lily Takes a Walk* (2021); in *I Want My Hat Back* (2012), the red hat on the head of the rabbit hints that the rabbit lies to the bear; the eye direction of the dog suggests the location of a diamond in *Sam and Dave Dig a Hole* (2015); the hole that the fox cuts to peep indicate the fox is interested in what people get through the magic umbrella in *Umbrella* (2019). Silent clues in the texts bring a reversal plot in *A Perfect Day* (2017), and texts can also suggest the content in *I Love You More Than All the Stars* (2021).

In space manipulation, there is constantly a space unfolding from a space, expanding the readers' imagination in *Zoom* (1995); when a spread zooms in, the back of a cow transforms into various scenery, including soil, a grassland, and a sea, bringing visual surprises in *Spring Is Here* (1999). In the reversal plot, conventional expectations are broken when ducks eat a fox in *That Is Not a Good Idea!* (2013), and Little Red Riding Hood kills the wolf in *Little Red* (2016). In abstract and figurative contrast, images have been shown in an abstract form with texts narrating a concrete event in *Little Blue and Little Yellow* (1995), forming a counterpointing relationship; sadness as an abstract feeling turns into a concrete character in *When Sadness Comes to Call* (2019). In parallel worlds - actual and imaged, one world outside the umbrella and one world inside the umbrella forms a contrast in *Umbrella* (2019); parallel worlds emerge from one world in real life and one world in the imaginary field in *Come Away from The Water, Shirley* (1977). In fairy-tale subversions, a new meaning has been added to suit the current society when a wolf is afraid of goats and pigs in *De qui a peur le grand méchant loup?* (2014), and Little Red Riding Hood conquers the wolf in *Little Red* (2016).

Sub-category 1. Multi-perspective Narrative

Example 1: *Voices in the Park*

A multiple narrative depicts a kind of storytelling narrating from different protagonists instead of a single character (Lewis, 2001, p. 10), and this picturebook *Voices in the Park* (1977) (fig. 3.4.1) exemplifies this method by presenting the story through the diverse lenses of four characters, each engaging with the same narrative context. This innovative approach transcends the limitations of traditional single-perspective storytelling. The approach adopted in this picturebook offers multi-parallel clues for the audience by looking at the hints holistically. It also enriches the whole narrative and encourages new interpretations with each reading.

In this picture book, the interplay among these differing perspectives introduces an ironic counterpoint, as each character reveals their unique motivations, emotions, and interpretations of the same situational backdrop. By examining the narrative holistically, readers can discern how the contrasting viewpoints not only enhance the storytelling but also create layers of irony that challenge initial assumptions. This dynamic interplay not only deepens the narrative experience but also encourages varied interpretations with each reading, inviting audiences to appreciate the complexity inherent in personal perceptions and the multifaceted nature of human experience.

FIRST VOICE



It was time to take Victoria, our pedigree Labrador, and Charles, our son, for a walk.

THIRD VOICE



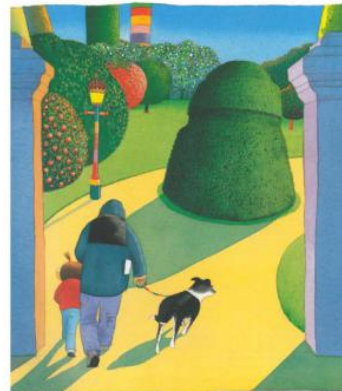
I was at home on my own again. It's so boring. Then Mummy said that it was time for our walk.

SECOND VOICE



I needed to get out of the house, so me and Smudge took the dog to the park.

FOURTH VOICE



Dad had been really fed up, so I was pleased when he said we could take Albert to the park.

Fig 3.4.1 Browne, A. (1977) *Voice in the Park*. London: Corgi Childrens.

Sub-category 2. Anthropomorphic Objects

Example 2: *Changes*

Style can be defined as the artist's conscious and unconscious choices and conventions, to express and reveal meaning (Kiefer, 1995, p. 120), the visual effect of the picturebook *Changes* (2008) (fig. 3.4.2) is amplified by using a surrealistic style. A striking feature of this book is how everyday furniture morphs into monstrous forms as a reflection of the

protagonist's shifting inner mood. This transformation illustrates how the character's emotional state alters their perception of their environment, turning familiar objects into frightening entities.

The surreal depiction of these household items not only heightens the tension within the narrative but also serves to immerse readers in the protagonist's emotional landscape. By portraying the character's feelings through such imaginative visuals, the book fosters a deeper sense of empathy in its audience. Readers find themselves navigating the character's turmoil and discomfort, experiencing how emotions can distort reality. Thus, the surrealistic style effectively communicates complex emotional truths, inviting readers to explore the interplay between perception and feeling in a unique and compelling manner.



Was this what he had meant?

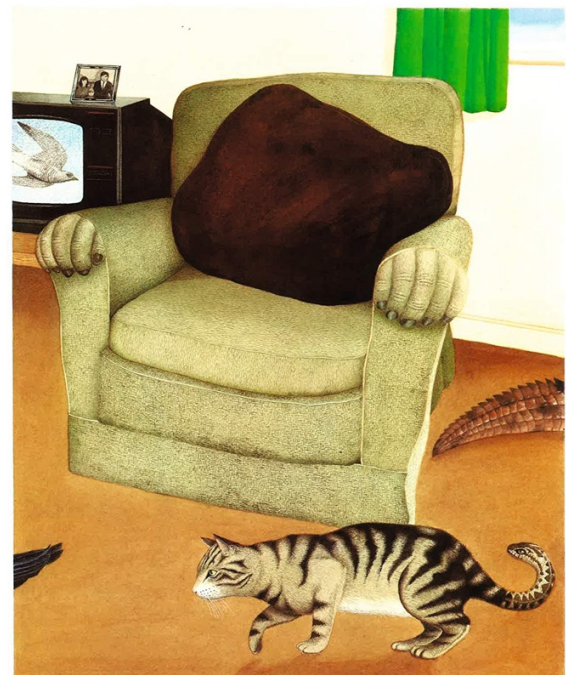


Fig 3.4.2 Browne, A. (2008) *Changes*. London: Walker Books.

Sub-category 3. Silent Clues

Example 3: *Lily Takes a Walk*

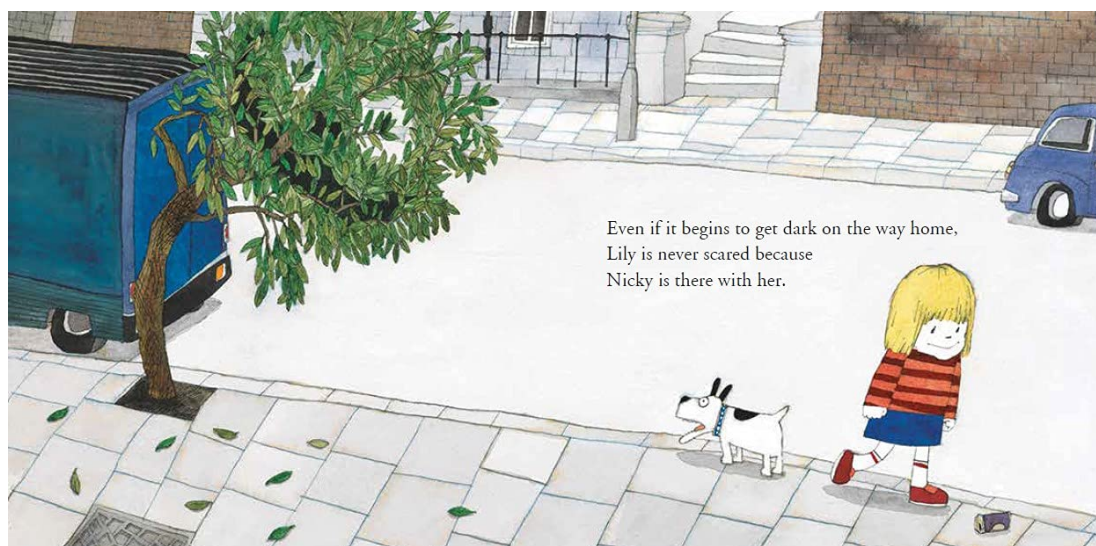


Fig 3.4.3 Kitamura, S. (2021) *Lily Takes a Walk*. London: Scallywag Press.

In the picturebook, *Lily Takes a Walk* (2021) (fig. 3.4.3), an intriguing aspect lies in the disconnect between the text and the visuals. The written narrative provides limited context, focusing solely on the experiences of the main character, a young girl. In contrast, the illustrations reveal significant actions and emotions of another pivotal character—the little dog—who is confronted by various monstrous figures throughout the story. This omission in the text introduces a layer of irony, as the visual representation of the dog's encounters remains overshadowed by the protagonist's singular focus, thereby enhancing the narrative's depth through a counterpointing relationship between the texts and the images.

The unspoken information in the image as visual cues operates as implicit layers of meaning that complement the text, enriching the reading experience by offering insights and interpretations that are not explicitly stated. The dog's fearful reactions and its encounters with threatening figures suggest underlying emotions and contexts that the text overlooks. By acting as conduits for this unspoken information, the illustrations invite readers to engage more deeply and to reflect on the nuances of the narrative. Consequently, they create an enhanced, multifaceted reading experience that encourages exploration of the story's complexities beyond the written word.

This narrative ambiguity is further accentuated by the presence of monster-like objects in the background, which evoke a range of interpretations. The dog's perspective remains a point of contention—whether its reactions stem from sheer fear or a protective instinct towards the girl adds to the tension of the unfolding narrative. The images, therefore, complicate the story's interpretation, signalling that danger is perceived differently from the dog's viewpoint, while simultaneously enhancing the overall reading experience through their silent storytelling.

Sub-category 4. Space Manipulation

Example 4: *Zoom*

Uncertainty or ambiguity in picturebooks can invite the readers to interpret the narrative through multiple aspects:

The open-endedness or ambiguity that is inherent in wordless picture books allows readers to construct diverse interpretations and return again and again to reconsider their initial impressions (Serafini, 2014).

The uncertainty of what will happen next serves a central feature of the story due to the innovative manipulation of the space throughout this book *Zoom* (1995) (fig. 3.4.4). As each page gradually zooms out, readers encounter a series of intriguing visual surprises that challenge their assumptions and expectations. This creative approach encourages readers to engage their imaginations, speculating about forthcoming events before turning each page.

The irony manifests in the relationship between what is initially presented and what is ultimately revealed. Each image may suggest one interpretation, but as the viewer zooms out, the context dramatically shifts, often revealing a completely different scenario than anticipated. This technique underscores the notion that our visual perceptions can be misleading, as the shapes and forms within the images take on new meanings when viewed from a broader perspective.

By cleverly manipulating space, "Zoom" crafts an ironic counterpoint between the reader's initial understanding and the surprising revelations that follow. This interplay between expectation and visual twist not only heightens the narrative tension but also invites readers to reconsider the way they perceive images and the stories they tell. In doing so, the book deftly highlights the fluidity of meaning and the role of perspective in shaping our understanding of a narrative.



Fig 3.4.4 Banyai, I. (1995) *Zoom*. London: Puffin.

Sub-category 5. Reversal Plot

Example 5: *That Is Not a Good Idea!*

Similar to mid-point reversal story with a plot taking a sudden turn (Betton, 2017), the reversal plots at the conclusion of a narrative enhance its visual impact and thematic

resonance. These plots reveal how our preconceived knowledge can mislead our understanding of the storytelling. In the picturebook, *That Is Not a Good Idea!* (2013) (fig. 3.4.5), the traditional narrative setup featuring a fox and a duck leads readers to assume that the fox, with its sharp teeth, is the menacing figure targeting the seemingly defenceless duck.

However, the story cleverly subverts this expectation, delivering a reversal that positions the fox as the duck's dinner. This twist forms an ironic counterpoint to the initial assumptions made by the reader. Moreover, the text plays a crucial yet ambiguous role throughout the story. By simply stating "dinner" without clarifying who will be dining on whom, it fosters a sense of uncertainty and misdirection. This ambiguity propagates throughout the narrative, guiding readers away from the true relationship between the characters until the surprising revelation at the end. This fox turns out to be the actual dinner of the duck in the story. The neutral text plays an unneutral role in the situation.

The reversal plot in this picture book not only provides humour and surprise but also challenges readers to reconsider their initial interpretations of character roles and intentions. The interplay between expectation and reality underscores the irony inherent in the narrative, illustrating how appearances can be deceiving and that our assumptions can be delightfully overturned.



Fig 3.4.5 Willems, M. (2013) *That Is Not a Good Idea!* New York: Balzer + Bray.

Sub-category 6. Abstract and Figurative Contrast

Example 6: *Little Blue and Little Yellow*

A meaning-making environment is well created through the interplay of the text and the image in picturebooks (Mantei, 2014). One significant method of highlighting meaning within narratives involves the contrasting relationship between abstract visuals and figurative texts. Leo Leoni's picturebook *Little Blue and Little Yellow* (1995) (fig. 3.4.6) exemplifies this contrasting dynamic, where the abstract images of colour blocks evoke feelings of ambiguity and complexity, making it challenging to discern any clear narrative content. When examining the images in isolation, readers may encounter a collage of colours that offers little in terms of story. However, when the figurative text is integrated with the visuals, a different experience unfolds, leading to a decoded narrative that reveals deeper meaning. For example, the text states, "Here he is at home with papa and mama blue," accompanied by a vibrantly coloured illustration. On the following page, the phrase "Little blue has many friends" introduces specific characters yet does not clarify their appearance when considered solely based on the text.

This juxtaposition creates an ironic counterpoint, as comprehension relies on the interdependence of words and images. The text cannot fully convey its meaning without the visual context, and the images fail to tell a cohesive story without the guiding influence of the text. Ultimately, this interplay emphasises the necessity of combining abstract visuals and figurative language to decode the story, highlighting how meaning is constructed through contrast and collaboration in the narrative experience.

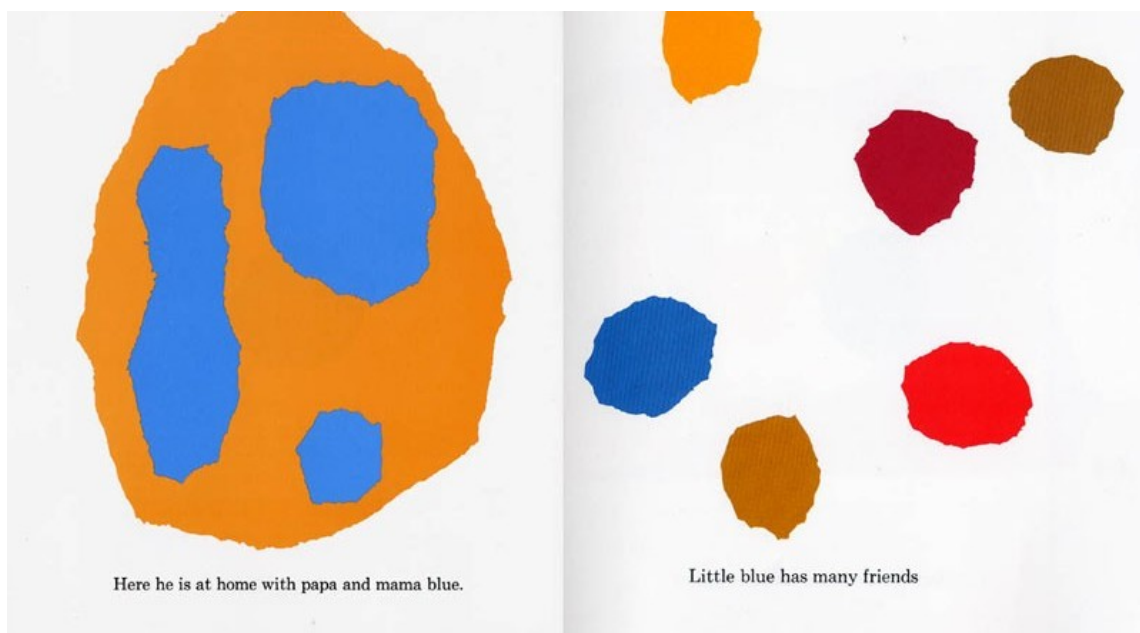


Fig 3.4.6 Lionni, L. (1995) *Little blue and little yellow*. New York: William Morrow.

Sub-category 7. Parallel Worlds- Actual and Imaged

Example 7: *Come Away from The Water, Shirley*

Parallel Narrative, as a format of contemporary literature, can stress the playful nature of picturebooks (Ramos, 2020). In this storytelling, an ironic effect emerges from the contrasting situations depicted across different images in relation to the text. In *Come Away from The Water, Shirley* (1977) (fig. 3.4.7), the text describes the situation – the text conveys a straightforward directive from Shirley's father, reminding her to be cautious with her new shoes. This line of instruction reflects a realistic, practical concern rooted in everyday life,

emphasising safety and propriety. Shirley's parents, particularly her father, embody a sense of cautious oversight, representing the adult perspective that values practicality and safety over imagination or adventure. In contrast, the accompanying illustration immerses the reader in Shirley's imaginative world as she joyfully rows on the sea, vividly illustrating the character's perspective. This stark contrast between the parental caution in the text and the whimsical, adventurous world depicted in the second image creates a rich layer of irony.

This distinction between the textual narrative, which focuses on a single, mundane event, and the visual representation, which portrays a vivid, fantastical adventure, effectively constructs a counterpointing irony. While the text grounds the reader in reality, concerned with practicality, the illustration transports them into the boundless realms of Shirley's imagination. This juxtaposition invites readers to appreciate the tension between the character's imaginative escape and the parental caution, enhancing both the humour and depth of the story while illustrating the rich interplay between reality and fantasy.

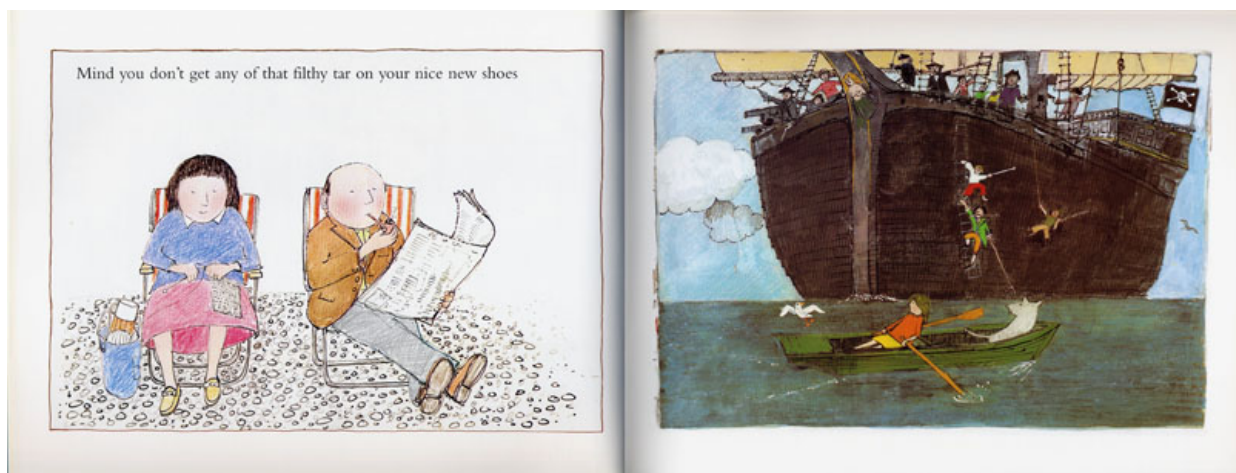


Fig 3.4.7 Burningham, J. (1977) *Come Away from the Water, Shirley*. London: Red Fox.

Sub-category 8. Fairy-tale Subversions

Example 8: *De qui a peur le grand méchant loup?*

Creating a narrative adapted to the current society is necessary to escape the limit of the socio-historical texts that prescribed our way of thinking:

It follows, then, out of necessity that we write our own texts to gain a sense not simply of what has happened in reality but what also has happened on psychological, economic, cultural and other levels, to free ourselves of the dictates of other socio-historical texts which have prescribed and ordered our thinking and need to be dis-ordered if we are to perceive for ourselves the processes that produce social structures, modes of production, and cultural artefacts (Zipes, 2006, p. 2)

The feature of this type of narrative lies in its reflection of classical fairy tales, while simultaneously subverting their traditional plots. In conventional fairy tales, characters such as wolves are typically portrayed as menacing figures threatening animals and humans alike, as famously depicted in stories like “Little Red Riding Hood.” However, in *De qui a peur le grand méchant loup?* (2014) (fig. 3.4.8), the wolf is intriguingly reimagined as a character consumed by fear of animals and even the little girl.

This subversion not only disrupts the expectations established by traditional storytelling but also cultivates amusement and intrigue for child readers as they encounter familiar characters framed in an unconventional light. The ironic counterpoint arises from this reversal of roles; the once-feared wolf becomes an object of sympathy rather than dread, encouraging readers to reevaluate their assumptions about characters and morality in fairy tales.

By presenting these well-known characters through an innovative perspective, the story not only entertains but also inspires the reader’s imagination regarding alternative narratives. This playfulness in the subversion offers fresh interpretations of classic tales, while highlighting the fluidity of roles in the fairy-tale genre, ultimately enriching the reading experience and prompting readers to explore possibilities beyond traditional narratives.



Fig 3.4.8 Shigemori, C. (2014) *De qui a peur le grand méchant loup?* Vanves: Nobi Nobi.

Chapter 4. Experimental Typography through Picturebook 1- *Responsible Me*

Experimental typography was employed to explore the concept of ironic counterpoint in picturebooks. Chapter 4 introduces theories of experimental typography, including the concept of experimental typography, the possible aspects of experimental typography for visual experiments, the significance of experimental typography, a case study, *I Love You More Than All the Stars* (2021), and an examination of ironic counterpoint through experimental typography in my picturebook *Responsible Me* (2021). Experimental typography is significant in this research because it can also function as images, bringing innovation in narrative and breaking traditional ways of reading words. The case study using a contemporary picturebook as an example in this chapter shows a series of potentials utilizing experimental typography to challenge the boundary between text and image and enhance the narrative for a story in picturebooks.

The overlapping of text and image shows an inextricable weaving with representation and discourse (Mitchell, 1995). Typically, text is employed to describe, narrate, and/or explain imagery, while imagery exemplifies, illustrates, and/or clarifies text. Instead of this traditional way, the picture book *Responsible Me* (2021) experimented with creating an ironic counterpoint. It was inspired by my childhood experience – trying to be a chicken mother to hatch an egg taken from a refrigerator. To enrich the story, I also combined the Children's Day from different countries as cultural elements behind the main story. I selected some countries because I was interested in the imagery of these festivals. It includes Children's Day in Japan which children dress in traditional costumes and hold colourful carp flags; Children's Day in Colombia which children put ghost makeup on their faces; Children's Day in Sweden – it is called Saint Lucy's Day for girls who wear white dresses with candles in their hands, and it is called Lobster Festival for boys dressing up as lobsters as a kind of animal considered to be a symbol of bravery in Sweden, and Children's Day in Spain which children pick up candies from the Three Kings.

In *Responsible Me* (2021), texts and images can never simply repeat or parallel each other due to the inherent distinctions between verbal and visual modes of communication

(Nodelman, 1988). Ironic counterpoint utilises the distinctions of each mode when the text shows the character trying to be responsible, while the imagery shows the character being affected by the surrounding activities or environment rather than attending to the egg. It is also the third story, which is the real meaning of this picture book's narrative when text and image complement each other to generate meaning in the multimodal context, and therefore, meaning is created through the selections of verbal and visual modalities from creators (Wu, 2014).

4.1 Theories in Experimental Typography

4.1.1 The Concept of Experimental Typography

Experimental typography enables words to function as images, and meaning is generated through the juxtaposition of both visual and semantic aspects:

As visual elements, the words make the page an image in which they function also as language [...] After this point, the line between the linguistic and visual aspects of representation in/of language demarcates two simultaneously occurring processes of signification within a single work. The meaning of the words derived as much from their position, their relation to each other as visual elements and their movement as a series of marks across the sheet, as from their semantic value. Their differential linguistic operation cannot be isolated from their phenomenological appearance on the page: both are at work in the production of signification. (Drucker, 1994, p. 137)

The statement conveys that the boundary between words and images in experimental typography becomes blurred because the experimental words have a potential beyond their semantic function. Those words can also work as visual images. It is crucial that they work simultaneously as both visual text and textual images and cannot be separated. The meaning of the experimental fonts is generated from their semantic level, their position on the page, and their visual interrelationship, so examining their meaning requires careful consideration. The aim of the experimental typography is to connect closely the form with the function:

Designers engage with words, typographically expressing them with purpose and poise. Typography is a process, a refined craft making language visible. Designers shape language with type and give words life and power to speak text fluently [...] A central goal of designers is marrying content and

form. Function balances with aesthetics. Boundless methods exist to visualize text with type. (Cullen, 2012, p. 7)

Sometimes, type can function as an image beyond its semantic meaning:

In addition to its function of using letters to communicate words, type is also used as a graphic device that speaks more through its visual representation than the meanings of the constituent letters. (Ambrose and Harris, 2011, p. 154)

Typographic layout turning characters into texts generates meaning “in the way they are organized visually”:

by adding extra layers of typographic information, our reading of the word is transformed into something other than its original meaning. (Triggs, 2003, p. 8)

The visual representation in experimental typography is crucial in terms of the communication of significance. The multiple ways of presenting the same texts visually produce different meanings and may alter the original meaning. Also, experimental fonts have substantial visual information, so it is not difficult to understand “the impossibility of separating the elements of image from the elements of language” (Drucker, 1994, p. 168). Meanwhile, Experimental typography reinforces “the visual properties of written language” (Drucker, 1994, p. 191). Visual components are considered a necessary and intriguing part of the experimental typography itself. Various visual factors can affect the meaning of the fonts. Due to the visual characteristics of the experimental typography, the relation between its textual signification and visual meaning cannot be ignored:

When one looks for experimental typography today, what one finds is not so much new typography as new relationships between text and image [...] and verbal signification, interacting with imagery and symbols, is instead relied upon. (McCoy and Frej, 2009, p. 82)

From this perspective, the core of the experimental typography is associated with the relationship between its verbal meaning and its visual signification. This dependence happens in the internal relationship between its verbal significance and visual manifestation and the external relationship between its actual meaning generated by the textual and visual properties and other textual or visual information. Because of multi-layered meanings

embedded in the experimental typography, it is possible that the reader may not comprehend the actual meaning of absorbing all information at first:

Objective communication is enhanced by deferred meanings, hidden stories, and alternative interpretations. (McCoy and Frej, 2009, p. 83)

However, it is the deferred meanings and hidden stories that add to the storytelling, enable the experimental typography to be entertaining, and attract readers to explore the multi-layered possibilities. The traditional way of reading text or seeing images has been challenged:

McCoy challenged the traditional Modernist ideal of reading text and seeing pictures, suggesting you could read pictures and see text, held up as a postmodern icon of graphic design for its articulation of postmodern design practice. The postmodern ideal flipped the modernist hierarchy in graphic design, it used text and image in a variety of ways. It allowed for added complexity and depth and meaning to be portrayed through typography, by treating it as, and using it in conjunction with, imagery. (Ambrose and Salter, 2019, p. 3)

There is an interesting shift from “reading text and seeing pictures” to “reading pictures and seeing text,” which means, on the one hand, the text can own not only a semantic meaning but also visual significance, and on the other hand, the image can also be seen as visual text and can be interpreted with verbal significance. Experimental typography as a postmodern design practice allows various ways of employing text and images. Complexity, depth, and meaning are added by using experimental typography, especially when the text combines with the picture.

4.1.2 Potential Aspects of Visual Experiments in Experimental Typography

Additionally, for a specific project with particular meanings to convey, the importance of experimental typography becomes obvious:

[...] typographic design is always contextual in nature: different problems require different solutions. (Carter, 1997, p. 7)

It is hard to imagine if only one unified typography is used in every picturebook. In picturebooks, the story is usually unique, dealing with a specific problem, so the solution for the typography may need to respond to the context as a potential solution. Through a free

exploration of the visual and verbal syntax as well as the relationships between the words and the pictures, typographic experimentation can extend the boundaries of language, and it is also crucial in experimental typography to conduct various experiments:

When experimenting, try sampling many different typefaces. Try some that you have never before used. Try them in different and obscure combinations, and try them without any preconceptions or expectations of outcome. (Carter, 1997, p. 27)

From the statement above, the core of the experimental typography highlights the concept of an innovative and bold experiment instead of having preconceptions in mind.

Various combinations of experimental typography bring different visual effects, and the distinctive visual effect has unique meanings and affects the reader's understanding.

Notably, visual syntax affects the representation of experimental typography:

Because type is viewed as well as read, it is governed by the principles of visual syntax [...] The first step in exploring type is to have an understanding of these factors and the ability to consciously apply them. A morphology is collection of factors that help us work with type. It can be used by designers as an effective tool to explore typographic possibilities and seek new alternatives. (Carter, 1997, p.24)

From this point, we can be aware that type is essential to make the language alive and strengthens the text. The primary objective of the experimental type is to link the content with form to balance function and aesthetics. Analysing the related visual factors would help explore their possibilities in terms of using experimental types. The factors influencing typography include scale relationships, distorting, elaboration, texture, dimensionality, balance, shapes, rhythm, grouping, and direction. The representation of type is, to a large extent, affected by scale relationships because the changes in scales can emphasize or de-emphasize components:

Relative to larger elements, small type whispers, is timid and shy; relative to smaller elements, large type screams, is forceful and adamant. (Carter, 1997, p. 29)

In picturebooks, larger fonts are stressed in a confirmed and confident way. Comparatively, smaller fonts are de-emphasized with an unassertive effect. Distorting typography brings extended meaning by presenting unfamiliar properties:

Distorting type provocatively transports it into the visual realm, for letters and words that function normally as symbols for spoken sound are transformed into expressive images. When type is distorted, it acquires strange and unfamiliar visual characteristics. Depending upon how and why it is distorted, there exists a potential for new and extended meaning. Fragmented type, for example, may allude to disjointed conversation or chaos, while blurred type may exude calm as it floats softly and atmospherically. Skewed and stretched type can represent movement or direction. Used in combination, the specific factors guiding type distortion can lend nearly infinite possibilities. (Carter, 1997, p. 34)

It provides a challenging way of experimenting with typography due to the bizarre and unusual visual appearance. Distorted typography gives new significance. When presented as fragmented, the visual effect conveys a disorder or separated communication. Yet when it turns to be stretched, it shows a sense of direction. There are many possibilities if the distorted type is conjoined with other forms.

In addition to scale relationships, elaboration is also one of the visual approaches when experimenting with letters:

To elaborate upon type is to add or subtract from its complexity, or augment it with detail or ornamentation. The result of elaboration is a heightened emphasis of typographic elements. Enclosing letters or words within a shape, isolating letters by means of color, and extending letter strokes are all tangible examples of elaboration. Removing letters or words from text emphasizes these elements by means of their conspicuous absence. (Carter, 1997, p. 36)

The concept of elaboration appears necessary in experimental typography if the designer wants to emphasize or explain the meaning of fonts to the narrative of the content.

A few approaches can achieve the effect of elaboration – adding more details, using a shape to enclose letters, separating letters by colours, and expanding the strokes of letters.

Meanwhile, texture adds quality to the typography and the readers' tactile sensation is recalled due to the textured types:

When type is expressed as visual texture, it evokes tactile sensations. A reader's individual response to texture depends on a number of factors, among which are the fineness or coarseness of a texture, and the regularity or irregularity of its pattern. (Carter, 1997, p. 39)

That means the distinct quality of texture and diverse shapes of its patterns decide different reactions or feelings for the various readers, allowing more possibilities for experiments and

results. The effect of dimensionality can be achieved through enlarging or reducing the scale of the letters and the use of colours or other visual effects:

The most basic means of achieving illusory space is to juxtapose letters of one size to those of another. Smaller letters appear to recede, while larger forms appear to advance in space. This effect is heightened with the use of color or tone: light and cool colors recede; dark and warm colors advance. The illusion of spatial dimension is further intensified when letters appear to zoom forward or backward in space, bend, and warp, or cast shadows. (Carter, 1997, p. 41)

Accordingly, letters in smaller scales present a visual effect of moving back, and letters in larger shapes move forward. The change of colour also impacts the dimensionality of the fonts. A recession happens when the colours are in cool and light states, and a forward appearance occurs when the colours turn dark and warm. Other approaches can also augment the visual effects, including bent, warped, and cast shadows. Tonality is one of the factors that can emphasize or de-emphasize the types in the space:

Adjusting the tone of type provides a way to control emphasis: the lighter the type, and the closer it approximates the tone or value of its background, the more it appears to recede in space. Type assigned lighter tones is de-emphasized in relationship to darker type, providing a means to control the visual strength of elements within a given space. (Carter, 1997, p. 42)

This shows that the change in visual strength can be achieved by tonality. If the fonts are in a lighter presentation, the fonts tend to recede in terms of space. In reverse, the darker type brings the effect of advancing in space. As a result, in a certain space, the adjustments of the reinforcement depend on whether the type represents a lighter or darker state. Other factors include rhythm, balance, direction, grouping, and shapes. Rhythm can be created when the experimental typography is against one another through a distinct rhythmic sequence, and the distinction in typography can be constructed by “juxtaposing different type sizes, faces, weights, widths, colours, and the intervals of space separating typographic elements” (Carter, 1997). For balance, asymmetrical organization can produce a dynamic visual tension compared with symmetrical organization, generating a formal atmosphere; shapes and positions exert directional energy of typography, and the energy varies when rotated with different angles; circular directions produce a whimsical setting; grouping can enhance the meaning of the text; shapes as typographic element can connote meanings highlighting the type’s content.

4.1.3 The Significance of Experimental Typography

Challenging norms while keeping some parts that are familiar to the audience is a way of keeping a language alive:

Challenging norms is essential to maintaining any living language [...] When experimenting typographically, it is useful to retain some familiar hook so the reader is not entirely at sea, and then play with shapes and materials in such a way that the surprising elements can be understood [...] even though the result may initially shock the system, the user or viewer will come to appreciate the challenge. (Heller and Anderson, 2016, p. 84)

Seemingly, innovations in experimental typography arise from the bold experiments with remaining elements familiar to the readers. To challenge the conventional ways of designing typography keeps language vivid and alive. Readers are expected to gradually accept the new phenomenon in typography when the experiments of shapes and materials are in the methods that break the traditional approaches while maintaining some typical components.

4.2 Case Study: Experimental Typography in Postmodern Picturebooks

In a contemporary picturebook, *I Love You More Than All the Stars* (2022), the evidence of manipulation of visual properties of the experimental typography appears to be greatly clear. It is a picturebook between two characters, mainly expressing one person's affection for another. From this book, it looks like two children building a strong friendship. A similar topic about love can be found in the classical picturebook *Guess How Much I Love You* (2014), but what distinguishes *I Love You More Than All the Stars* (2022) is the employment of experimental typography.

A spread with two characters looking up to the sky through an astronomical telescope (fig.4.2.1) shows three ways of highlighting keywords that the creator intends to stress: adding texture, adding weight, and adding background. Concretely, the word "stars" is filled with a group of graphics of small stars. As this spread spends most of the spaces depicting a starry night, the textured word "stars" aligns with the visual information and enhances the star-related theme. Another word, "strong", is added weight in the text. The semantic

meaning shows the character's love is strong according to the sentence, so the keyword "strong" looks visually firm and potent after being weighted. Similarly, the word "bright" is surrounded by visual light in the sentence, which responds to the bright love that the author tries to express.

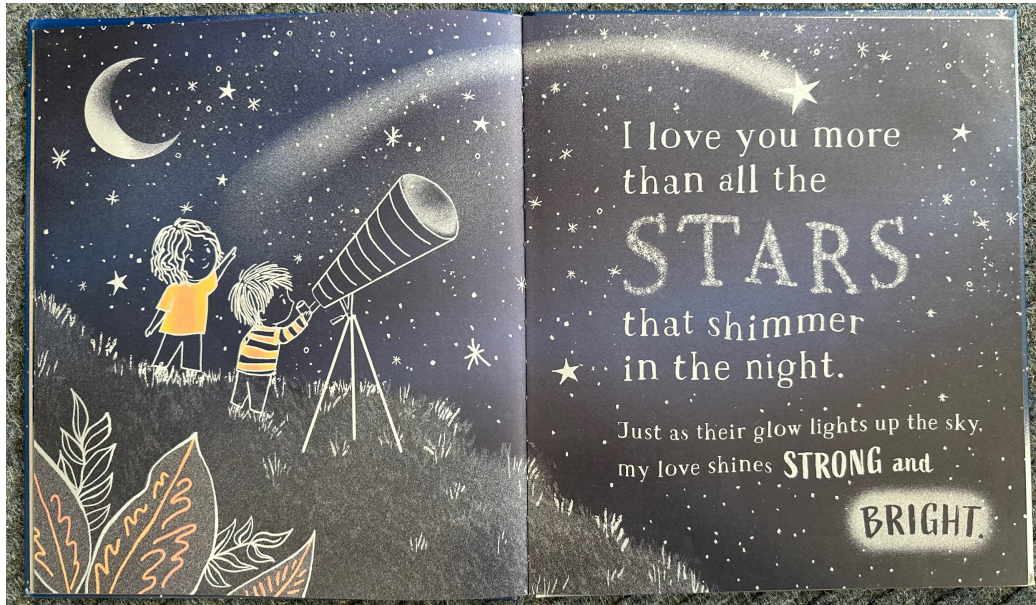


Fig. 4.2.1 Davies, B. and Brown, D. (2021) *I Love You More Than All the Stars*. Wilton: Tiger Tales.

An ironic effect arises when the text becomes part of the picture, adding visual interest to the narrative of the story (fig.4.2.2). There is a big sun with sun rays in this spread, and the text "I love you more than SUMMER DAYS and more than SUNSETS, TOO" function as other sun rays in the picture in terms of position and direction, bringing visual flavour to the readers. Notably, visual details also assist the concept in the design of the typography. The words closer to the sun in the picturebook look more apparent and brighter than those farther from the sun, which helps the design of the typography present more naturally and convincingly. It shows that the text can be part of the picture; however, pictorial elements can compose a word. In the text "I love you HIGHER than the CLOUDS" (fig.4.2.3), the word "HIGHER" is comprised of graphic stars. To some extent, the pictorial word "HIGHER" may imply that the degree of love is higher than the clouds, and higher than the stars. Another possible interpretation is that the word "HIGHER", composed of visual stars, suggests how

love can be higher because in the pictures, two characters are climbing on a ladder made of stars.



Fig. 4.2.2 Davies, B. and Brown, D. (2021) *I Love You More Than All the Stars*. Wilton: Tiger Tales.

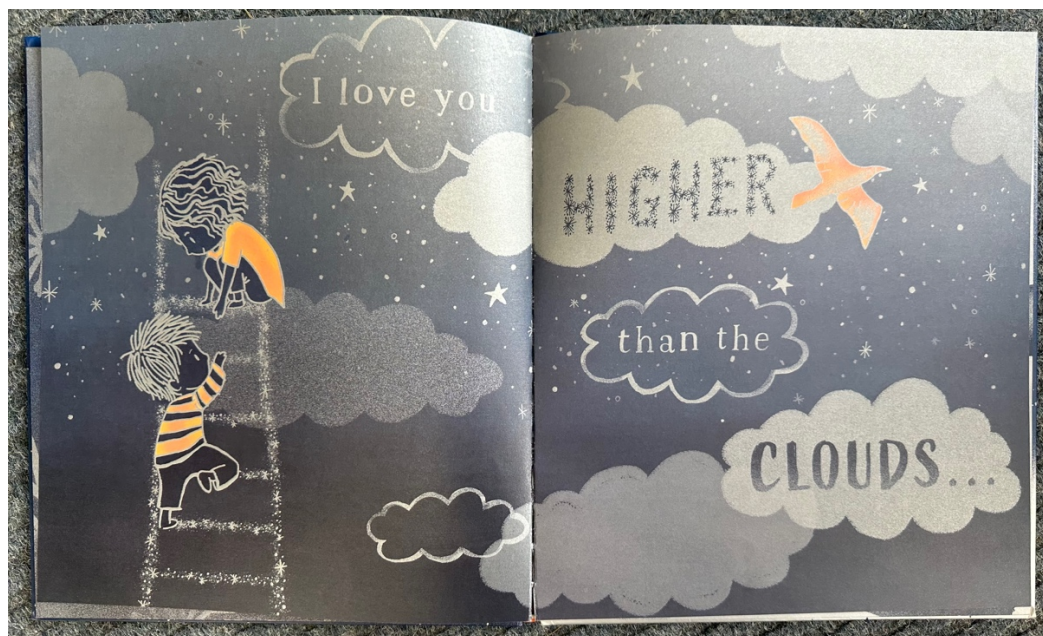


Fig. 4.2.3 Davies, B. and Brown, D. (2021) *I Love You More Than All the Stars*. Wilton: Tiger Tales.

Moreover, text imitating the shape, texture, and the colour of the pictorial components forms an ironic effect, breaking the boundaries between what the text is and what belongs to the image. For instance, in the text “I love you deeper than the sea, its waves of ENDLESS BLUE” (fig.4.2.4), three words appear to stand out. The first one is “waves”, presented in a curved shape of real waves; the second one is “ENDLESS,” the top half of the word looks normal as this half is exposed to the air, whereas the bottom half is filled with water ripples, strengthening its visual function and creating ambiguous definition of whether “ENDLESS” is a word or it is a visual element in the picture; the third one is “BLUE,” and it concerns spatial factor as the colour of the word is darker when the bottom portion of the word locates deeper.



Fig. 4.2.4 Davies, B. and Brown, D. (2021) *I Love You More Than All the Stars*. Wilton: Tiger Tales.

In addition to the various approaches to enhancing keywords, the layout of words can also be designed based on the requirement of verbal significance. In a spreading with a storm (fig.4.2.5), the whole sentence “I love you stronger than a storm with winds that sign and swirl” follows the path of the visual storm. Conversely, the storm is also composed of a visual sentence. Also, sometimes, words on the body of a visual object are integrated with the visual components. For instance, the picture (fig.4.2.6) has two ways of depicting the

raindrops – solid and hollow. In the text “...and sweeter than the RAIN,” the letters “R,” “A,” “I,” and “N” are on the body of raindrops, respectively. Two letters “R” and “I” show in hollow shapes, and the others “A” and “N” present in solid looks. In this way, words naturally integrate with visual elements, forming a counterpoint relationship with the picture humorously.



Fig. 4.2.5 Davies, B. and Brown, D. (2021) *I Love You More Than All the Stars*. Wilton: Tiger Tales.



Fig. 4.2.6 Davies, B. and Brown, D. (2021) *I Love You More Than All the Stars*. Wilton: Tiger Tales.

The manners of employing experimental typography in this picturebook can be categorized into six aspects. Highlighting keywords by adding weight, texture and background, filling typography with pictorial elements that are relevant to the visual content, typography functioning as part of the pictorial element, using pictorial elements to form typography, imitating typography that resembles shape, texture and colour of the picture and meaningful layout of typography that corresponds to the pictorial content. Because of the diverse approaches experimentally utilising typography, this picturebook can be considered an excellent example of the contemporary trend of experimental typography.

Many other picturebooks that use similar experimental techniques as

I Love You More Than All the Stars (2021) (fig.4.2.5). In terms of layout, the experimental typography following the path of storm in *I Love You More Than All the Stars* (2021) is similar to *The Queen's Hat* (2014) (fig.4.2.10) or *The Fly* (2011) (fig.4.2.11) which both follow the same principle, with the former following the path of wind and the latter chasing the orbit of a flying fly. A little difference appears in *A Possum's Tail* (2014) (fig.4.2.12), where the curved shape of the sentence not merely suggests a road leading the little girl forwarding but also functions as a branch held by a monkey compared with a word 'tree' combining branches visually in *Are You Sitting Comfortably?* (2016) (fig.4.2.13).

Based on this point, two picturebooks cleverly utilised the function of the shape of experimental typography. In *Look* (2018) (fig.4.2.14), a baboon jumps up and grabs both rings composed of "oo" from the word "baboon." In *Hello* (2019) (fig.4.2.15), when the "ll" from the word "lullaby" is replaced by the legs of a person, it shows the person is singing a lullaby, supporting the narrative cleverly. In addition, the inclination of experimental typography can also enable the narrative to be vivid. In *Two Can* (2016), the words "can't" tilt to the left and the right, imitating the action of two characters, resulting in a dynamic visual effect (fig.4.2.7).

Notably, the larger size of the font can suggest a stronger feeling for a character. In *Snail* (2023) (fig.4.2.8), the big size of "AAAAH" shows that a little boy feels panic when driving the bike to an area filled with grass. Also, the bigger the words are the stronger the emotion of the character. In *Two Can* (2016), the words "can't" repeat and present bigger, indicating a gradual change or an increase of emotion (fig.4.2.7). The gradual change is not limited to the size of the experimental typography but also the transparency of fonts. In *There Is a Tribe of Kids* (2016) (fig.4.2.9), the sentence "There was a NIGHT of DREAMS" demonstrates a change of transparency from bright to dark, creating a mysterious atmosphere about what dreams they could be.

Sometimes, experimental typography provides supplementary information as "sub-text" by showing up on placards, notes, or postcards. In *Slug Life* (2024) (fig.4.2.16), the note "BEWARE GARDENERS" on the wall indicates that gardeners can be dangerous to these slugs. A postcard explaining about what the feeling of the Bat when it arrived home in *Bob's*

Blue Period (2018) (fig.4.2.17) and a placard with a red line across an image of an elephant functioning as pictorial text suggests that the public is refusing the elephant in *Mrs Bibi's Elephant* (2020) (fig.4.2.18). This “sub-text” enriches the narrative and offers more messages for readers to reflect and imagine. Another point to consider is that unknown words that do not belong to any existing language can bring readers to the “Secondary World” (Auden,2015). Both *Du Iz Tak?* (2016) (fig.4.2.19) and *Door* (2018) (fig.4.2.20) adopt exclusive words in the text communicated by the characters in the picturebooks, with the words in the latter picturebook being more peculiar.

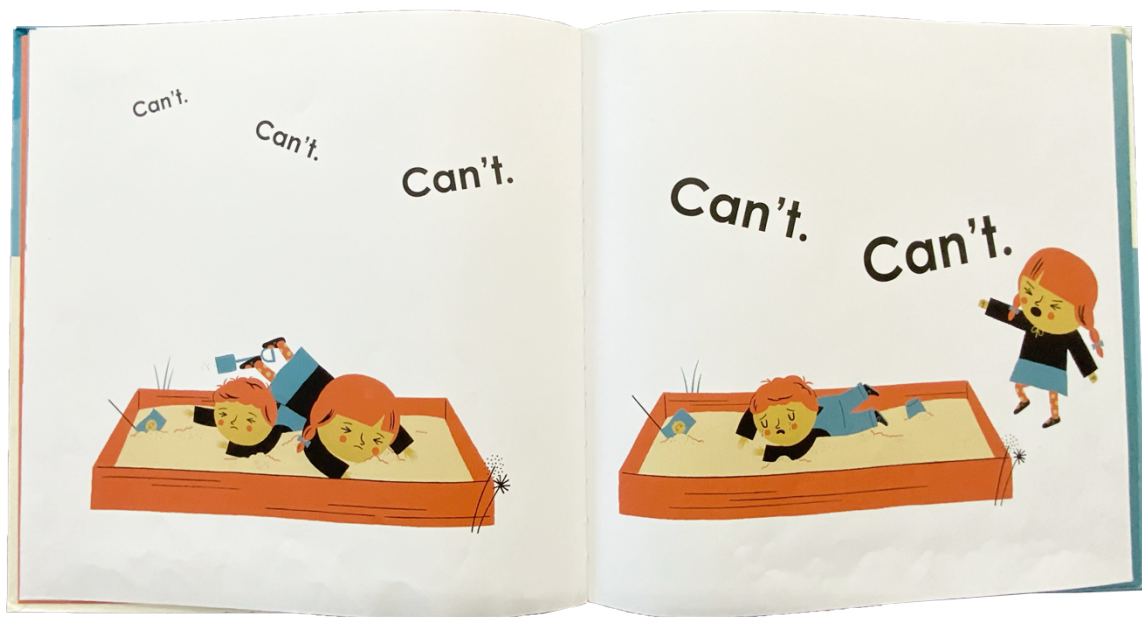


Fig. 4.2.7 Prasadam-Halls, S. and Javens, B. (2016) *Two Can.* London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books.

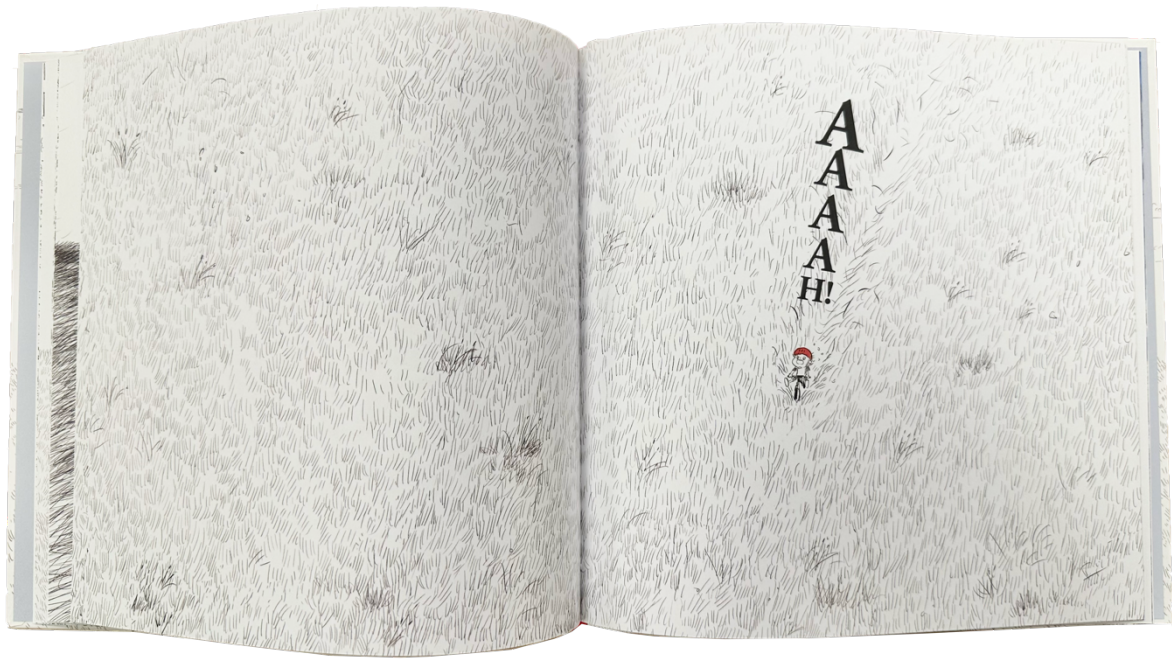


Fig. 4.2.8 Kim, M. (2023) *Snail*. London: Pushkin Children's Books.



Fig. 4.2.9 Smith, L. (2016) *There Is a Tribe of Kids*. New York: Roaring Brook.



Fig. 4.2.10 Antony, S. (2014) *The Queen's Hat*. London: Hodder Children's Books.



Fig. 4.2.11 Horacek, P. (2011) *The Fly*. London: Walker Books Ltd.



Fig. 4.2.12 Dawnay, G. and Barrow, A. (2014) *A Possum's Tail*. London: Tate Publishing.



Fig. 4.2.13 Hodgkinson, L. (2016) *Are You Sitting Comfortably?* London: Bloomsbury Children's Books.

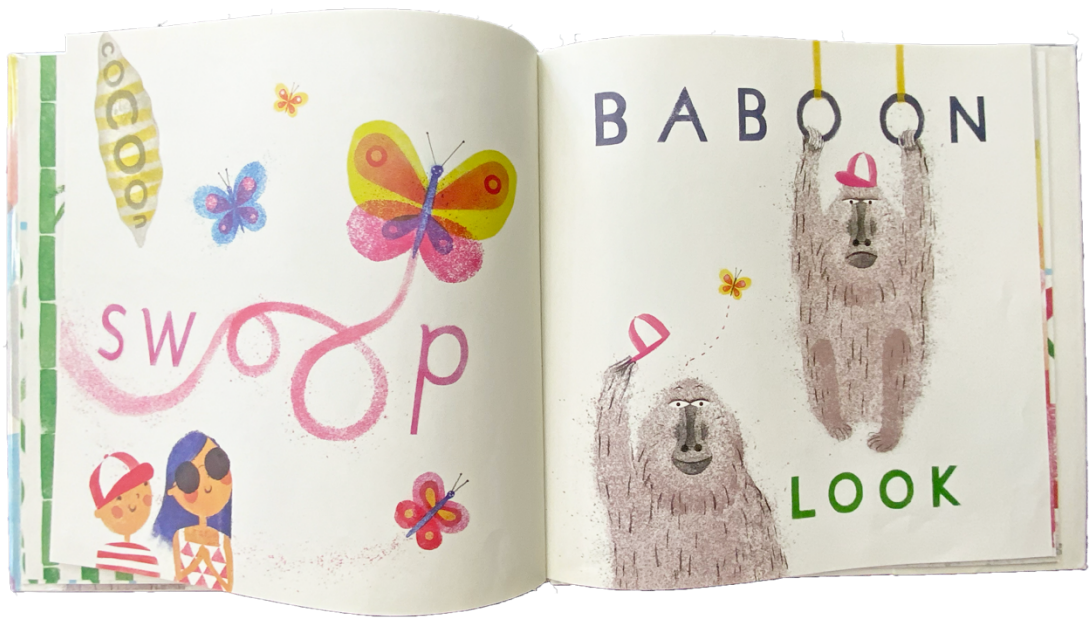


Fig. 4.2.14 Woodcock, F. (2018) *Look*. New York: Greenwillow Books.

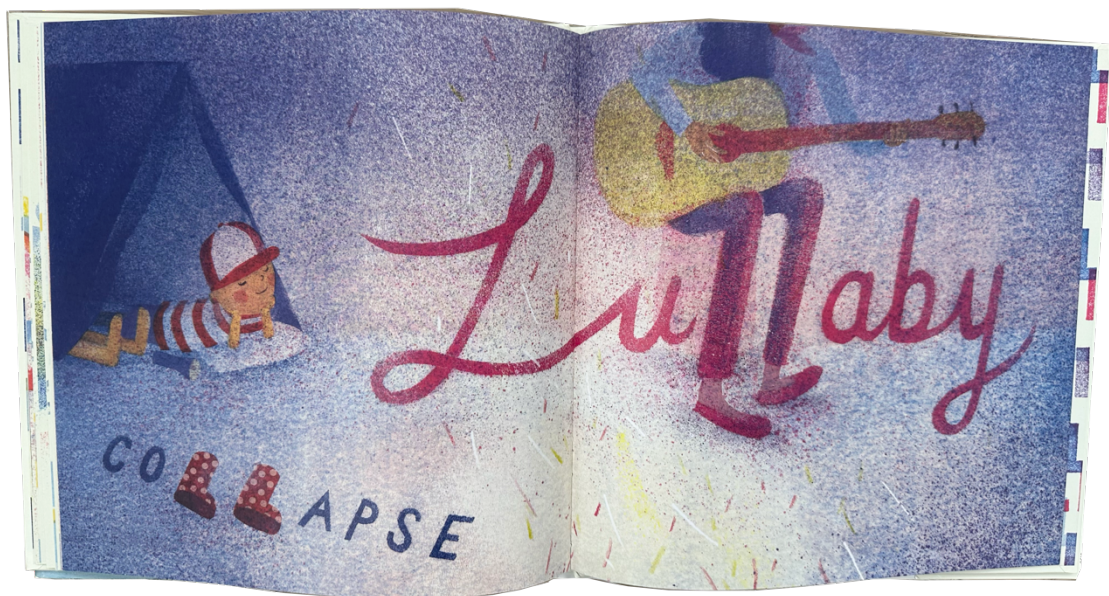


Fig. 4.2.15 Woodcock, F. (2019) *Hello*. New York: Greenwillow Books.



Fig. 4.2.16 Kellaway, M. (2024) *Slug Life*. Edinburgh: Rocket Bird Books.



Fig. 4.2.17 Deuchars, M. (2018) *Bob's Blue Period*. London: Laurence King.



Fig. 4.2.18 Dalvand, R. (2020) *Mrs Bibi's Elephant*. London: Flying Eye Books.



Fig. 4.2.19 Ellis, C. (2016) *Du Iz Tak?* London: Walker Books Ltd.



Fig. 4.2.20 Lee, J. (2018) *Door*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

4.3 Examining Ironic Counterpoint through Experimental Typography in *Responsible Me*

Experiments on typographic text in a picture book are crucial because discovering various possibilities that break convention through experimentation is a part of designing (Solomon, 2013). Also, instead of having an established rules or being formulaic, the typographic experiments are more about innovation. It can be trying something out and discovering an unknown effect (Triggs, 2003). It has also been suggested that experimental typography is an approach to demonstrating and interpreting information. Based on the reasons above, this project would focus primarily on experimental typography and seek a suitable selection to maximise the effect of ironic counterpoint in *Responsible Me* (2021).

The size of the texts could influence the effect of ironic counterpoint as the control of type based on scale and weight and its integrated placement could reinforce dialogue and the delivery of narrative (Triggs, 2003). For example, in a spread of *Responsible Me* (2021), I intend to create ironic counterpoint by presenting the text "Ghosts visit." in a larger size (fig.4.3.1) and the words "I am not afraid." in a smaller size (fig.4.3.2) because the smaller

size of “I am not afraid.” could imply “fear” is the fact contrasted with the storytelling on the surface, which enhance the effect of ironic counterpoint.



Fig.4.3.1 Typography test of Columbia children's day 1



Fig.4.3.2 Typography test of Columbia children's day 2

Text weight contributes to the effect of ironic counterpoint through the letters as signifiers, which means that their value is decided by a graphic relation to other letters, considering weight, scale, and typeface (Drucker, 1994). For example, I used bolder letters for text “Ghosts visit.” (fig.4.3.3) and thinner letters for the text “I am not afraid.” (fig.4.3.4) to visually suggest the character's fear of the children in ghost makeup, thus creating a contrast with the stated lack of fear. The effect of ironic counterpoint results from this hint of the text through the change of text weight.



Fig.4.3.3 Typography test of Columbia children's day 3



Fig.4.3.4 Typography test of Columbia children's day 4

The spacing of the letters also contributes to the effect of ironic counterpoint as the internal space that the design occupies, and the external space of the surrounding area will influence each other. Space in typography includes letter space, word space and line space, and it is important to be aware of the components within the internal space because they need to contribute to the central theme, and external space can also influence design (Solomon, 2013). In a spread of *Responsible Me* (2021), I positioned the text "I will not do anything except" far away from the text "taking care of the egg" (fig.4.3.5). My intention was to explore how this spacing might weaken the ironic counterpoint compared to a closer placement (fig.4.3.6) as it takes longer time for readers to search for the following half sentence under the situation that there is no change of text size and text weight.



Fig.4.3.5 Typography test of Spain children's day 1



Fig.4.3.6 Typography test of Spain children's day 2

The arrangement of text is one element associated with the effect of ironic counterpoint, as readability can be affected by line length and word spacing (Harkins, 2013). Instead of a traditional and horizontal arrangement (fig.4.3.7), I chose a vertical and non-traditional positioning (fig.4.3.6) to create visual contrast with the serious text “I will not do anything except taking care of the egg”, thereby enhancing the ironic counterpoint.



Fig.4.3.7 Typography test of Spain children's day 3

Letters represent our voice visually through the style of typography we utilize (Escalera and Kirkendall, 2016). Through this point, different styles can speak directly to the intended message we aim to deliver. Designing intentional texts means considering an appropriate typeface to suit the narrative. Besides, type can set the tone of a page (Harkins, 2013). I designed the text “I am not afraid” with trembling shapes to visually represent the character's fear (fig.4.3.8), creating a contrast between the text's visual tone and its literal meaning of the text, thus generating an ironic effect.



Fig.4.3.8 Final typography for the spread of Columbia children's day

Designing typographic texts containing multiple layers of information would help to achieve the effect of ironic counterpoint in a picture book. According to a situation that the multiple layering of information of typefaces appears to be commonplace, if we add extra layers of typographic information, the message communicated by the words can be transformed into something new rather than the original meaning (Triggs, 2003). Letters could be considered as shapes conveying meaning when constructed in specific approaches. Besides, types own their distinctive forms carrying semiotic value (Harkins, 2013). For example, in the text "I did" in one spread of *Responsible Me* (2021) (fig. 4.3.9), I designed the letters "d"s as sleeping eyes to metaphorically represent the character's actual action—sleeping—ironically contrasting with the literal meaning of "hard work". The design of the typographical shape adds another layer of information to the narrative of a picture book. This multi-layered information within the typographic design can create an ironic counterpoint.



Fig.4.3.9 Final typography for the spread of character sleeping

As type is designed to deliver a message (Baines and Haslam, 2002), the design of a composed word with the combination of letter and pictorial elements may construct “narrative typography,” a typographic form carrying additional layers of meaning (Lupton, 1996) and thus producing an ironically counterpointing effect. For example, in the word “except” (fig. 4.3.10) in *Responsible Me* (2021), I designed the letter “e” as an egg. The pictorial element suggests the actual narrative, which means the character would do anything except take care of the egg, contrasting with the message displayed from the verbal text – taking care of the egg. Narrative typography, through the combination of letter and pictorial elements, creates an ironic counterpoint.



Fig.4.3.10 Final typography for the spread of Spain children's day

Positioning text on a character's body or the background creates different visual effects that influence our understanding of the narrative of the picture book. It is worthwhile to experiment on the gap between explicit meaning and gap (Triggs, 2003). For instance, the phrase "I will join them" (fig. 4.3.11), part of the sentence "There is no chance I will join them", are key parts that are generating ironic counterpoint in this image as the words stand out when placed on the character's dress. This placement visually highlights the girl's actions contradicting the statement. In contrast, the background text is less visually prominent and may diminish the ironic effect. My intention was to explore this contrast in visual emphasis.



Fig.4.3.11 Final typography for the spread of Sweden children's day

It is suggested that good typography shows the actual image of meaning (Triggs, 2003). For example, in a spread of *Responsible Me* (2021) (fig.4.3.12), the text shows, "Waves come, I will not leave the egg," but the image shows the character leaving the egg. I intended this discrepancy between text and image to require the reader to consider both modalities simultaneously to understand the narrative.



Fig.4.3.12 Final typography for the spread of Japan children's day

One highlighted keyword could strengthen the effect of ironic counterpoint by using size or colour in limited typefaces (Baines and Haslam, 2002), and the stressed type may dominate and reflect the inspiration of the creator. For example, I enlarged the word "afraid" (fig. 4.3.13) in *Responsible Me* (2021) to highlight the character's actual feelings, which create a counterpointing contrast between the implied fact and the literal representation in the typography.



Fig.4.3.13 Final typography for another spread of Sweden children's day

Positioning text across different pages can create ambiguity in understating, and an ironic counterpoint can be produced by the ambiguous narrative caused by typographic location. This means that an ironic counterpoint can arise from the interaction between the content of words and images, and typography enhances it. It had been believed that the experimental type plays a revealing role and possesses its own voice (Triggs, 2003). For example, I placed the text "my baby chick" (fig. 4.3.14) on the same page as the hen to imply the ownership of the chick by the hen rather than the character, aiming to create ironic counterpoint through the ambiguous relationship between the literal meaning and the facts shown in the image.



Fig.4.3.14 Final typography of the ending page

In conclusion, through the typographic experiments, some typographic texts work more effectively to enhance the ironic counterpoint. The reason is that type users must test to ensure the selected types are suitable for the purpose (Harkins, 2013), and unusual typefaces are little used but perfect for one-off projects when hundreds of regularly available typefaces fail to capture the essence of the message you intend to convey. My design for this project captures the narrative's essence by manipulating position, size, shape, arrangement, text weight, spacing, keyword highlighting, and combined word.

4.4 Analysis and Reflections of Final Output of *Responsible Me*

- Cover Design Implying Ironic Counterpoint

To present ironic counterpoint, the core of this picture book practice, on the cover, I selected three key elements that may imply and correspond to this concept of ironic counterpoint – the girl character, a hen, and the egg. In the design of the cover (fig. 4.4.1), the character is sleeping when the hen is taking care of the egg, meaning that the character is visually doing what contrasts with the text and produces an ironic counterpoint.



Fig.4.4.1 Cover design of the picture book *Responsible Me* (2021)

- Pacing and Rhythm through Texts and Visuals

layouts (fig. 4.4.2) are below:

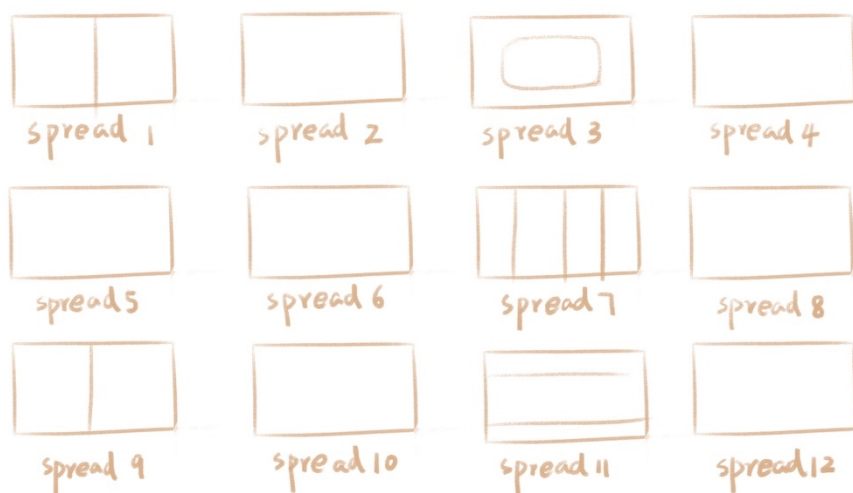


Fig.4.4.2 Layouts of the Picturebook *Responsible Me* (2021)

The interanimation of multimodal texts and images creates space for readers to expand their visual imaginations, which can be achieved through minimal text and spare images (Clement, 2013). To achieve this, I designed the texts in *Responsible Me* (2021) to be minimal, leaving space for readers' imaginations.

Story texts are below:

Spread 1: Hello egg, I will take care of you.

Spread 2: Waves come, I will not leave the egg.

Spread 3: Ghosts come, I will not leave the egg.

Spread 4: I am not afraid at all.

Spread 5: There is no chance I will join them.

Spread 6: I will not do anything except taking care of the egg.

Spread 7: no text.

Spread 8: no text.

Spread 9: no text.

Spread 10: With all the hard work I did.

Spread 11: no text.

Spread 12: Here comes my baby chick.

Responsible Me (2021) focused especially on the typographic side of the picture book as two different sets of languages exist in a picture book: the language belonging to the sequence of texts and the language linking to the sequence of images (Sipe, 2012). From a semiotic perspective, the two modalities of texts and images can be considered systems of “signs” in picture books with sub-sign systems (Sipe, 2012). The typographic sub-sign here can include size, position, shape, and other aspects. I designed the opening page (fig. 4.4.3) to demonstrate the promised action by the character by placing text around the egg, which is in line with the meaning of the text. This “congruency” (Schwarcz, 1982) of text and image relationship in the first spread is a preparation for the contrasts later when the designed typographic texts do not concur with the literal meaning of the texts, generating ironic counterpoint.



Fig.4.4.3 Spread 1 of the picturebook *Responsible Me* (2021)

The highlighted contrast and difference show how the ironic counterpoint appears in the narrative of this picturebook. Words in picture book do not exist in isolation because they interact with pictures from the ecological perspective of picturebooks (Lewis, 2001).

Therefore, the literal text in the picture book is influenced by the image. It is necessary to

combine both pictures and words to comprehend the true meaning of the narrative. For example, in spread 2 (fig. 4.4.4) and spread 3 (fig. 4.4.5), I intended to stress the contrast and highlight the difference between text and image when literal texts show one thing, and the image reveals the opposite, thus resulting in the effect of ironic counterpoint.



Fig.4.4.4 Spread 2 of the picturebook *Responsible Me* (2021)



Fig.4.4.5 Spread 3 of the picturebook *Responsible Me* (2021)

The “deviation” (Schwarcz, 1982) or “divergence” (Wu, 2014) in the text and image relationship can shape the book’s impact and the reader’s engagement in decoding. In spread 4 (fig. 4.4.6), spread 5 (fig. 4.4.7) and spread 6 (fig. 4.4.8), I visually depict the character as affected by the surrounding environments and activities, while the text conveys the opposite from different angles – not afraid of the lobster boys, to not join the festival and only take care of the egg. It is the various perspectives of the inconsistency that cause a powerful effect of ironic counterpoint in the picture book’s storytelling.



Fig.4.4.6 Spread 4 of the picturebook *Responsible Me* (2021)



Fig.4.4.7 Spread 5 of the picturebook *Responsible Me* (2021)



Fig.4.4.8 Spread 6 of the picturebook *Responsible Me* (2021)

The 'added' effect of the image to text has been stressed (Agosto, 1999) in picturebooks, so the function of the image can contribute to the narrative and be focused. I designed spread 7 (fig. 4.4.9), spread 8 (fig. 4.4.10), and spread 9 (fig. 4.4.11) as silent pages to contribute to the overall rhythm and pacing of *Responsible Me* (2021). These silent pages are designed to create a sense of anticipation for the text and a contrast on the subsequent pages.



Fig.4.4.9 Spread 7 of the picturebook *Responsible Me* (2021)



Fig.4.4.10 Spread 8 of the picturebook *Responsible Me* (2021)

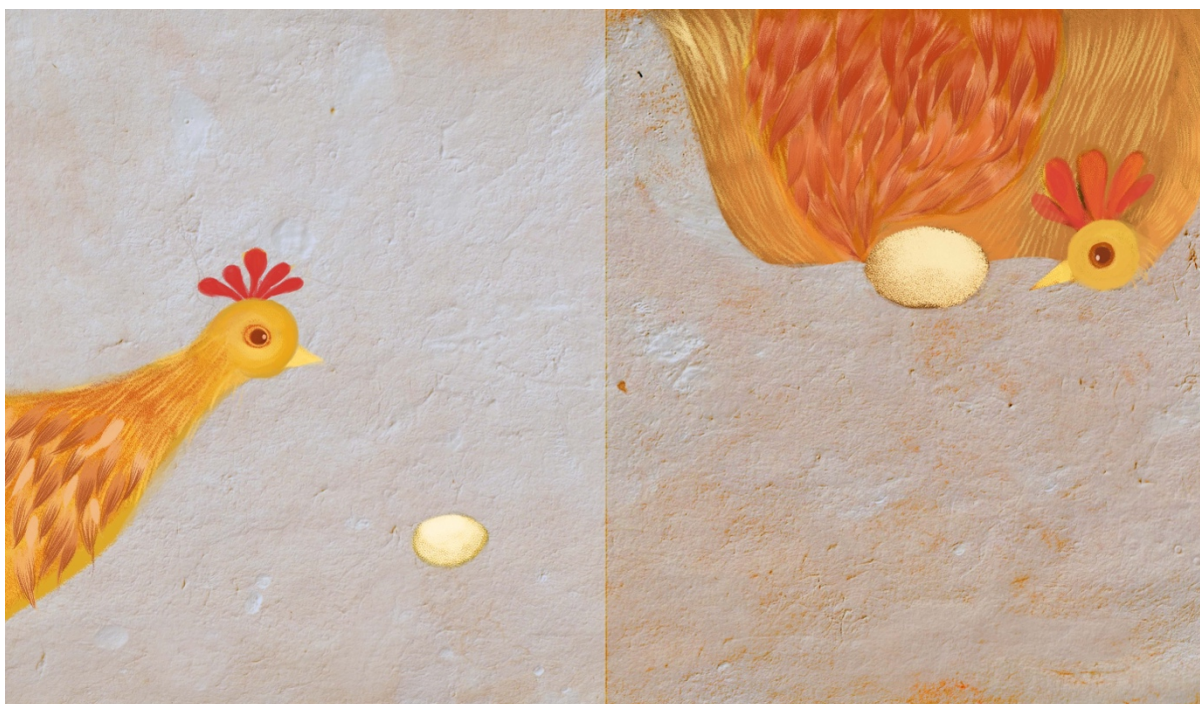


Fig.4.4.11 Spread 9 of the picturebook *Responsible Me* (2021)

An ironic counterpoint could be generated when the two modes “contradict” (Doonan, 1993) with one another. In spread 10 (fig. 4.4.12), spread 11 (fig. 4.4.13) and spread 12 (fig. 4.4.14), I divided a single sentence across multiple spreads. This design choice aims to encourage reader interpretation and enhance the ironic counterpoint by creating a multi-layered narrative where text and image offer distinct, yet interconnected, perspectives (Nodelman, 1988).



Fig.4.4.12 Spread 10 of the picturebook *Responsible Me* (2021)



Fig.4.4.13 Spread 11 of the picturebook *Responsible Me* (2021)



Fig.4.4.14 Spread 12 of the picturebook *Responsible Me* (2021)

4.5 Conclusion

Through the theoretical study of experimental typography with and related case studies, we can know that experimental typography enables words to have functions like images beyond their semantic meaning, which means the experimental typography relies on the relationship between its verbal significance and its visual meaning. Therefore, the aim of experimental typography is to construct a bridge connecting form and function. Moreover, key factors influencing experimental typography include scale, shapes, direction, distorting, elaboration, texture, dimensionality, balance, rhythm, and grouping. The picturebook case study *I Love You More Than All Stars* (2021) showcased diverse application of experimental typography, providing inspiration for my later picturebook creation. My experiments with ironic counterpoint in *Responsible Me* (2021) involved manipulating size, weight, space, arrangement, style, using composed words, positioning text on characters, and employing highlighted keywords. These techniques were selected to influence the narrative meaning, thus forming an ironically counterpointing relationship between the text and the image. Experimental typography empowers the text and makes words come alive.

Chapter 5. Pictorial Experiments through Picturebook 2- *The Guardian Angel*

Pictorial theories in terms of visual metaphor and semiotics are introduced in this chapter. For semiotics, this involves the concept of the sign, the distinction between signifier and signified, the structure of the sign, the definition of connotation, denotation, and exemplification. In the field of visual metaphor, the notion of metaphor, how metaphor works, the application of incongruity and ambiguity in visual metaphor, and the importance of visual metaphor are explained in this chapter. Moreover, the chapter also consists of a case study and my own picturebook experiments for *The Guardian Angel* (2022), examining ironic counterpoint through pictorial experimentation.

In children's picturebooks, the representation of metaphors could be considered a crucial semiotic resource that can be utilized by illustrators to express both simple and complex meanings (Purcell, 2016). The picturebook *The Guardian Angel* (2022) was created to comfort people in loneliness and depression because of losing a loved one. The narrative of the picturebook presents a fictional story about a little girl who feels lonely when her grandfather has passed away but is protected by a manifestation of her grandpa, an angel. To further understand the use of visual metaphor in the narrative of loss and loneliness, I have examined the change of visual elements in pictures, including colour, size, and position. My aim was that this visual sequence would address the difficulty of grieving and loneliness.

In addition to telling the story of the little girl and her grandfather in *The Guardian Angel* (2022), each spread of this picturebook represents an organ in the human body. All the vegetables and fruits depicted in this picturebook are likely to be nutritionally helpful to specific organs of the body in terms of health. The pragmatic information is designed to increase the health knowledge of readers. The book is a mixture of visual metaphor and pragmatic information/advice. Additionally, the shapes of the bodily organs are known to some extent, and the specific fruits and vegetables are also known. With the combination of the known shapes of organs and fruit and vegetables, the unknown things fruit and vegetables within the shapes of different organs have been associated with each other in visual form and indicated. Also, repeated objects can symbolize a specific character, and in

my picturebook, a cap is repeatedly used when the grandfather presents both in human form and in angel form.

5.1 Pictorial Theories in Visual Metaphor and Semiotics

Salisbury suggests picturebooks without words communicate messages through pictorial elements, and more layers of narrative meaning are purposely embedded in these pictures:

Wordless books and books with minimal text convey meaning pictorially. They can sometimes be demanding to 'read' and follow, and often contain many hidden references and secondary narratives that can be pored over and rediscovered by the curious child. (Salisbury, 2007, p. 83)

The approach of inserting multiple layers of information in the visual elements of picturebooks involves the fields of semiotics and visual metaphor. The discipline of semiotics was founded by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the North American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, and key figures on semiotics include Vladimir Propp, Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco (Lagopoulos and Boklund-Lagopoulou, 2021). The difference between the two founders of semiotics is that Saussure worked in modern linguistic and cultural systems, while Peirce focused on logic, and his theory of signs has a more general nature. The approach of folklorist Vladimir Propp is associated with Russian Formalists. Propp suggested the effect of an episode's action on the development of the plot instead of defining regularities based on the traditional logic of themes after he analysed hundreds of fairytales, which is considered a structural analysis of fairytales. Roland Barthes played an important role in turning structuralism into semiology by studying everyday semiotic phenomena from a semiological perspective and elaborating the general theory of semiotics. Semiotics reached maturity when Umberto Eco extended the general theory of semiotics and added visual semiotics.

Karen Coats, a director of the Centre for Research in Children's Literature at Cambridge, researched how people generate meaning through words and pictures during her PhD study, and she proposed that in picturebooks, visual conceptual metaphors are regarded as a semiotic resource (Coats, 2019). Joanne Marie Purcell, a lecturer at Australian Catholic University researching cognitive literary theory and picture books, claimed that readers have

to conceptually blend the two semiotic codes, and the codes can interrelate to generate new meaning (Purcell, 2016) for a better understanding of a picture book. Notably, Mark Turner, a professor of Cognitive Science at Case Western Reserve University, used the term “conceptual blending” to describe how people understand metaphorical expression:

Conceptual blending is the mental operation of combining two mental packets of meaning—two schematic frames of knowledge or two scenarios, for example—selectively and under constraints to create a third mental packet of meaning that is the new, emergent meaning. (2002, Turner, p. 10)

Accordingly, conceptual blending involves putting two selected mental packets of meaning in a certain condition to generate the third meaning. Similarly, the new or implied meanings can be created by the means of merging two selected concepts in picturebooks. The two concepts are also perceived as two semiotic codes, which means a new semiotic code arises from the mixture of the two known codes that associate with each other.

5.1.1 The Concepts of the Sign

Although there are similarities and differences, the sign is situated in a series of terms used by different authors. These terms include signal, index, icon, symbol, and allegory (Barthes, 1967). For Peirce, a sign can be named an icon, an index, or a symbol (Peirce Edition Project, 1998) – an icon is a sign that refers to the object denoting only by its own virtue of characters, an index is a sign that the object denoting through virtue is subject to the object and a symbol is a representamen that its character lies in a rule determining its interpretant.

This means that an icon is only concerned with its own features as it links with its own content more directly, mainly through physical similarities. Nevertheless, an index is connected with the object that can represent it, which means the feature stands for the content. A more interesting concept is a symbol because there is no necessary resemblance between the signifier and the signified; their connection is built through certain interpretations, instead of an inherent meaning.

According to Short (2007), any object can be regarded as an icon as long as it can signify merely based on its qualities. An icon’s significance is determined by the qualities belonging

to itself instead of relying on the relationship with another to exist. Its significance is not necessarily subject to a rule of interpretation, compared with a symbol that is a sign of the object decided by a rule of interpretation, and symbols are merely able to signify types rather than individuals. An index is a sign that, depending on the object's existence, there may be a compulsiveness from the object to the interpreter through the index, while the compulsiveness should be exceedingly weakened in certain circumstances.

Maria Nikolajeva, a literary critic specialising in children's literature and a professor of Education at the University of Cambridge, and Carole Scott, a Professor of English at San Diego State University, asserted that for the application of sign, images and symbols can be utilized to express the feelings of a character in picturebooks (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006), as David Lewis, one of the leading British scholars on picturebooks and Lecturer in Primary Education at the University of Exeter, suggested that reading can rely on an implicit meaning of how pictorial elements are organized and how pictures make use of the symbols from a common culture (Lewis, 2001). Rudolf Arnheim, a German art and film theorist and a perceptual psychologist, declared that a state of mind can be symbolized by drawings when its dynamic properties are translated into visible patterns (Arnheim, 1969). Young artists also use drawing to conceptualise an idea by selecting various symbols and deciding where to place the image on a page. They can utilise symbols to express meaning (Soundy, 2015). The use of symbols in picturebooks involves two concepts – feelings and particular cultural meanings. Alternatively, feelings, a state of mind, and ideas are possibly conveyed through visual symbols from culture. The ways of utilising symbols deserve further study in picturebooks. The choices of specific symbols and the position of the symbols determine the meanings that the picturebook maker intends to express.

In a hermeneutical approach, colour is recognized as a highly stylistic sign, rather than mixed up with the colours in the real world. This is significant as colour takes on the visualisation of rich emotions in the stories without being specific in terms of content. The symbolic colours carry narration, which means that the specific colours with significance can change throughout the narrative (Uhlig, 2022). That means colour as a sign can communicate rich feelings in picturebooks.

Also, particular colours suggest or are culturally indexed to certain emotions (Cousins, 2012). In contrast, the symbolic meaning is affected by all the qualities of colour – the relative opacity, brightness, and a cool or warm effect. Additionally, visual contemplation can make a deeper meaning in a picture and present a puzzle that needs readers to be open-minded to decoding because pictures cannot exactly or directly express the meaning of their signs in picturebooks (Doonan, 1993). It shows that specific colours connect with particular emotions, either suggestively or culturally. The factors that may influence the symbolic meaning of colours mainly exist in the traits of colour. These attributes contain brightness, tone, and opacity. In addition, readers are encouraged to contemplate visually to gain an extensive understanding of the visual mode in picturebooks.

Notably, Arnheim proposed that images are regarded as signs when they only refer to what they stand for. Images are thought of as pictures when they present things at a lower level of abstractness than themselves, and they fulfil their function by capturing the relevant qualities of the objects or activities, containing shape, colour, and movement. Images serve as symbols when they are at a higher level of abstractness than themselves and stand for a kind of thing. He distinguished three functions of images that images can perform as pictures, symbols, or signs:

The Three terms — picture, symbol, sign — do not stand for kinds of images. They rather describe three functions fulfilled by images. A particular image may be used for each of these functions and will often serve more than one at the same time. As a rule, the image itself does not tell which function is intended. A triangle may be a sign of danger or a picture of a mountain or a symbol of hierarchy. We need to know how well or badly various kinds of images fulfill these functions. (Arnheim, 1969, p. 136)

In general, images function as signs when they only stand for the things themselves, and images are perceived as pictures in situations where they contain related and concrete qualities. Images are considered symbols serving a kind of thing. Take an apple as an example – when the graphic shape of an apple stands for the fruit apple, the image of an apple is a sign. The apple as a sign may be used as a label to distinguish it from other fruits or items in a supermarket; when an image of an apple contains the concrete qualities of an apple, including its texture, unique shape, and rich colour, the image of an apple is a picture. The image of an apple could be from a painting or a photograph; when the image of the

apple represents an abstract thing, the image of the apple is a symbol. Just as an apple from the Tree of Knowledge in the bible symbolises a forbidden object.

The visual form of an artwork is essential as an accurate interpreter of the idea, and the work is intended to convey rather than arbitrary or a play of shapes and colours. Likewise, the subject matter is not insignificant, as it offers a concrete embodiment based upon an abstract theme by precisely correlating with the formal pattern, so using an image to symbolize a universal content involves both the formal pattern and the subject matter:

Only with regard to subject matter can the term symbolism be used in a more restricted sense. When Rembrandt depicts Aristotle contemplating the bust of Homer, it makes sense to ask whether the artist intended to narrate a scene that has taken place or might have taken place in a world of history or fable, or whether the scene is meant as purely “symbolic.” In the latter case the subject matter and its arrangement are designed to embody an idea, and they may indicate this purpose by the unlikelihood of their occurrence in any real or imagined world ... The correct reading of such a picture depends heavily on conventions. These conventions tend to standardize the way a certain idea is to be depicted, so that, for example, in Christian art a lily is known to symbolize the virginity of Mary, lambs are disciples, and two deer drinking from a pond show the recreation of the faithful. However, the more an artistic experience depends on knowledge, the less direct it is likely to be. (Arnheim, 1974, p. 457)

A symbol's function in a picture relies on subject matter and visual form. The visual form should be designed thoughtfully in terms of its own qualities, such as the shape and range of composition, the appearance and size of the shape, or the tone and saturation of colour. These designed qualities of visual form and subject matter are closely tied with the intended ideas and should serve the intended theme. The intended theme as an abstract concept is embodied through the concrete representations of visual form with subject matter. Moreover, there is a difference in whether the artist intended to create a symbolic narrative scene, where the chosen visual components and subject matter may not directly resemble the intended theme on the surface. Yet, the visual form and the represented contents are in line with the core ideas of the artistic expression in a hinted way. Suppose the comprehension of the subject matter embodied through visual form strongly depends on the knowledge of the related context. In that case, the artistic expression of the potential concept is indirect, and so is the relation between the visual content and the intended theme.

Following the stated points, adopting symbolic elements as subject matter through visual form in the practice of making picturebooks can implicitly represent the core idea that the story intends to convey, even though it probably relies on the reader's knowledge of the related resources, such as the conventional fables and fairytales, Christian art and art history or international literature and different cultures. Therefore, using such symbolic objects helps convey the ideas hidden in the narrative of a picturebook and presents the theme indirectly. The given subject matter does not necessarily have to resemble the theme in the aspect of visual occurrence so long as it serves or connects with the theme of the narrative through its symbolic meanings.

Utilising symbols from diverse contexts in a picturebook challenges its potential readers. Still, the value of the embedment of symbolic components in a narrative should not be underestimated because of this. Readers can enjoy the exploration of the hidden meaning by reading repeatedly and deducing what the symbolic elements presented in a picturebook could denote. They can also investigate the underlying concept through contextual research and gain more knowledge, which can help them form a diverse perspective in viewing or understanding things.

5.1.2 Signifier and Signified

All the terms indicate a relation between two objects, and a sign is thought of as the connection between a signifier and a signified (Eco, 1976), so there is a common feature that a semiological sign consists of a signifier and a signified. Barthes (1967) claimed that the signifiers involve expression and the signified reflected content. Instead of being an act of consciousness or a real thing, the signified is referred to by the person who employs the sign in the signifying process. The signified is considered a mental representation of a thing rather than the thing itself. Sharing the same feature with the signified, the signifier is also a relatum, while the signifier can be viewed as a mediator. The substance of the signifier is associated with materials containing objects and images, so that we will encounter different kinds of signs, including the verbal sign, the graphic sign, the iconic sign, and the gestural sign.

Awareness of the distinction between the signifier and signified is crucial in comprehending their relation correctly and applying them to art creation effectively. In artistic expression, the signifier can be perceived as a medium or a connection to link the presented objects with the intended ideas, and the signified is the intended concepts manifested through the visual contents as signifiers, so in picturebooks, the signifier is to some extent a visual representation of the author's intended ideas as the signified. The determined factor of effective communication in picturebooks could lie in whether the selected signifier shown as visual expression is suitable for the signified content or, conversely, if the signified as a mental representation has been reflected employing a proper signifier. The signifier may be displayed in diverse appearances, such as symbolic objects, gestural signs, or iconic images. Applying of the signifier and the signified into a picturebook can construct a close association between the visual demonstration and the mental representation. It can also help us understand the link between visual content presented in various forms and the thoughts the author intended to convey.

5.1.3 Sign Structure

According to Atkin (2022), Peirce's basic claim of sign structure is that it is composed of a sign, an object, and an interpretant, and all the components are interconnected in this triadic structure. Specifically, the sign is regarded as a signifier, and the object is viewed as signified. The interpretant is considered to be the understanding of the relation between the sign and the object. In the relation, a sign only signifies when being interpreted, which means it is in the interpretation that the meaning of a sign manifests. In addition, a sign-vehicle, an object and an interpretant are included in any instance of signification. "Sign," "representamen," and "representation" are the terms describing the signifying element and "sign-vehicle" is the component of the sign in charge of signification. The object determines the sign, and only specific characteristics of an object relating to signification enable a sign to signify that object or to represent it. An interpretant is determined by a sign as the interpretant offers a translation of the sign, which forms our understanding of the sign's object.

From my perspective, meaning and communication derive from interpreting the sign as a signifier and the object as signified. In this structure, the sign is the visual representation implying the intended idea, the object is the concept that aims to convey, and the interpretant is a specific explanation which plays a key role in connecting the former two. It is the interpretant that enables the potential meaning to appear on the surface. In picturebooks, the structure of this triangle between a sign, an object, and an interpretant significantly influence on analysing the intended meaning beyond the visual representation. As noted above, understanding the difference between the signifier and the signified and how they work is essential. In parallel, the relation between the signifier and the signified adapts to the triangular structure between the sign, the object and the interpretant. The difference is that the latter offers a more direct image connecting the key roles in the signifying process as it explicitly employs the object denoting the signified in addition to the sign as the signifier in diverse visual representation, and adds the “interpretant” as a complement, which focuses on the determining factors of interpreting the visual contents in the art creation. Together, they are indispensable components for a comprehensive understanding of the inner mechanism behind the visual symbols in a picturebook.

5.1.4 Connotation, Denotation and Exemplification

Connotative code constructing connotation that its further signification depends on the main one, and a connotative code can be regarded as a sub-code as long as it relies on a more basic one (Eco, 1976). This definition of the difference between a connotative code and a main code means a main code is a code that can reflect the core concept of the narrative, and a connotative code as a sub-code is related to the main code and also relies on it. In a picturebook, the main code can be a visual code that is most obvious and dominates the visual components of a picture. This main code can reflect an intended theme independently, without a reliance on any other code, even though the main code can be inferred and supplemented through the other code. However, a connotative code, which functions as a sub-code, cannot convey the significance of the main narrative without depending upon the main code, even though it assists and augments the main code in a picturebook.

Colour has an essential and one of the most significant roles in decoding the meaning of the narrative in a picturebook. In picturebooks, tone and saturation convey emotional connotations more strongly than hue (Doonan, 1993). Because it is hard to tell the subtle or correct emotion from hue, even though it is common to say that yellow shows warmth and blue conveys sadness. The embodiment of feelings can be vastly different for the warmer yellow and cooler or the higher saturation of blue and the lower saturation of blue. Hence, tone and saturation are closely related to the connotations of emotion. Generally, warmer, or brighter tones relate to the positive feelings, and in reverse, cooler or darker tones incline to the opposite emotions. Also, sometimes, the higher the saturation, the more dynamic the atmosphere. And the lower the saturation, the quieter the vibe. Additionally, a specific colour can refer to an object; when painted in this colour, the colour denotes the object (Gras, 2018). This is a helpful approach to visual expression, which can be applied in creating picturebooks. If you paint a leaf green, the colour green can symbolize the object leaf, or we could say the colour green metaphorically corresponds to the object leaf.

Furthermore, Doonan (1993) suggests that denotation and exemplification are the two basic modes of pictures, which can refer to things outside themselves. For denotation, a picture representing an object can refer to and denote the picture. The object is linked to the symbol's meaning, and denotation is not necessarily associated with the truth of physical resemblance. For exemplification, pictures can demonstrate abstract notions, ideas that cannot be shown directly but can be metaphorically recognized through properties of pictures. What distinguishes this from denotation is that meaning in exemplification does not attach, so readers must select a specific meaning that best suits the image from various possibilities. Pictures can also stand for something else by the use of exemplifying symbols.

From my point of view, the similarity of denotation and exemplification is that both can stand for other objects. The difference is that denotation seems more targeted for a specific symbol, linking the object with a symbolic meaning. The denoted object does not have to be similar to what it symbolizes in terms of visual appearance. For instance, a grandma often gives her granddaughter an apple; then the apple can be used to denote the grandma in the visual storytelling of a picturebook. In comparison, exemplification tends to open its interpretations, demanding the audience to decide on what it refers to. For exemplification,

an apple has diverse potential meanings, such as a forbidden thing, a precious object, or a healthy lifestyle. Consequently, the context where the object stays essentially decides what it could stand for.

5.1.5 The Notion of Metaphors

George Philip Lakoff, an American cognitive linguist and philosopher, claimed that metaphor is a mode of thought regarded as a mapping from a source domain to a target domain. The entities in the target domain correspond systematically to the entities in the source domain. The typical form of this concept is “TARGET-DOMAIN IS SOURCE-DOMAIN, or alternatively, TARGET-DOMAIN AS SOURCE-DOMAIN” (Lakoff, 1993, p. 5). From my understanding, mapping from the source domain to the target domain means comparing one entity with another. The former is the target, and the latter is a projection in line with the former as a target. The target domain is the main domain because the function of the source domain is to help augment, illustrate, or amplify the target domain in a particular aspect. A resemblance between the entity in the target domain and the entity in the source domain may exist to make the projection or the mapping work. For instance, a story creation is a journey of self-discovery. The story creation is the target domain, and the journey of self-discovery is the source domain. As the process of generating a story involves subjective ways of creation, personal perspectives of the story’s narrative and the creator’s feelings are hidden in the storytelling. All of these reflect a process of self-awareness, in parallel with exploring further about oneself. This process of mapping from the journey of self-discovery to the creation of a story is where metaphor functions. As a result, a journey of self-discovery is a metaphor for creating a story.

Images can represent a particular entity while capturing nuances of meaning, and images can also evoke deep emotional responses that are hard to be aware of or explain (Zakia, 2002). That is to say, images are more likely to express subtle and detailed information codes for the narrative in a picturebook story. Images can assist in conveying certain contents that is comparatively not easy to communicate in words. Those content may influence the intended concept of the picturebook narrative and cannot be ignored. Notably, there exists a kind of metaphor called image metaphors, which “...maps conventional mental images onto

other conventional images by virtue of their internal structure” (Lakoff, 1987, p. 219). Image metaphors can also be comprehended as “one-shot” metaphors, as they map merely one conventional mental image onto another. The metaphorical images also map the structure of one domain onto the structure of another. One of the features of “one-shot mapping” is that they “are not used over and over again; That is, they are not conventionalized” (Lakoff, 1993, p. 221).

From the statements above, I conclude that “image metaphor” embeds and is based on the mechanism of metaphor. Image metaphor can correlate one mental conventional image with another conventional image employing an internal property, with one image being the target domain and another being the source domain. For instance, one of the symbolic meanings of an apple is a precious object. The mental conventional image is a cherished entity as the target domain, and the mapped image is the apple as the source domain. For “one-shot mapping” in image metaphors, it may indicate that a particular image metaphor functions in a specific narrative and is unsuitable to be used again because of distinctiveness only applicable to the specific tale. Furthermore, to fully comprehend the core concept of the narrative, the readers may also be required to select the most appropriate meaning among all the possible implications of the entity for the story.

Moreover, Lakoff and Johnson (2003) refers to a metaphorical concept called conduit metaphor, where linguistic expressions are thought of as containers for meanings, and these meanings exist in the words and sentences themselves, independent of any people or context. From this point of view, conduit metaphor provides a more flexible way of using metaphors in a picturebook narrative due to its unconstrained quality, not necessarily relying on other factors or conditions. The conduit metaphor is somewhat similar to the “one-shot metaphor” as both are independent of contextual or conventional meanings.

Another metaphorical concept that organizes a whole system of concepts regarding another can be referred to as orientational metaphors, and deriving from their function in a physical environment, these spatial orientations concerning orientational metaphors include “up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off, deep-shallow, central-peripheral” (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 15). For instance, “Happy is up,” “I’m feeling up today,” “I’m feeling down,” or “He’s

really low these days” (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). These examples demonstrated that emotions and feelings are directly associated with spatial orientations in orientational metaphors. In picturebooks, designing the position within a spread or a page becomes crucial as it links with orientational metaphors. Different directions and positions can result in different connotations of certain entities. Moreover, in my opinion, the orientation or position is relative. For example, the direction “Up” not only means an object is located on the top area of one spread or page but can also denote that one object is in a higher position than another. Hence, examining the connotational components in a picture requires a comprehensive consideration of both situations. The two circumstances, the spatial or orientational virtue of one entity and the relation between one entity and the other, determine how to interpret the metaphor in the narrative.

In addition, studying metaphor without confronting metonymy is impossible (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009). Metonymy means one entity referring to another connected with it, enabling us to employ one to stand for another (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). The difference between metaphor and metonymy lies in situations where the former is concerned with similarity and the latter involves connection. For the metonymy, if two things are linked with each other, one can be used to represent another. In picturebooks, using metaphor or metonymy depends on which perspective you choose, and which one can meet more about the specific requirements of the particular narrative in the story.

5.1.6 The Way that Metaphor Functions

The metaphor is conceptual and exists in mental images instead of words. Metaphorical understanding is associated with abstractions or emotions rather than concrete physical experience. We comprehend these abstract concepts through metaphor, and in turn, most fundamental and abstract concepts from our conceptual systems are understood through “Metaphor-concepts like time, quantity, state, change, action, cause, purpose, means, modality and even the concept of a category” (Lakoff, 1993, p. 10). The virtue of metaphor is conceptual, and the comprehension of metaphor involves understanding abstract notions. Metaphors associated closely with mental images are perceived as gateways to making sense of abstraction. With metaphors, abstract concepts are easily understood instead of

introducing plainly. For instance, an aphorism we often hear, “time is money”, adopts a metaphor. Time as an abstract concept is understood by utilising the metaphorical entity money, so we make sense of time being valuable and deserving to be cherished.

A conceptual metaphor arises from mapping an abstract idea onto a more concrete referent to create meaning (Coats, 2019). It means the representation can be perceived, and abstract meaning can be understood through concrete, observable phenomena. Since the abstract can only be understood via metaphorically coupling it with the concrete, both the embodied actions and the personification as vehicles can also be used to help us comprehend metaphor (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009). Specifically, the embodied actions, including arm-and-hand gestures and face-to-face interaction in visual metaphors, convey perspectives and emotions that are not easily accessible through verbal metaphors. Indeed, thinking and feeling can be detected from facial expressions, poses, and relationships between the positions of each character, which corresponds to a claim that visual metaphor can also be achieved through an abstract composition organisation (Doonan, 1993). This statement demonstrates various facial expressions, gestures, positions, and compositions can all contribute to the meaning as concepts in a narrative of a picturebook, and these factors can be perceived as metaphors presented and understood concretely.

In personification, living organisms and animals can be utilised as source domains for human target domains as well as for phenomena, as children have abilities to grasp the metaphorical implication in a picturebook that depends on animal characters or personified objects to express concepts related to human behaviour (Coats, 2019). This also involves a concept that metaphorical thinking relates to a transfer from inanimate to animate (Rau, 2011). That is to say, using animals or living organisms as the objects of metaphors and presenting their interaction can children comprehend concepts associated with human behaviour and phenomena. Also, in picturebooks, it is the way that humans are embodied that generates the connections of shape, scale, colour, and composition with the concepts of emotion and cognition (Bang, 2000), and the embodiment is also thought of as the source of many conceptual metaphors (Stockwell, 2002), as early conceptual metaphors rely heavily on embodied experiences, situations, and intimate social relationships for children (Coats, 2019). It demonstrates that conceptual metaphor manifests through the embodiment of

emotion, cognition, experience, and social relationships, allowing children to understand. It is associated with shape, scale, colour, and composition in picturebooks.

Particularly, bodily posture and facial expression in picture books have inserted conventional significances, as the gestures and expressions can lead readers towards the subject of the storytelling attitudinally and ideologically (Happonen and Stephens, 2003). Representing various gestures and facial expressions is perceived as the embodiment of conceptual metaphors, providing clues for readers to grasp what the subject intends to convey.

Therefore, conceptual metaphors can assist children with comprehending abstract notions, including imagination, anger, friendship, and knowledge acquisition (Rau, 2011). Indeed, the application of conceptual metaphors tends to be practical. Conceptual metaphors can be perceived as tools that help readers, especially children, to comprehend abstract notions. These abstract notions range from thinking activities, emotions, relationships between humans and others, as well as the acquisition of knowledge. Particularly, thinking activities may include imagination, creativeness, thought, insight, and inspiration; emotions can contain anger, anxiety, depression, joy, and shock; the relationship between humans and others may involve family love, friendship, the relationship between human and nature or animals; the acquisition of knowledge means the process of obtaining knowledge in various ways.

Perceptual resemblance can be considered another approach employed in visual metaphor. Even though the perceptual resemblance functions only in monomodal metaphors that a visual representation resembles another perceptually, there are ample choices in visual representation as long as the “two things can resemble one another because they have the same size, colour, position, posture, texture, materiality, etc.” (Forceville, 2009, p. 31). It offers opportunities to utilise similar properties to produce visual metaphors between two things. Perceptual resemblance allows visual metaphors to happen when two things have resemblant qualities in scale, tone, gestures, texture, materials, position, shape, function, composition, and direction.

It is also important to scrutinise visual and conceptual metaphors shown in children’s picturebooks, as these images can form an unconscious substrate referred to as the schemas

– we employ to process daily experience (Coats, 2019). This reflects a claim that children can only comprehend and interpret information based on their previous experience (Nodelman, 1988). It demonstrates to children how schemas work by shaping an unconscious base from visual, conceptual metaphors. Schemas have significantly influence children as they can help them make sense of things they encounter and assist them in decoding new information they obtain. An unfamiliar idea may be comprehended when represented in an ordinary form as the unknown can be implied by the known (Sullivan, 2016). This statement provides a practical perspective for creators by applying the familiar form to represent or suggest unusual thoughts or concepts in picturebooks. When interpreting a visual metaphor, readers start by perceiving the visual input, and a subconscious comparison does it with the information previously stored in terms of the visual attributes belonging to the object or objects. The mental storage of prototypical referents is composed of two fundamental types of information that go through consistent updating and stabilisation via visual perceptions:

(a) Prototypical visual referent: encyclopedic entry containing visual elements and attributes that an item depicted in an image is typically made of. (b) Prototypical visual syntax: other items typically associated with another object depicted in an image. (McMahon, 2003, p. 266)

From my perspective, this concept of schemas is helpful in terms of visual metaphor when illustrators want to communicate some experienced but not named notions to readers, and then the readers can understand these new ideas based on those demonstrations of unfamiliar ideas in familiar forms. Moreover, prototypical visual referent and prototypical visual syntax, the two basic types of information, can be utilised to choose the visual elements' content when creating visual metaphors. For prototypical visual referent, the focus potentially lies in the feature of the visual object itself. For prototypical visual syntax, the concentration is moved to the other visual objects connected with the focused visual object.

It is also crucial to note that meaning is closely associated with visual representations. Sometimes, meanings are expressed through pictorial or visual representations in pictorial or visual metaphor. If the target is emotion, what shows in the picture can be interpreted as representing some emotion in this metaphor. The intensity of natural phenomena corresponds to the intensity of the emotion, so the natural elements can convey emotions.

“Thunder, wind, rain, cloud, fog, flowers, birds, and other naturally occurring or existing phenomena are used as the background scene of panels and can express emotional states of a person described in a panel” (Shinohara and Matsunaka, 2009, p. 273). Emotions can be communicated in terms of intensity by using the resembled intensity of natural phenomena, which means there are plenty of possibilities in selecting various weather types. Moreover, other natural elements or phenomena function as symbols as well. The different species of plants, animals or diverse natural phenomena may symbolise particular emotions and feelings and suggest certain concepts or characteristics of a specific thing or character. Manolessou utilised the environment as a visual metaphor, creating a particular atmosphere to hint at her son’s emotions in a picturebook:

They showed some of my son’s difficult emotional moments, such as his inability to fall asleep at night. Here the environment was drawn enclosing the child/animal figure: the oppressive darkness or the cage-like shape of the cot isolate and restrict the character ... so I wanted this jungle environment to act as a visual metaphor for the complex yet intriguing world that young children face and are challenged by everyday. (Manolessou and Salisbury, 2012, p. 388)

Schwarcz (1982) also discovered that evoking the mood of the verbal image is one way to represent a metaphor. “[w]hen the illustrator succeeds in creating a picture which somehow resounds with the mood that gave rise to the metaphor in the first place, even without rendering the verbal image at all” (Schwarcz, 1982, p. 51). In addition, he states that mood developed by verbal metaphor can possibly be created through colour, layout and the spatial organisation of objects or characters. These claims suggest that visual metaphors in images can evoke moods without the augmentation from text, and moods can be rendered through visual components, including colour, layout, and the organisation in space. Moreover, moods, eccentric ideas, and philosophical reflections can be expressed through images metaphorically, as metaphors in picturebooks can be demonstrated through either text or image or through both (Gras, 2018). Pictures can metaphorically display ideas and moods that cannot be directly visualised. Shapes and colours can refer to ideas and feelings. All the essential components of pictures, including the arrangements of lines, shapes, colours, materials and ways of drawing, contribute to the narrative so that the meaning of figurative illustration lies in the essential components of pictures in picturebooks. Specific elements used include:

- a scheme of colour
- a scheme of light and dark
- a system of scale and intervals
- an arrangement of shapes
- an order of small-and large-scale patterning
- a network of linear rhythms. (Doonan, 1993, p. 14-p. 15)

As the fundamental elements in a picture contribute to the narrative, these visual elements can indicate thoughts and emotions and are essential in presenting visual metaphors.

Specifically, the fundamental components involve, but are not limited to, colour, shape, ways of drawing, materials, scales, and composition.

Additionally, as the structure of an image can indicate an impression of the past or a sign of the future, time acts as a threefold present – a present of future events, a present of past activities, and a present of present circumstance, when passing is going from the future, through the present, into the past, and “time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience” (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 3).

Narrative time can be discerned either in the episodic or in configurational dimension (Ricoeur, 1984). The narrative time is in the direction of the linear representation of time because of an episodic dimension of a narrative. Specifically, the action stages are in an external relation by “then, and then” at first. Next, the episodes form an open series of events with an added “and so forth.” Eventually, the episodes come in succession with the irreversible order of time ordinary in physical and human events. Conversely, temporal features presented by the configurational dimension contrast with the characteristics of the episodic dimension. The configurational system first turns the successive events into one meaningful whole, correlating with assembling the events, thus making the narrative followable. Then, the entire plot of the story is one thought, which equals to point or theme. The configurational plot puts an ending on the successive incidents, and the “endpoint” is a point enabling the story as a whole. Finally, the structural function of closure is perceived by retelling. This repetition of the narrative forms an alternative representation of time moving from the past toward the future. In this way, the recapitulation of the beginning course of action is in the final consequences.

Therefore, the arrangement of the time order is significant regarding the narrative in picturebooks. In the episodic perspective, the narrative time act linearly and the events or activities in the plots happen one after another. In contrast, the configurational perspective requires observers to read time backwards. Ending enables all the assembled plots in the story as a whole, so the temporal feature in this approach is distinguished from the ones following the order of time travelling from future to past. Through this method, moving narrative time from past to future, the relation between the single plot and the whole as the assembly of all plots can be discerned more clearly to narrate more comprehensively and organised. In addition, for the spatial temporal metaphor, Chen stated that:

In the temporal concept of 'ego moving metaphor', time is seen as a fixed space and is conceptualized as a limited zone. The observer would finish walking the distance across this domain and go forward the further future. He is facing the future, crossing the space in the direction from the past to the present and to the future. Hence, 'ego moving metaphor' is also named as the 'time's landscape metaphor'. (Chen, 2014, p. 131)

At the vertical level, dynamic spatial-temporal metaphors in English are comparatively richer while static spatial-temporal metaphors in Chinese are in contrast plentiful (Chen, 2014). In Chinese, "known for up" and "unknown for down" is viewed as the signifying rule with the metaphor value splitting the space domain and time domain into two parts – the spatial word "up" links with earlier time and another spatial word "down" corresponds to a later time, in this way higher and lower positions in space have been projected into a temporal mapping that the past time located in the higher place, and the future time placed in the lower area. For the dynamic spatial-temporal mode in English, "future" can go upside to the observer's location when it is the downside. In the sentence "The Christmas day is coming up," "Christmas day" as the future time point goes from the downside to the upside from the observer's visual perspective. In "This story went down in a family history," "story" is the past time point moving from the upside towards the downside as the present time. From these examples, it is clear to tell the difference between static spatial-temporal metaphors and the dynamic spatial-temporal metaphors. The former case uses "up" as earlier time, representing "known" and regards "down" as later time, representing "unknown." The latter example links "up" with "future" and "down" with "past."

5.1.7 Incongruity and Ambiguity in Visual Metaphor

In an image, to a shift with inferential processing from a denotative interpretation to a connotative metaphoric interpretation, the key is to perceive an incongruity showing up between the activation of the prototypical visual referents and the visual configuration forming visual metaphor in the picture (Forceville, 1996). This means that incongruity plays a crucial role in comprehending the connotation out of the denotation. The incongruous representation exists between prototypical elements and metaphorical components in the image. Theories of comedy based on incongruity show that humour works with the incongruity that possesses a kind of logic enabling its comprehension (Mills, 2011), and the logic is thought of as the “logic of the absurd” (Palmer, 1987). Accordingly, generating humour through embedding incongruity in the narrative allows the incongruous components to be understandable because the incongruity-generated humour has the logic of the absurd. Also, a metaphoric mapping can be considered from “the source image” to “the target image”:

Visual metaphor involves a mapping of information transferred from one image to another, which we have called source image and target image respectively. Often both images are present in the picture (either fused together or separated) but sometimes one of them – normally the source image – is absent. (Yus, 2009, p. 156)

The statement demonstrates that ambiguity may happen when the source image does not show up with the target image. Therefore, visual ambiguity may exist in identifying the source image and the target image because they are not always distinctly recognisable, even when both images appear simultaneously. The incongruity turning up during the perception of the visual image also notifies there is an intended metaphoric interpretation for readers, even though metaphors are naturally open to more than one interpretation, which makes their utilisation potentially more appealing for interpreters:

By its very nature, the cartoon genre is ambiguous and open to multiple readings, and the process of making sense of a cartoon is likely to be strongly dependent upon the individual interpreter’s background and experiences. (Refaie, 2009, p. 184)

Also, when a picture is ambiguous in abstract qualities, readers must decide what they see (Arnheim, 1969). These points show that visual narrative can be ambiguous and enable

various interpretations, inviting the readers to decode the connotative content through their experience and knowledge. This nature also requires readers of picturebooks to scrutinise a single picture and the sequence of pictures repeatedly, as they may not make sense of all the pictorial elements shown in a picture (Doonan, 1993). From my point of view, every rereading may bring different interpretations or enrich what the readers already know.

5.1.8 Significance of Visual Metaphor

Stories embedded with metaphor can facilitate understanding (Rau, 2011), and visual metaphor, as a feature of language and thought, provides children with a conceptual frame that can enrich their comprehension and expression of ideas and build their abilities in decoding and creative thinking (Purcell, 2016). As a result, applying visual metaphor in picturebooks for children could be helpful to accelerate their ability to understand the concepts of the story, decode the information hidden in the narrative, and think creatively when encountering “indirect” messages.

In visual mode, it is impossible to represent abstract concepts without the aid of symbols, metonyms, or metaphors (Refaie, 2003), and metaphor can manifest itself not merely in language but also through other modalities of communication, such as pictures (Forceville, 2009). In particular, expressions of visual signs cannot always be translated into language in conceptual metaphors, so they may not need to be mediated by language and probably be “direct” manifestations of the conceptual metaphors (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009). Therefore, studying pictorial metaphor can help comprehend multimodal metaphor – its target and source are presented primarily in two different modalities because it is impossible to completely translate the meaning of one mode into that of the other mode, and a more complete theory of metaphor also involves studies in non-verbal metaphor. Those abstract concepts, including reflections, thoughts, and moods, may also largely rely on visual metaphor to manifest without verbal assistants as mediators. In that way, the subtle detail containing narrative meaning could be conserved and observed instead of losing some during the shift from verbal content to visual representation.

5.2 Case Study: Pictorial Function in Postmodern Picturebooks

The picturebook *Umbrella* (2019) is a good example of the analysis of the pictorial components because it comprehensively displays many different visual elements. The story demonstrates a magic umbrella that can bring what people wish for. However, it does not always make wishes come true and depends on different situations. The analysis of this picturebook is composed of six aspects: silent plot, colour, scale, direction, and visual metaphor.

A silent plot as a clue goes through the storytelling from the beginning. In this case, when the image and the text focus on a girl finding a magical umbrella in the first spread (fig. 5.2.1), an unmentioned visual clue appears quietly on the right page, and the silent clue demonstrates a fox wearing glasses is reading a newspaper. The small event is called a silent clue because it occupies a small space compared to the character and surroundings and is without any mention in the text.



Fig. 5.2.1 Melville, E. (2019) *Umbrella*. London: Scallywag Press Ltd.

The manipulation of colour can bring various atmospheres or moods based on the purpose of the narrator. In this case, the picturebook adopts red and blue as two primary colours in almost the whole book, and they have symbolic meanings in the narrative. Colour is used

not only to imply the mood of the character but also mainly to demonstrate the two different states about wishes. Specifically, When the character feels lonely, it shows blue standing for isolation (fig. 5.2.2). When the character's dream comes true with a cat accompanying her, the colour in the image turns to red, symbolising warmth (fig. 5.2.3). Colour inside the umbrella suggests whether it is a good wish or not and whether the umbrella will help the dream come true or not. The colour under the umbrella is red with the wishes coming true when Clara, a lonely girl, Mr Roberts, an old man with a paralysed body, and parents with crying children, make their wishes (fig. 5.2.4). In contrast, the colour becomes blue when Mr Fox makes a wish to get rich without any efforts (fig. 5.2.5). As it is an impure motive, the magic umbrella is not in charge of this kind of wish.



Fig. 5.2.2 Melville, E. (2019) *Umbrella*. London: Scallywag Press Ltd.



Fig. 5.2.3 Melville, E. (2019) *Umbrella*. London: Scallywag Press Ltd.

Other factors include scale, direction, and visual metaphor. Scale plays an important role in this picturebook, deciding what the readers should focus on or what is not necessary to highlight but may be important later. For instance, a fox reading a newspaper sits on a chair on a much smaller scale than the girl because the smaller scale can form a hidden clue that is not obvious to the readers but can be crucial in the rest of the narrative (fig. 5.2.2).

Direction sometimes exposes a psychological activity of a character, often with a future action of the character or suggests an answer to a question. In this picturebook, when everyone gathers and enjoys what the magic umbrella brings, Mr Fox sees the situation from the corner of his eye (fig. 5.2.4), meaning that he may know how the magic umbrella works as his eye direction points to the scene. Another application of direction is seen in Joan Klassen's *Sam and Dave Dig a Hole* (2015); the eye direction of the dog in the story points to the diamond, which is the object they have been trying to find for a long time. However, no one notices the dog's actions, which is why they do not find the treasure, even though sometimes they are very close to the goal.

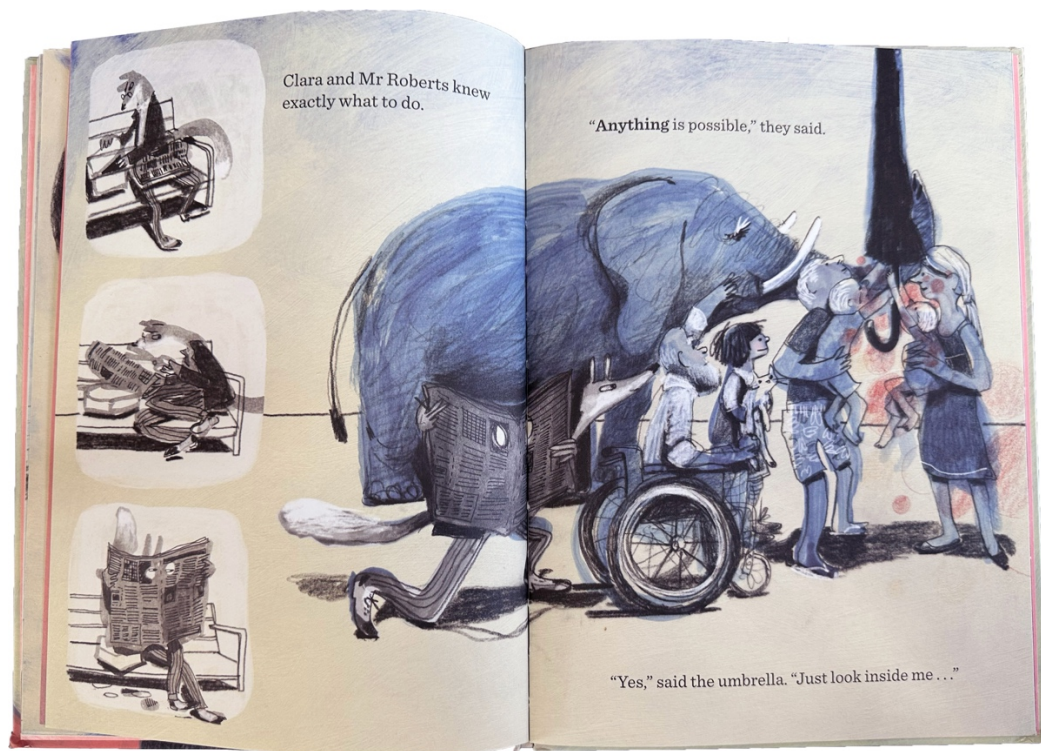


Fig. 5.2.4 Melville, E. (2019) *Umbrella*. London: Scallywag Press Ltd.

The incorporation of visual metaphor brings another layer of meaning to the narrative of picturebooks. In this storytelling, the magic umbrella is beyond its physical significance. It acts in the narrative as a judge as to what kind of wish that deserves to be realised and what kind of wish has a negative motivation.



Fig. 5.2.5 Melville, E. (2019) *Umbrella*. London: Scallywag Press Ltd.

Five aspects of using the function of a picture can be observed from this picturebook. Silent clues appear across the whole picturebook, employing certain colours to show certain emotions and particular meanings, scale deciding what to focus that adds layers of narration as it indicates what is primary or not, direction hinting extra possible events in the narrative of picturebook, and the integration of visual metaphor into the picturebook which enriches the narrative with philosophical significance and brings it to a deeper level of thinking and reflection.

Notably, contrast can create impressive effects in the narrative of picturebooks, and sometimes, the contrast happens across pages instead of on a single page. In *Big Gorilla* (2024) (fig. 5.2.6), the former spread depicts a character with a sad face and the following spread presents a character with a warm smile, subtly communicating a positive spirit. In particular, various functions appear when contrast applies to the scale of characters. Specifically, small scales enable the visual clue to be the hidden information at first, waiting for readers to find out (fig. 5.2.2). However, more frequently, small scales indicate a weakness in power or a feeling of helplessness. In *Mrs Bibi's Elephant*, which was examined

earlier (2020) (see fig. 4.2.18), when the public gathers together and resists Mrs Bibi's elephant, both Mrs Bibi and the elephant are shown at an extremely small scale, which indicates their power are not able to contend with the group of people. In *Snail* (2023) (see fig. 4.2.8), the boy presents in a very small size, reflecting his helpless state of mood; so does the lonely Willy in *Willy and the Cloud* (2016) (fig. 5.2.10 and fig. 5.2.11) no matter whether he is surrounded by the public or walking alone. Also, contrast in colour forms an engaging visual effect. In *A Possum's Tail* (2014) (see fig. 5.2.9), the colour of the balloons in the sky is shown in high saturation compared with the greyer colour in the surroundings, which highlights the focused subject associated with the theme.

Picture within picture sometimes brings an innovative visual experience or provides the visual information that texts are laborious to narrate. In *The Incredible Painting of Felix Clousseau* (2021) (fig. 5.2.8), a fierce dog in a painting bites the suit of a thief in the story, which breaks not only the frame of that painting but also the boundary between two-dimension and three-dimension, between fiction and reality, resulting an engaging visual effect. In *The Heart and the Bottle* (2010) (fig. 5.2.12), the man's head extends to four pictures from the whale in the sea to the orbits of the planets, showing the desire and curiosity for knowledge directly instead of depicting these thoughts in plain words. Likewise, transferring words into pictures sometimes implies diverse messages. The thought bubbles in *Mrs Bibi's Elephant* (2020) (see fig. 4.2.18) display rich information. For instance, the arrow in one bubble means that this person is thinking about stock and investment, and the diamond in another suggests that the person cares only about money and value. All the images presented in the bubbles of this spread indicate that none of them are concerned or fond of Mrs Bibi's elephant.

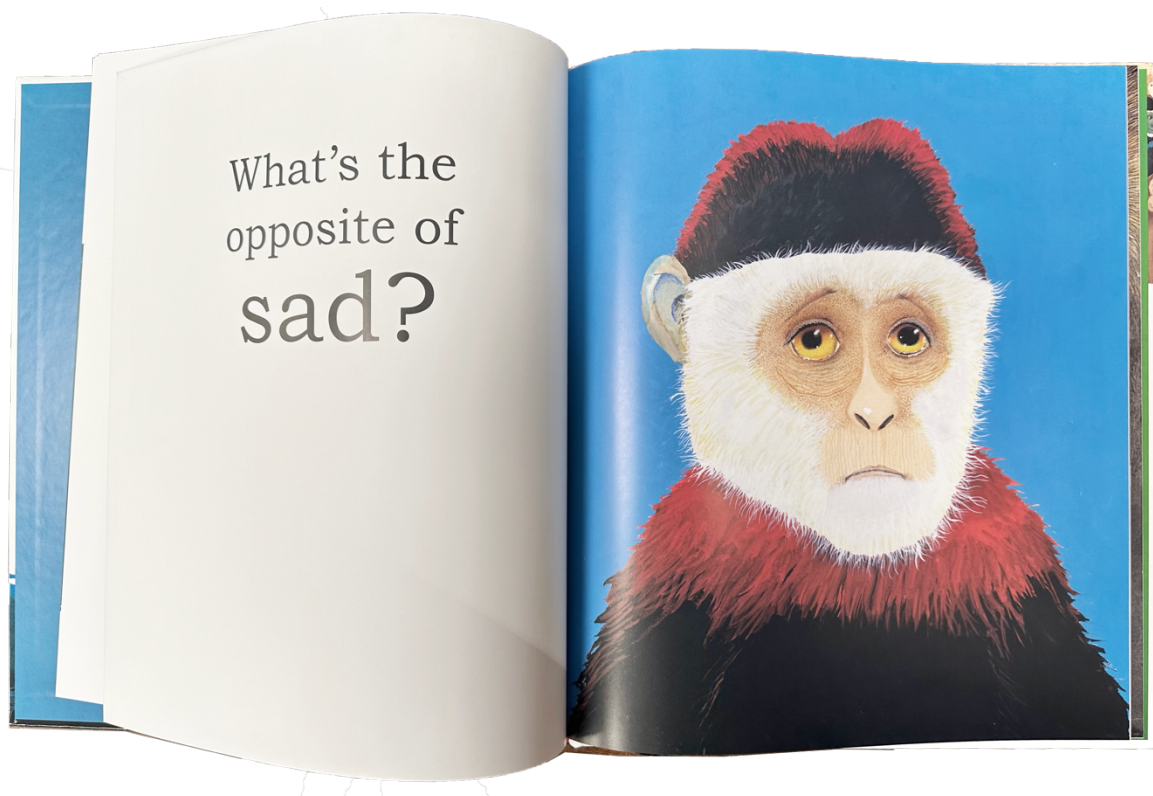


Fig. 5.2.6 Browne, A. (2024) *Big Gorilla*. London: Walker Books.

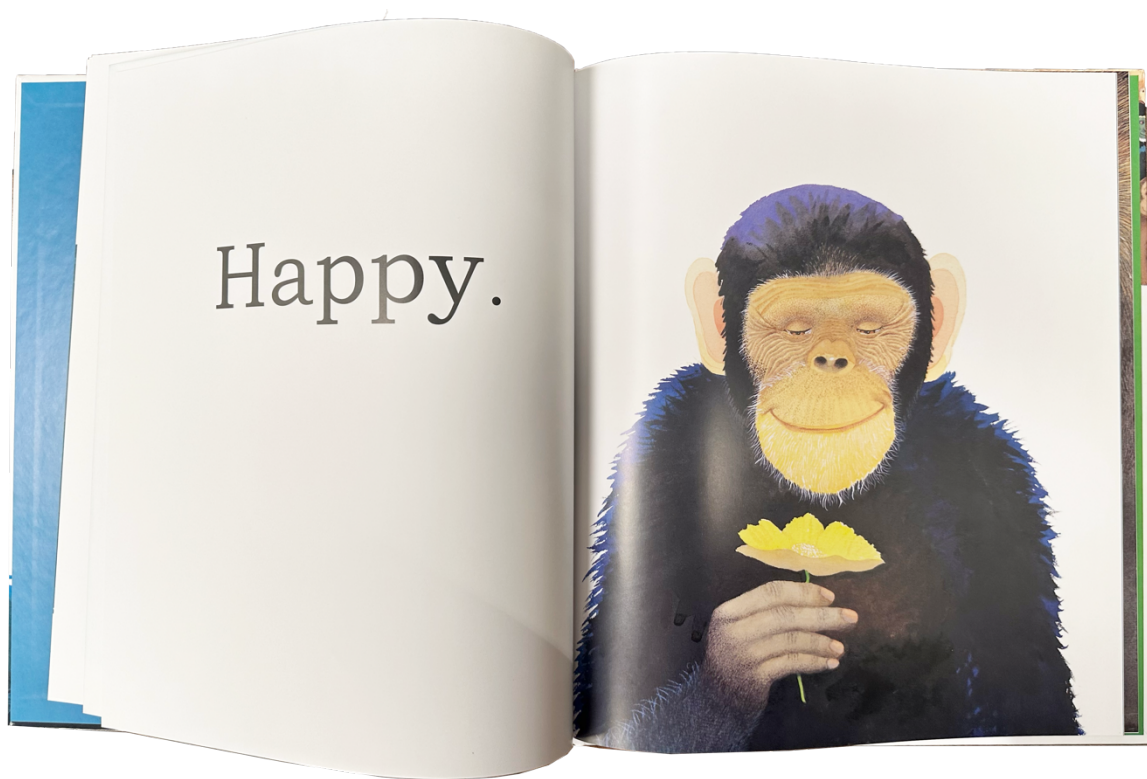


Fig. 5.2.7 Browne, A. (2024) *Big Gorilla*. London: Walker Books.



Fig. 5.2.8 Agee, J. (2021) *The Incredible Painting of Felix Clousseau*. London: Scallywag Press.



Fig. 5.2.9 Dawney, G. and Barrow, A. (2014) *A Possum's Tail*. London: Tate Publishing.

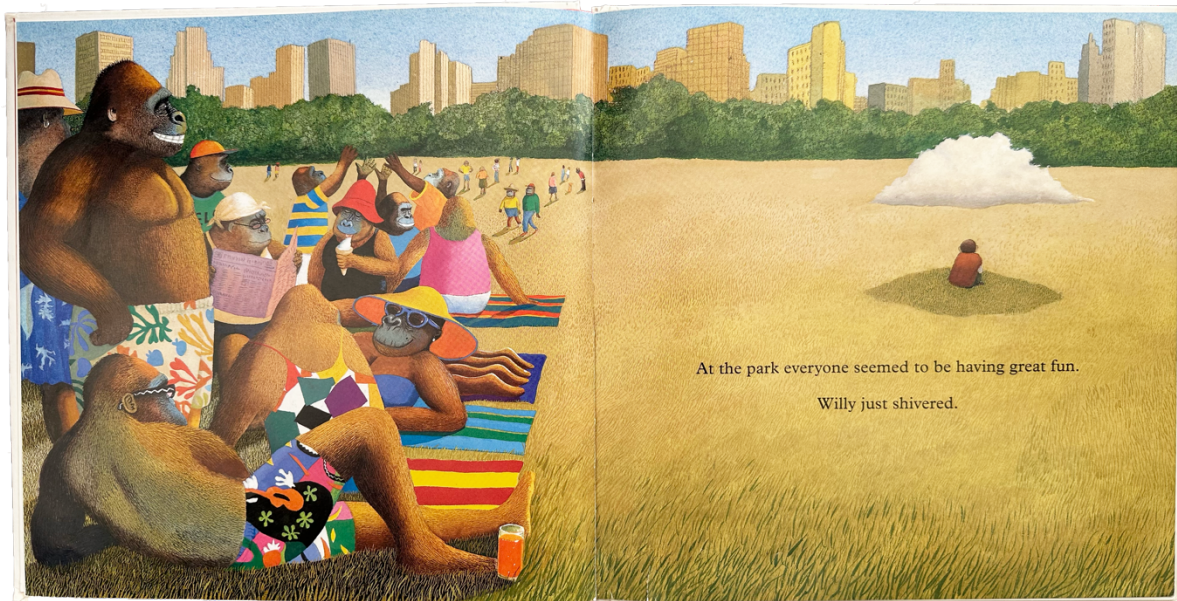


Fig. 5.2.10 Browne, A. (2016) *Willy and the Cloud*. London: Walker Books.



Fig. 5.2.11 Browne, A. (2016) *Willy and the Cloud*. London: Walker Books.



Fig. 5.2.12 Jeffers, O. (2010) *The Heart and the Bottle*. New York: HarperCollins Children's Books.

5.3 Examining the Changes of Pictorial Elements to the Meaning of Narrative in Picturebook *The Guardian Angel*

In picturebooks, the impact of the changes of visual elements on the meaning of narrative has not yet been thoroughly examined by other researchers. It is claimed that a visual object relates not merely the visual appearance, but also the relation between the observable picture and its intended statement (Arnheim, 1974), so the visual elements showing up in a picturebook involve not only their visual appearance but also the relationship between the elements seen and the meaning of the narrative to be conveyed. This section aims to examine how the variations of the pictorial experiments in my picturebook *The Guardian Angel* (2022), affect the meaning of storytelling by combining experimental practices with corresponding visual or pictorial theories.

To explore this point, I have created a simple and original story, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), which concerns a little girl who cannot find her grandfather but is protected by an angel as the embodied manifestation of the grandfather. Moebius (1986) observed that illustrations contain communication codes and can help the interpretive process. In my view, these

communication codes can be considered as the potential visual changes of pictorial elements that constitute a picturebook, including scale, location, and colour. Our understanding can be affected by size and location, respectively (Lewis, 2001). The visual experiments were conducted and divided into several parts, focusing on the scale and position. These include the changes in the scale of the characters, the variations in the position of the characters, the changes in size and location of scenes, and the changes in the location of scenes.

5.3.1 Theories in the Visual Experiments of in *The Guardian Angel*

The main function of visual images in picturebooks is to carry the conceptual meaning of storytelling, as picturebooks provide a visual narrative of concepts and meaning primarily through images:

Picture books afford repertoires of visual images and narratives anchored in cultural assumptions, systems of meaning and ideologies. (Bradford, 2011, p. 183)

Research further in visual narrative concerns studies of the image and its components.

When discussing images, Groensteen argues that they can be considered as “an utterable,” but more importantly, image is both “a describable” and “an interpretable”:

Indeed, the reduction of the utterable to a statement mobilizes, in the image, only the elements directly concerned with the narrative process, that is to say, those engaged in action. (Groensteen, 2007, p. 103)

This is to say that the action closely associated with the narrative or core concepts of the intended idea in a picturebook plays a vital role in interpreting the creator’s thoughts. It means that the visual components that constitute the way of the action decide what a reader sees and understands. In picturebooks, images and gestures of the human body are primary carriers for meaning (Mitchell, 1995), and narrative relies on both action and character (Roxburgh, 1983); the experiments in characters are also meaningful for visual narrative. Meanwhile, multiple perspectives in the experiments to examine the influence of

the changes of visual elements in the narrative are also in line with the multiple strategies for the visual expression of potential content:

The artists may employ any number of strategies for the arrangement of graphic marks in representing any subject, and while the observable differences between those strategies might characterize that subject in different ways, they do not usually provide any barrier to the act of recognition itself. (Miers, 2022, p. 77)

This means that several approaches can be applied to examine the visual narrative in images of the picturebook. Even though they may distinguish in representing the intended subject, readers can recognize the core ideas through the strategies used in embodiments. A comparative method examining the pictorial groups may help produce a suitable way of analysing the development of visual experiments. This method, to some extent, corresponds to a primary characteristic of the iconographic approach:

The central feature of an iconographic approach is to compare the image with other texts to establish the potential meaning of its content. (Horton and Gray, 2022, p. 22)

This practice is also mainly done through an iconographic approach to compare multiple pictorial groups of visual experiments. And examine which version is comparatively more helpful in communicating the intended meaning.

5.3.2 The Changes of the Scale of the Characters in *The Guardian Angel*

Three spreads in *The Guardian Angel* (2022) that demonstrate how changes in scale impact the meaning of the narrative are spread 6, 7, and 8. For Spread 6 (fig.5.3.2.1) and spread 6_3 (fig.5.3.2.2), even though the emotional expression is more evident in spread 6_3, the effect is weakened with the larger scale of the character. I hypothesized that a larger scale might suggest greater power. In addition, interesting visual effects arise from the changes of scales in spread 7(fig.5.3.2.3), particularly the change of girl and black panther in this case. Spread 7_2 (fig.5.3.2.4) and spread 7_3 (fig.5.3.2.5) are a good comparison group in terms of the contrast in size. The girl is larger than the black panther in spread 7_2 and the other way around in spread 7_3. My intention in spread 7_2 was to portray the panther as potentially frightening, but the larger scale of the girl diminishes this effect, as a larger object also

means it appears heavier (Arnheim, 1974). Conversely, the black panther appears more menacing in spread 7_3. The problem is that the girl is hard to notice when she is too small. In spread 7, I aimed for a noticeable, yet relatively small scale for the girl.



Fig.5.3.2.1 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

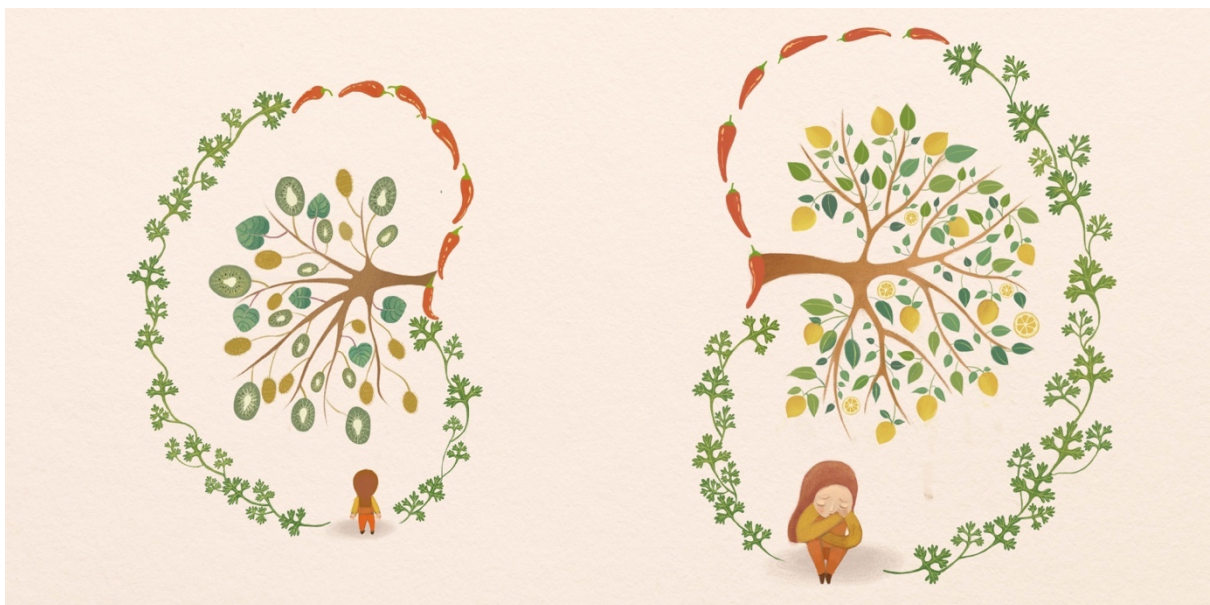


Fig.5.3.2.2 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.2.3 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.2.4 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.2.5 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

Comparing spread 8 (fig.5.3.2.6) and spread8_3 (fig.5.3.2.7), the larger guardian angel in spread 8_3 is intended to convey greater protective power. The 'total visual field' (Arnheim, 1974) involves properties weaving together rather than a single characteristic. Notably, the white colour in the guardian angel's body and the blue on his cap, together with the change of size, make the guardian angel stand out, so I assume that the interplay of multiple components in the picture can enhance the power, which makes the character's size more remarkable than it is. Another example concerning size can be found in this spread as well. Compared with spread 8 and spread 8_6, the girl's size in spread 8_6 is smaller than in spread 8, making the maze more massive than the original one, and the girl thus is more vulnerable.



Fig.5.3.2.6 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.2.7 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

5.3.3 The Variations of Position of the Characters

The position of characters in a picture can indicate the relationship between characters. In experiments for spread 1 (fig.5.3.3.1) and 1_7 (fig.5.3.3.2). I placed characters close together to suggest a stronger relationship compared to those further apart. I hypothesized that closer proximity would enhance the sense of intimacy. Both spread 1_7 and spread 1_8 (fig.5.3.3.3) explore distance, showing how different positions influence closeness. The degree of intimacy weakens when one of the characters is remote and away from the scene in the picture. Notably, even though the characters are in a comparatively close position, the object existing between the characters can separate the characters and prevent the sense of closeness. Spread 1_10 (fig.5.3.3.5) is an example of the nearby position being separated. Similarly, the dividing line, the intersection of the left and right pages in a book, can isolate the two characters and reduce the degree of intimacy. Spread 1_12 (fig.5.3.3.7) in contrast on the same page demonstrates a tighter relation.



Fig.5.3.3.1 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

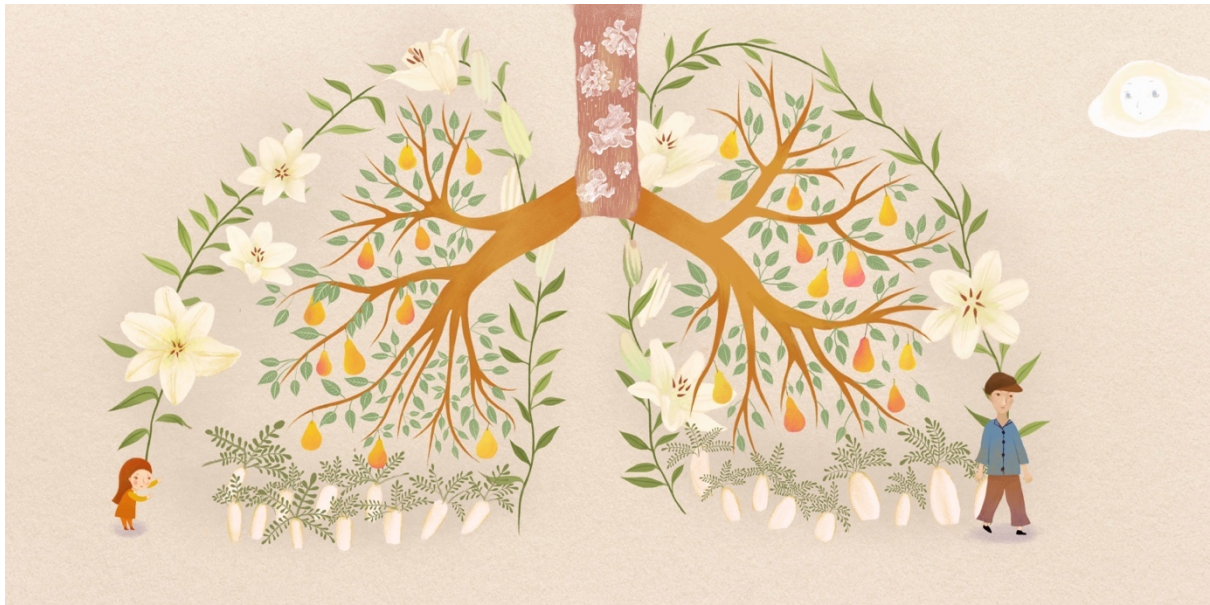


Fig.5.3.3.2 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.3.3 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

Apart from comparing positions on the horizontal line level, up and down in a picture also influences meaning. For spread 1_9 (fig.5.3.3.4) and spread 1_11 (fig.5.3.3.6), I positioned the grandfather above the little girl in both spreads, so the girl in either situation is protected. However, I varied their vertical positions to shift the meaning subtly. In spread 1_11, placing the girl higher was intended to convey greater safety with a better place to hide from unknown danger; conversely, in spread 1_9, the grandfather's elevated position was meant to symbolise his courage and exploratory nature compared with the one on the ground in spread 1_11. Characters staying close and on the same page show closer relationships. The closeness manifests in either spread 1 or spread 1_12. To compare the two, spread 1_12 shows stronger protection because, on the one hand, both characters are closer to the cloud fairy, and on the other hand, they are both on top of the trees, which is not stable compared with being on the ground.



Fig.5.3.3.4 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.3.5 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

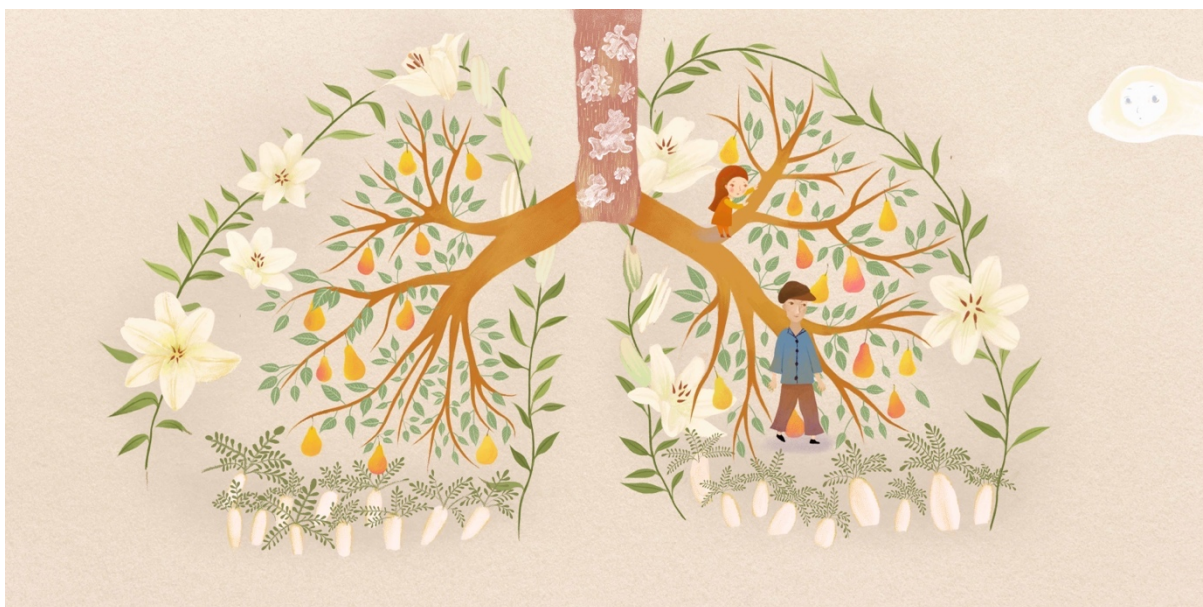


Fig.5.3.3.6 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

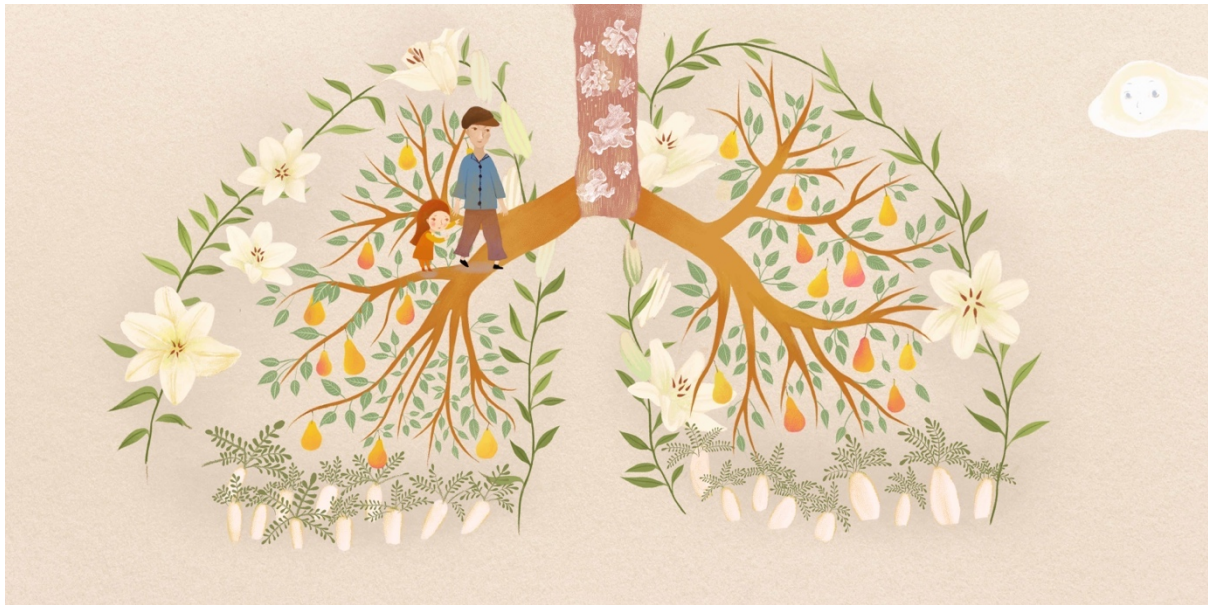


Fig.5.3.3.7 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

The different location of the cloud fairy in spread 2 shows the different effects on the meaning. I intended the cloud fairy's proximity to the grandpa in this spread to emphasise their connection. Specifically, spread 2 (fig.5.3.3.8), 2_7 (fig.5.3.3.9) and 2_8 (fig.5.3.3.10) present, respectively, the cloud fairy behind the scenes, by the scene and far from the scene. Even though the cloud fairy is far from the scene in spread 2_7, which seems visually pleasing, it is far from the meaning that should be conveyed in this spread. And the cloud fairy is too hidden to be spotted in spread 2_8. Therefore, this character in the scene is a better solution regarding the meaning: watching and getting close to the grandpa. Its location corresponds to the previous and the subsequent spread in the picturebook. The comparative group of spread 4 (fig.5.3.3.11) and spread 4_2 (fig.5.3.3.12) shows the distinction between up and down in terms of narrative in the picturebook. When grandpa is up in the picture with the cloud fairy, a tendency to leave appears. Conversely, the meaning seems to be changed, as if the grandpa is going to play with his friend when he is at the bottom of the image.



Fig.5.3.3.8 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.3.9 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.3.10 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.3.11 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.3.12 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

The power of a character can be affected when placed at a high or a low level. Compared with the girl and grandfather, the cloud fairy is located at a higher place in spread 3 (fig.5.3.3.13) and a lower point in spread 3_8 (fig.5.3.3.14), which visually demonstrates a different meaning. When a visual object is situated higher up, it carries more weight (Arnheim, 1974). Only in spread 3, the cloud fairy, as a powerful creature in this fictional story, shows its energy. If a picture is imprecise in its abstract qualities, the observer must decide what the object represents (Arnheim, 1969). My intention in spread 3_8 was to explore the effect of altering this visual hierarchy. In spread 3_8, the cloud fairy has to look up the grandfather, which cannot communicate its properties correctly.



Fig.5.3.3.13 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.3.14 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

I experimented with the black panther's placement in spreads 7 (fig. 5.3.2.3) and 7_9 (fig. 5.3.3.18) to explore the impact of distance on visual narrative. In spread 7_9, I positioned the panther too far from the girl, both vertically and horizontally, diminishing its intended role as a threatening element. I hypothesized that proximity would intensify the narrative

tension. In spreads 7_6 (fig. 5.3.3.15) and 7_7 (fig. 5.3.3.16), I aimed for a visual representation of increasing danger; spread 7_7 was designed to convey a more urgent threat than 7_6. Comparing spreads 7_7 and 7_8 (fig. 5.3.3.17), I found that horizontal positioning better conveyed a sense of immediacy. I hypothesized that a vertical arrangement might lessen the impact of the dangerous situation because verticality can imply a difference in time.



Fig.5.3.3.15 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.3.16 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.3.17 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.3.18 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

The proximity of a character to the scene affects the narrative. My intention in spreads 9 (fig. 5.3.3.19) and 9_2 (fig. 5.3.3.20) was to explore how distance impacts the atmosphere. In spread 9, I aimed for a close interaction between the guardian angel and the scene to highlight the imminent danger. There exists a proper distance among objects If the distance

is too far, its effect will be weakened (Arnheim, 1974). Therefore, I intended spread 9 to be more impactful than 9_2, due to the closer proximity between the angel and the wave.



Fig.5.3.3.19 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.3.20 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

5.3.4 The Different Directions of the Characters

Direction, as one of the properties of visual objects, has a vital influence on equilibrium. (Arnheim, 1974). My intention in spread 9 (fig. 5.3.3.19) was to create a sense of urgency by depicting the guardian angel facing the oncoming waves. It is this direction that creates an intense and exciting moment or action. I contrasted this with spread 9_7 (fig. 5.3.4.1), where the angel is turned away from the waves. The message cannot be delivered when the guardian angel is in the opposite direction, looking at the back of the waves. I hypothesized that the former would better convey the immediacy of the situation, while the latter would suggest a less effective response.

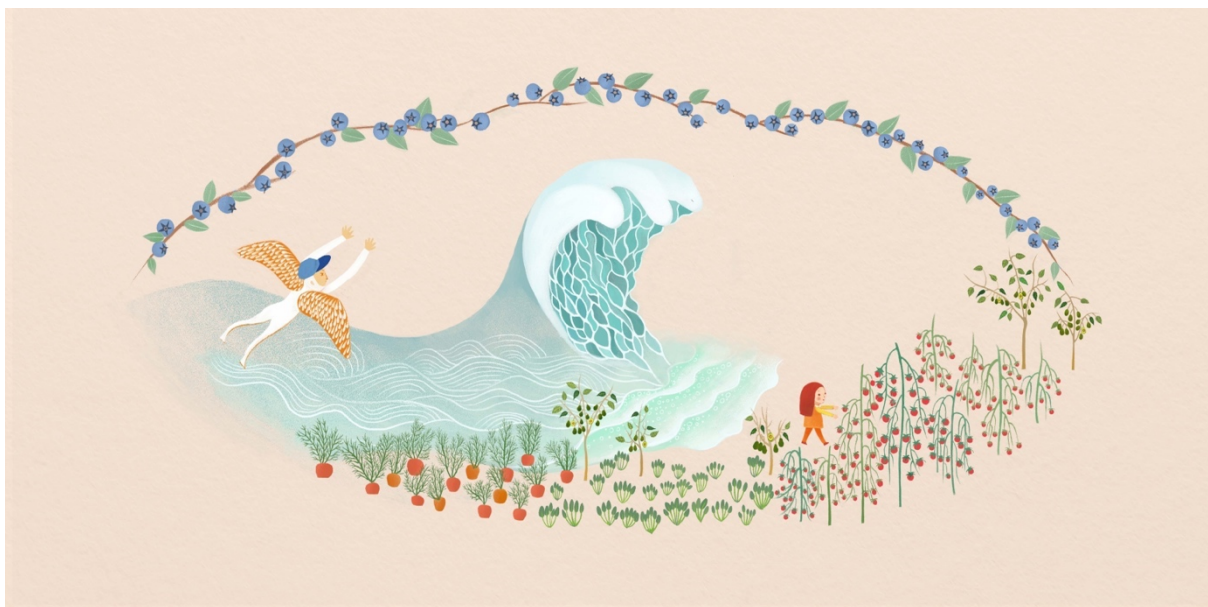


Fig.5.3.4.1 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.4.2 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

Direction significantly impacts the narrative atmosphere, particularly in moments of danger. My intention in spread 9 (fig. 5.3.3.19) was to use direction to heighten the sense of urgency and danger. By positioning the guardian angel facing the wave, directly protecting the unaware girl, I aimed to create a visually compelling representation of a critical moment.

This spread shows that the guardian angel is protecting the girl when she is distracted by the tomato vines and unaware of the threatening waters behind her, and the direction plays a crucial role. In contrast, spread 9_10 (fig. 5.3.4.2) shows the girl facing the wave, suggesting she is aware of the danger. This deliberate change in the girl's direction reduces the dramatic tension and lessens the visual need for the angel's intervention. This deliberate contrast in directional positioning was intended to highlight the nuanced interplay between threat and response, showcasing how directional cues shape the narrative's impact.

Therefore, on the one hand, a protective action exerts its effectiveness when the protector and the dangerous factors are in close interaction, and they are in a direction facing each other. On the other hand, the visual effect can have an enhanced influence when the character is not aware of danger by placing the character in the same direction. In these relationships with proper directions, the reader can receive the information that the image

intends to convey. The reader's reaction to certain relationships may also echo Gombrich's idea of "equivalence":

All artistic discoveries are discoveries not of likenesses but of equivalences which enable us to see reality in terms of an image and an image in terms of reality. And this equivalence never rests on the likeness of elements so much as on the identity of responses to certain relationships.
(Gombrich, 1984, p. 276)

The equivalence mentioned above is vital in understanding visual images. Understanding pictorial objects relies on the reactions to certain relationships instead of likeness.

5.3.5 The Changes of Size of Scenes

In spreads 4 (fig. 5.3.3.11) and 4_5 (fig. 5.3.5), I experimented with scale to convey the intended emotional impact. I found that the smaller scene in spread 4, with its ample negative space, more effectively conveys the grandpa's sadness and reluctance to leave the girl. The negative space was intended to emphasise his emotions and make the character's feelings more prominent. I hypothesized that this would allow readers to better connect with his feelings of love and sorrow. Isolation can result in weight (Arnheim, 1974), so I assume the negative space, in this case, strengthens the emotional impact of the scene.



Fig.5.3.5 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

5.3.6 The Changes of Location of Scenes

I experimented with scene placement in the second spread of this picturebook to determine its impact on visual storytelling. The scene has been arranged on the left in Spread 2_7 (see fig.5.3.3.9) and on the right in spread 2_8 (see fig.5.3.3.10); the top left in spread 2_9 (fig.5.3.6.1) and bottom left in spread 2_10 (fig.5.3.6.2); the top middle in spread 2_12 (fig.5.3.6.3), bottom middle in spread 2_13 (fig.5.3.6.4); the top right 2_14 (fig.5.3.6.5) and bottom right 2_15 (see fig.5.3.6.6). I considered complete scene compositions—such as spread 2 (see fig.5.3.3.8), spread 2_7 and spread 2_8—to be more effective than those with cut-off edges or unbalanced visual gravity. My intention was to explore how changes in scale and composition would affect the overall impact of the scene.



Fig.5.3.6.1 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.6.2 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.6.3 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.6.4 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.6.5 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.



Fig.5.3.6.6 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

These visual experiments reflect a comprehensive investigation into the impact of various visual design choices on the narrative effectiveness of a picture book, examining how the manipulation of scale, placement, and the interaction between textual and visual elements could shape a reader's emotional response. This involved creating and comparing numerous alternative visual representations of key moments. This systematic approach proved valuable in revealing the subtle, yet profound, impact that design decisions can have on the overall narrative in a picturebook. The analysis of these design choices emphasises the critical role of visual communication in storytelling. The ability to effectively guide a reader's emotional experience, to create a sense of anticipation, and to amplify the story's central themes through careful visual choices highlights the power and sophistication of visual language in the context of picturebook design. The project demonstrates that design choices in picturebooks are not simply aesthetic decisions; they are integral components of the narrative, shaping meaning and influencing the reader's emotional response on multiple levels. The research findings reinforce the significance of thoughtful, intentional design in fostering a deeper engagement with the narrative and enriching the overall reading experience.

5.4 Analysis and Reflections of Final Images of *The Guardian Angel*

In spread 1 of this picturebook (fig. 5.4.2), I used character actions and placement to convey emotion and relationships. The grandfather holding the girl's hand was intended to visually represent his care for her. The cloud fairy's placement at the page's edge, gazing at the grandfather, serves as a visual foreshadowing of the story's progression, hinting at the impending loss without explicit statement. The organs (in this case, the lungs) are depicted using fruits and vegetables known for their health benefits (pears, lilies, tremella, and mooli). This design choice was intended to add a layer of visual symbolism, subtly hinting at themes of health and well-being, which are central to the narrative.

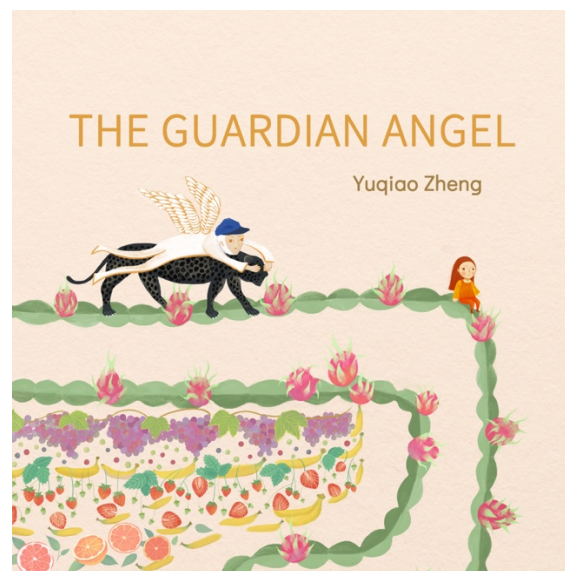


Fig.5.4.1 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

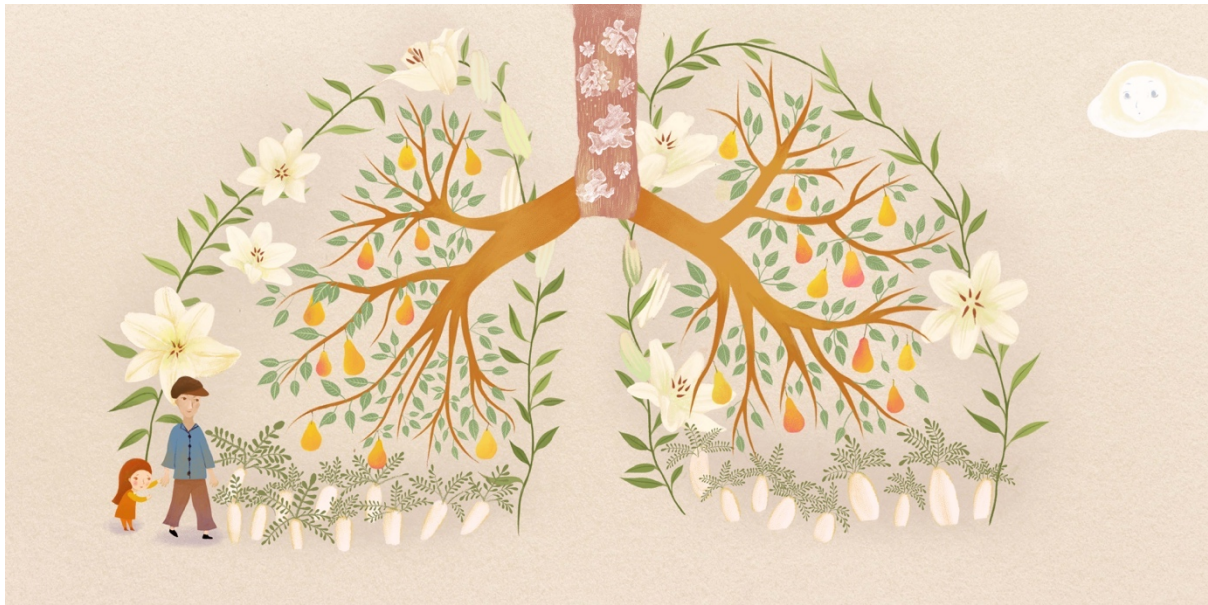


Fig.5.4.2 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) the spread 1 of *The Guardian Angel*.

My intention in creating spread 2 (fig. 5.4.3) was to present a visual juxtaposition of joy and impending loss. In this spread, vegetables and fruit in the shape of a heart are the scenes used to symbolise the organ. Blueberries, cranberries, blackberries, raspberries, and kale form the heart shape. I aimed to convey feeling through the facial expressions, poses, as well as the relationship between the position of each character. I chose to depict the grandfather picking food for the girl, his actions complemented by her delighted expression and jump to highlight the closeness and warmth of their relationship, while positioning the cloud fairy closer to them, creating visual tension, and subtly hinting at the grandfather's impending vulnerability and the imminent threat of loss, effectively communicating the delicate balance of joy and sorrow that underscores the story. I used this design to create a visual metaphor for the love and happiness between the grandfather and granddaughter while simultaneously foreshadowing the narrative's sadness.

Visual metaphor can be achieved through an abstract organisation of the composition. I placed the grandfather centrally within the heart-shaped arrangement of healthy foods, a visual metaphor highlighting his importance in her heart and using the heart shape to further symbolise the love and connection between them, enhancing the narrative's

emotional depth while also communicating the fact that the scene is a memory from the girl's past, adding a layer of wistful reflection to the imagery.



Fig.5.4.3 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) the spread 2 of *The Guardian Angel*.

For the content of visual elements in spread 3 (fig. 5.4.4), the corresponding vegetable carrots, broccolis, cabbages, onions, and sprouts presented in this spread are in the shape of a liver, constituting the background of the storytelling.

My deliberate design choices in this spread aimed to create a visually rich and emotionally resonant composition that conveys the warmth and intimacy of the relationship between the grandfather and granddaughter while subtly introducing the looming presence of loss. This was complemented by a depiction of the grandfather and girl in close proximity, visually suggesting their close bond, and his act of sharing the vegetables was meant to symbolise the warmth and affection of their shared moments, making the visual scene feel inviting and comforting. However, the subtle introduction of the cloud fairy, partially concealed behind the broccoli, was intentionally created to introduce an element of ambiguity, inviting the viewer to interpret the cloud fairy's seemingly hesitant action and to consider what this visual ambiguity might foreshadow.

The colour choices in the initial spreads were carefully considered to immediately capture the attention of young readers and establish the emotional tone; specifically, I chose a high-saturation blue for the grandfather and a high-saturation warm orange for the little girl, ensuring that the girl, rendered in a vibrant, attention-grabbing hue, would be the first element to catch the eye and thereby directing the viewer's focus to her emotional state from the outset, intentionally using colour to guide the reader's visual experience and to establish the emotional core of the narrative before introducing more complex narrative elements.



Fig.5.4.4 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) the spread 3 of *The Guardian Angel*.

In spread 4 (fig. 5.4.5), the shape of the spleen is formed by corns, papayas, figs, lychees and mushrooms. I aimed to visually represent the grandfather's passing using a multi-layered approach that combined carefully chosen character actions with composition. The depiction of the cloud fairy gently taking the grandfather's hand was deliberately designed to symbolise his gradual passing, while his backward glance at the little girl was intended to directly convey his reluctance to leave and the profound affection he holds for her; the overall composition of this spread was designed to evoke a sense of quiet sadness,

highlighting the emotional weight of this pivotal moment in the story's narrative, enhancing the emotional impact of the transition.

There exists a proper distance among objects. If the distance is too far, its effect will be weakened. And if the distance is too close, the object will look compressed and require more breathing room. However, the distance can still be a factor that affects our emotions toward the character. When the character is more distant from us, we may feel less close and less attached to the character. My design choices in spread were driven by the desire to visually express the emotional consequences of the grandfather's departure and the resulting separation; to do so, I increased the spatial distance between the grandfather and granddaughter as the cloud fairy leads him away; this deliberate expansion of space between the two main characters was not accidental but intentionally used to visually represent their growing distance and to highlight the emotional weight of their separation, thereby allowing readers to viscerally experience the pain of loss and the profound sense of detachment; the carefully controlled use of space in this spread, therefore, serves as a powerful visual metaphor for the emotional separation between the two characters, augmenting the narrative moment.



Fig.5.4.5 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) the spread 4 of *The Guardian Angel*.

In spread 5 (fig. 5.4.6), the shape of the stomach consists of pineapples, pumpkins, red cabbages, cherries, and mangos. As visual layout can impact the meaning of the storytelling, in creating spread 5, my goal was to visually represent the little girl's desperate search for her grandfather; therefore, I strategically placed the girl in three distinct locations—top right, bottom left, and bottom right—to visually depict her active search, creating a sense of movement and urgency within the illustration; furthermore, her varied postures—looking left, looking up, and looking right—were intentionally chosen to visually capture her growing worry and concern as her search unfolds, adding an element of energy to the composition and further emphasizing the girl's growing anxiety and emotional distress, enhancing the visual narrative's emotional impact.



Fig.5.4.6 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) the spread 5 of *The Guardian Angel*.

In spread 6 (fig. 5.4.7), the shape of the kidney is composed of corianders, kiwis, lemons, and red peppers. Colour contains twin layers of potential meaning, creating a convincing physical world and implying various moods. The arrangement of colours is one of the essential components of pictures, and symbolic meaning is affected by all the qualities of colour – the relative opacity, brightness, and a cool or warm effect. I used a grey tone with a lower saturation for the girl to visually represent the emotional impact of her failure to find her grandfather, emphasising that tone and saturation are more effective than hue in

conveying emotional nuances and successfully communicating her feelings of sadness and loss within the visual narrative, thus enhancing the story's emotional depth.

Size is another effective component in the visual narrative of picturebooks. Our understanding can be affected by size. My intention in depicting the little girl smaller in size in the spread where she cannot find her grandfather was to visually communicate her feelings of helplessness, isolation, and vulnerability; consequently, I intentionally reduced her size relative to the surrounding environment, creating a visual representation of her emotional state and physical distance from her grandfather, making her appear proportionally smaller and more distant, thereby underscoring her loneliness and the profound sense of loss she is experiencing, effectively conveying the emotional weight of the moment through a carefully controlled manipulation of scale.



Fig.5.4.7 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) the spread 6 of *The Guardian Angel*.

In spread 7 (fig. 5.4.8), the shape of the intestine is constituted of strawberries, grapefruits, pitayas, oranges, grapes, and bananas. I introduced the angel character, a visual metaphor for the grandfather's continued presence and protection. The angel can be regarded as the source domain, and the guardian of the grandfather can be viewed as the target domain; the

angel's gradual appearance, starting in this spread, was designed to represent the transition from the grandfather's physical form to a more spiritual or protective presence, a presence that acts as a guardian for the little girl, ensuring the reader understands that even though the grandfather is no longer physically present, his love and protection continue; the repeated appearance of the angel throughout the remaining spreads acts as a visual reminder of this continued protection, making it clear that the grandfather is still watching over and guiding the little girl.

An abstract atmosphere can metaphorically be expressed through an animal as a character. The black panther in spread 7 was intentionally used as a visual metaphor for danger, while the grandfather's action of shielding the panther's eyes from the girl was meant to convey his protective role and illustrate how he prevents harm to her; I also used the girl's gaze to direct the reader's focus and to intensify the narrative; by directing her gaze to the right, away from the approaching panther, I aimed to make the threat seem more imminent and create a sense of suspense as the reader is aware of a dangerous situation that the girl is not yet aware of, enhancing the dramatic tension in the scene, amplifying the visual narrative's impact.

It is worth considering the function of colour in the application of visual metaphor. A particular colour can refer to a known object. When a different object is painted in this colour, an association can be made. It can also mean the colour denotes the object. Also, if the same colour appears on two or more objects, they are associated with each other when we see them. My use of colour in spread 7 (fig. 5.4.8) aimed to create a visual connection between the grandfather in his human form and his angelic representation; specifically, the consistent use of blue in both the grandfather's shirt and the angel's cap was intended to subtly connect the two figures, acting as a visual bridge between the grandfather's physical presence in the earlier spreads and his spiritual presence in the later spreads, using colour to emphasise the enduring nature of his love and protection for his granddaughter; this metonymic shift from the grandfather's shirt to the angel's cap, both rendered in blue, acts as a visual symbol of his continued protection, adding a layer of symbolic depth to the evolving narrative.



Fig.5.4.8 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) the spread 7 of *The Guardian Angel*.

In spread 8 (fig. 5.4.9), a maze of nuts has been designed within the shape of a brain subtly; and the corresponding nuts are sunflower seeds, hazelnuts, peanuts, pistachios, and walnuts.

I employed scale and composition to create a visual representation of the little girl's challenges; therefore, the proportionally larger maze was designed to represent the enormity of the task facing the girl, highlighting the overwhelming nature of this challenge from her perspective; simultaneously, I depicted the girl proportionally smaller than the maze, emphasizing her vulnerability and the task's daunting nature while contrasting this with the larger figure of the angel, who guides her, thus communicating the grandfather's ongoing protection and support, creating a visually compelling representation of resilience and guidance in the face of adversity.

My intention in this spread was also to subtly incorporate knowledge about brain function into the design while creating a visually engaging narrative. Therefore, I used the letters B, V, L, R, and S—representing Balance, Visuality, Listening, Reading, and Speaking—to represent the different functions of specific brain areas, intending to subtly engage the reader with this information while simultaneously adding a layer of intellectual interest to the overall

imagery, adding depth and complexity to the visual narrative; I designed the pathway through the maze to spell out these letters, thereby connecting the visual puzzle to the concept of brain function, making the illustration intellectually stimulating as well as visually engaging.



Fig.5.4.9 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) the spread 8 of *The Guardian Angel*.

In spread 9 (fig. 5.4.10), the shape of the eyes consists of carrots, blueberries, cherry tomatoes, spinach, and avocados. The central layout is one of the approaches in visual metaphor utilised in this spread. The arrangement of the largest waves in the centre, signifying the pupil of the eye, was designed to immediately draw the viewer's attention to the imminent threat, effectively using visual centrality to create emphasis; the grandfather's central positioning, blocking the waves, was intended to highlight his protective role and to emphasise the contrast between the impending danger and the grandfather's protective action, thereby increasing the dramatic tension and creating a visually powerful moment; the waves' comparatively larger size relative to the girl was meant to visually emphasise the girl's vulnerability and the immediacy of the danger, enhancing the emotional impact of the scene through a careful manipulation of visual scale and proximity.



Fig.5.4.10 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) the spread 9 of *The Guardian Angel*.

Spread 10 (fig. 5.4.11), divided into four mini-scenes, was designed to depict the grandfather's protective actions and to provide comfort to those who have experienced loss. Each mini-scene—the grandfather catching the girl, picking food for her, shielding her from a falling apple, and steadying her—was specifically chosen to represent his love and care. My intention was to use these visual vignettes to communicate a sense of warmth, security, and enduring love, conveying the comforting message that protection and care can continue even after loss. The visual representation of the grandfather's consistent protection aims to provide a sense of reassurance and hope to readers who might be experiencing grief.

The contrast between the girl's unawareness of the danger and the viewer's knowledge of it was a deliberate narrative choice in this spread; by having the girl look in directions other than the potential source of danger (the wave), I intended to create a suspenseful moment in which the reader sees the danger the girl doesn't, thereby increasing the visual tension; this juxtaposition highlights the unseen protection provided by the grandfather, emphasising his constant vigilance even when the girl is unaware of the danger, successfully communicating the silent protection offered by the grandfather, enhancing the dramatic and emotional effect of the story's narrative.

Apart from this, the background is composed of vegetables and fruits that are nutritionally helpful for most organs – tomatoes, apples, pomegranates, oranges, carrots, and grapes, so these certain vegetables and fruits depicted are potentially beneficial for the whole human body. The hidden information in this spread is the carrots as lines in the image construct the entire shape of bodily organs from the lungs to the intestine when rotating the image 90 degrees clockwise. The inclusion of this hidden element is intended to add an element of intellectual curiosity and visual discovery for the viewer, rewarding careful observation and adding depth and richness to the overall design.



Fig.5.4.11 Yuqiao, Z. (2022) the spread 10 of *The Guardian Angel*.

5.5 Visual Metaphor in Narratives of Loneliness and Loss in Picturebooks

In this section, I aim to examine how visual metaphor could be applied in the storytelling of loneliness caused by loss and parting in the form of picturebooks. Moods can be expressed through images in metaphorically, as metaphors in picturebooks and can be presented through images (Gras, 2018). Therefore, visual metaphor can be viewed as a subtle way to display loneliness and loss. The question is how to effectively utilize visual metaphors and to further question what factors may be crucial in the effectiveness of the storytelling about trauma and loneliness.

A wordless picturebook is one of the two extremes in the interaction between words and pictures. The wordless narrative of the picturebook is also a complex form that demands readers verbalize its story (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006). In wordless picturebooks, pictures are key in expressing ideas and meaning. Pictures can give form to ideas and authors can also insert their thoughts into pictures (Doonan, 1993). Our understanding of meaning-making can be enhanced through books with pictures as the only narrative form (Kummerling-Meibauer, 2018). Besides this, reading can rely on an implicit understanding of how pictorial elements are organized (Lewis, 2001).

Our conceptual system is metaphorical concerning both thought and action (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003), and metaphor could also encourage abilities in decoding and creative thinking (Coats, 2019). Visual metaphor, as a feature of language and thought, provides children with a conceptual frame that can enrich their comprehension and expression of ideas and build their abilities in decoding and creative thinking (Purcell, 2016). Visual metaphor can be viewed as a subtle approach to dealing with hard topics, including loss, sadness, and grief. For example, in *Duck, Death and the Tulip* (2016), a duck is followed by an eerie figure with a skull head and starts talking and becoming friends with the figure. The method of depicting the ending of the duck's life is indirect. The passing of the river symbolizes the passing of life in this picturebook, *Duck, Death and the Tulip* (2016) (fig. 5.5.1).



Fig.5.5.1 Erlbruch, W. (2016) *Duck, Death and the Tulip*. Wellington: Gecko Press.

Generally, picturebooks express warm and positive emotions, while sadness seems to be a negative emotion. It demands techniques to tell sadness in a way suitable for children. Although it is difficult to express such an abstract emotion in *When Sadness Comes to Call* (2019) (fig. 5.5.2), the author cleverly personifies sadness as a character and shows readers what feelings that sadness would bring. A solution to sadness and how to deal with sadness have been suggested in the picturebook.

This picturebook encourages readers to understand their inner feelings and offers ways for children to release and relieve their emotions. It shows a better way to deal with this emotion is to respect sadness. Once you recognise, acknowledge, and welcome it, it will not be as uncomfortable and scary as it was in the first place. These concepts have been revealed through a character with a warm blue tone (fig. 5.5.2), which makes it easier for children to understand and accept the hard feeling.

In the picturebook *My Grandpa* (2020), the story describes the painful truth that the grandfather is ill, but it communicates warm emotions between the grandfather and the grandchild, which can ease the feeling of accepting what has happened to grandpa. In the

story, as the grandfather gets older, his behaviour gradually become unstable. Sometimes, he behaves like a child (fig. 5.5.3), which suggests that the grandpa has a serious illness.

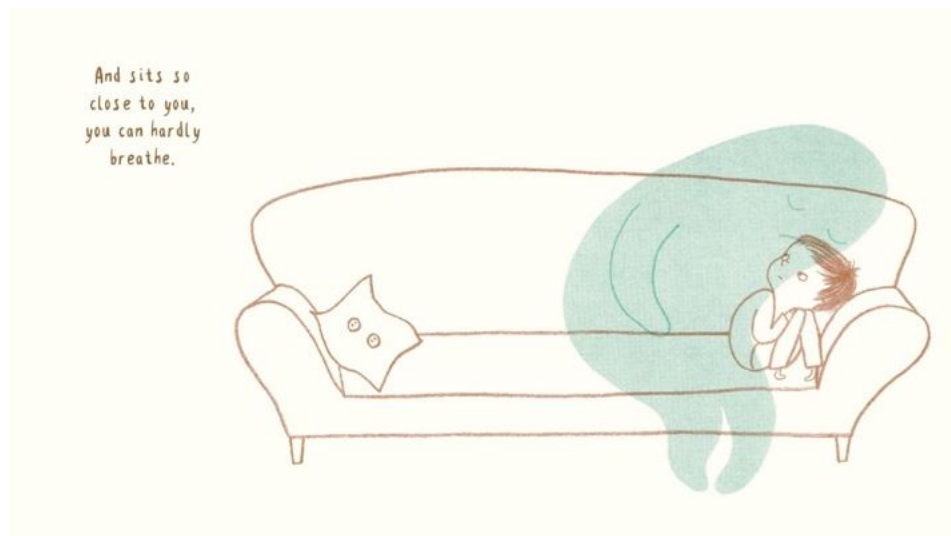


Fig.5.5.2 Eland, E. (2019) *When Sadness Comes to Call*. London: Andersen Press.

At times he behaves like an old man.



At times he's like a child.

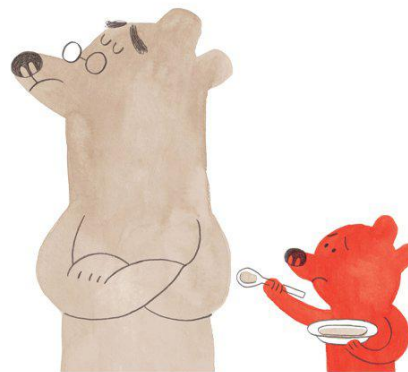


Fig.5.5.3 Altés, M. (2020) *My Grandpa*. London: Macmillan Children's Books.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has concentrated on pictorial theories regarding visual metaphor and semiotics. Visual conceptual metaphors are perceived as semiotic sources in picturebooks, requiring the readers to conceptually blend text and image as two semiotic codes to generate new

meanings when the words and pictures interrelate. In terms of the relationship between icon, index, and symbol, an icon links its features with physical similarities. In an index, its feature stands for the content. For symbols, the association between the signifier and the signified is constructed by specific interpretations. Moreover, symbols can manifest the feeling of a character in picturebooks through various forms. Also, the use of symbols sometimes depends on its cultural context. In a picture, to enable a symbol to work depends on both subject matter and visual form, and the designed visual form should serve its intended theme.

Furthermore, there are some differences between connotation, denotation, and exemplification. In connotation, connotative code is a sub-code relying on the main code to express the significance of the central concept of a picturebook. Both denotation and exemplification can represent objects. The distinction is that denotation is not necessarily associated with the truth of physical resemblance, and the object is associated with the meaning of its symbol. For exemplification, symbols can have various significances, and it requires a context to understand, which demands readers to make their own choices when selecting the most suitable meaning.

The picturebook *Umbrella* (2019) is used as an example to demonstrate how pictorial factors work in picturebooks. The aspects resolved mainly contain silent plot, colour, scale, direction, and visual metaphor, which all contribute to constructing a fantastic narrative, empowering the significance of a story. In my own practice, the visual experiments concentrating on the pictorial changes belong to the visual modality, and those visual variables for experimentation are not limited to colour, scale, position, and direction. The results of these experiments manifest how the changes in these factors affect the meaning of a story and can be perceived as a reference for employing an effective narrative approach in creating a picturebook. Overall, for creators, having the ability to embed visual metaphors and the awareness of using symbols not merely means a grasp of an approach that communicates abstract feelings through visual components in an effective way but also an invitation for readers to actively engage in the narrative to decode the significance of the story. For readers, being able to identify visual metaphors and adopted symbols in the storytelling will help them better understand the concept of the story in picturebooks.

Chapter 6. The Application of Symbol in the Multimodal Text and Image Relation in Picturebook 3- *The Way to Happiness*

As symbols play a crucial role in narratives, especially fairytales, this chapter illustrates the concept of fairytales and introduces the archetypes, universal themes, symbolism, and functions of fairytales. This chapter also involves a case study analysing how a symbol works in postmodern picturebooks. Moreover, a comparative analysis of the application of symbols in picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), and picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), has been added. Before the creation of the picturebook 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), some preparatory works had been completed, including an initial practice of using symbols and a review of the use of symbols in my past picturebook '*I*' *Searcher* (2020), when I was unaware that I already adopted symbols in my practice. Picture book 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), uses symbols to communicate ironic counterpoint. Unlike the analysis of the previous two picturebooks, the reflection of picture book 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), has been divided into two parts, with the first part focusing on the symbols in this picturebook practice and the second part analysing the whole picturebook together with an examination of ironic counterpoint as a type of multimodal text and image relationship.

For picturebook 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), various kinds of symbols have been embedded into the storytelling of this book. The symbols adopted in this book can mainly be divided into six parts – mythology, traditional culture, the bible, fable, fairytales, and Renaissance painting. To some extent, readers could also take the six parts as six origins of inspiration in terms of utilizing symbols. Before analysing the symbols adopted in detail later, a short overview of *The Way to Happiness* (2024) is given here. This picturebook communicates a concept about different ways to be happy. By visualizing the different ways of deviating from happiness, the proper way of achieving happiness will be enhanced through the ironic effect resulting from the counterpointing relationship between text and image.

6.1 The Embodiment of Symbols in Fairytales

6.1.1 The Concept of Fairytales

According to Teverson, fairy tales “are fundamentally about humanity, and one of their central functions is to dramatise the human condition.” (Teverson, 2013, p. 23) Jack Zipes proposed that the literary fairytales derived from the literary activity in Florence in the fourteenth century. It appeared as a short narrative form, the “novelle” – a short tale obeying principles of unity of time and action and a clear narrative plot (Zipes, 2006). These mainly contain surprising events of everyday life aimed at entertaining and instructing readers. These stories were influenced by oral wonder tales, fairytales, fabliaux, chivalric romances, epic poetry, and fables and were intended for the amusement and instruction of the readers. The growth of the French literary fairytale in the late seventeenth century can be thought of as the origin of the blossoming of fairytales in Europe and America in the nineteenth century. Based on these points from Zipes, the initial form of the fairytale is perceived as a novelle, a short narrative form containing time, action, and an explicit narrative plot within united rules. These three components then become the fundamental elements for a shot narrative. For the relations among them, the narrative plot may function as knots connecting the actions of characters within a certain time from the beginning to the end of a story.

Auden defined fairytale from a symbolic perspective and clarified its transcultural and transnational traits:

The fairy tale is a dramatic projection in symbolic images of the life of the psyche, and it can travel from one country to another one culture to another culture, whenever what it has to say holds good for human nature in both despite their differences Insofar as the myth is valid the events of the story... a genuine myth... can always be recognized by the fact that its appeal cuts across all differences between highbrow and lowbrow tastes... (Auden,2015, p. 209)

It illustrates that fairytales symbolically reflect what spiritual life presents. Meanwhile, fairytales can break the boundaries among cultures and countries, resonating with people spiritually, as long as the tale links with human nature and is beneficial for all those cultures.

Under these circumstances, the readers will relate themselves to the story told based on their own cultural background and experience.

Fairytales can carry useful moral messages, and their playful narrative allows the stories to penetrate the reader's mind more pleasantly and to instruct and amuse them simultaneously (Perrault, 1967). Fairytale has moral significance so that it can instruct readers to some extent. Also, what makes fairytales remarkable is their playful way of storytelling. Consequently, the educational and entertaining traits of fairytales, together with their association with human nature, contribute to the uniqueness and significance of fairytales and allow this form of narrative to penetrate the reader's thoughts or resonate with the reader's mind with amusement and enlightenment concurrently.

The historian Marina Warner, when studying symbols and fairytales, asserted that a fairytale does not necessarily contain fairies as the agents of the wonders and that the magic in a fairytale needs to be implicit and conjures the existence of another world with a sense of the "realms of faery" (Warner, 2018). This statement reveals the magic or wonders of a fairytale, which can be shown implicitly. Notably, it is the sense of the fairy world that connects the readers with the other world. From my point of view, the sense can be achieved through a constructed atmosphere. This atmosphere naturally brings readers into another world the creator intends to build. According to Auden, for the reader, fairytales can be thought of as being a "Secondary World":

the Primary, everyday, world which he knows through his senses, and a Secondary world or worlds which he not only can create in his imagination, but also cannot stop himself creating ... Stories about the Primary world may be called Feigned Histories; stories about a Secondary world myths or fairy tales...the Secondary worlds of myth and fairy tale, however different from the Primary world, presuppose its reality... A Secondary world may be full of extraordinary beings (fairies, giants, dwarves, dragons, magicians, talking animals) and extraordinary objects (glass mountains and enchanted castles) and extraordinary events may occur in it, like a live man being turned to stone or a dead man restored to life; but, like the Primary world, it must, if it is to carry conviction, seem to be a world governed by laws, not by pure chance. Its creator, like the inventor of a game, is at liberty to decide what the laws shall be, but, once he has decided, his story must obey them. (Auden, 2015, p. 237)

Auden claims stories related to a primary world are perceived as fictional histories, and stories linked with a secondary world tend to be fairytales. In particular, the readers are

flexible to engage in secondary worlds with their imagination. From my perspective, a secondary world is composed of four fundamental elements: exceptional characters, unusual objects, extraordinary sites, and miraculous events, instead of the three components mentioned in Auden's statement above. Moreover, to construct a convincing story, certain rules are needed and followed in the 'secondary world', and a reader can completely exercise their function as a "sub-creator."

6.1.2 Archetypes and Universal Themes in Fairytales

The Jungian psychologist and scholar Marie-Louise von Franz proposed that personal elements deviating a story from the archetypal pattern would be corrected by retelling because it is impossible for anything incompatible with the collective psyche to remain. Fairytales with collective structures can touch emotions more deeply, so only the things expressing a general human structure can last in people's memory and be passed on:

A fairy tale is not simply the tale of a personal experience. Fairy tales normally come into existence in one of two ways. Some fairy tales, as far as we can trace them, are created by people who had parapsychological or dreamlike or visionary experiences...The other way fairy tales come into existence is the same way as literature does...The tales originate in what you could call the active imaginations of certain individuals in the folk population. In both cases, whether the nucleus of a fairy tale was a visionary experience, a big dream or a parapsychological experience, or whether it came originally from some folk poet or storyteller, it was something that had to fit the psyche of the whole collective. Otherwise, it would not have endured. (von Franz, 1997, p. 14-p. 15)

Teverson suggested that elements of tales in the past remain constructive as they are utilized and constantly transformed into new and diverse versions in line with the current cultural needs:

Lévi-Strauss viewed such elements of myth as something akin to the fragments of glass in a kaleidoscope that function as building blocks for larger patterns, structures, and designs. Whatever name we use, the concept itself is important in helping us recognize how elements from tales migrate into new versions and are repurposed to renew their cultural energy ... Folktales ceaselessly preserve the old and the cultural memory of the past even as they engage in a form of repetition compulsion that is transformative, always making something new... (Teverson, 2019, p. 82)

Von Franz states that only stories following the psyche of the collective can evoke the readers' deeper emotions and remain in their memories. Then, it is of great importance for

creators to be aware of the psyche of the collective. To some extent, whether the creators can construct things that stand for the common structure of human life decides the success of the story. Fairytales, as one of the fantastical narrative forms, own the collective structure and meet the common spiritual and psychological needs of people. Contrastingly, in my opinion, there are two situations for those stories that incorporate primarily personal factors – either they cannot be passed on due to personal elements dominating in the story that others cannot relate to, or they can last in the memories of a smaller and specific group of people if they can find relatable experiences in these stories.

The notion of a narrative pattern gradually forms through the retelling and reflects the profound needs of the collective psyche. While there are various character roles often recognized in traditional fairy tales, the concept of these roles—traditionally referred to as archetypes—should not be viewed as fixed or universal. Instead, it is more fruitful to consider them as "spheres of action," which are fluid categories that characters may embody based on their actions rather than predefined traits. This perspective allows for a more nuanced understanding of characters within narratives and recognises the variability in how these roles can manifest across different stories and cultures.

The seven spheres of action identified by Propp—such as the villain, the donor, the helper, the princess, the dispatcher, the hero, and the false hero (Media Studies, no date)—illustrate diverse character functions without imposing rigid archetypal constraints. For instance, the villain might take on various forms, from a dragon to a witch, and their characteristics can shift depending on the narrative context. Similarly, donors and helpers can appear in diverse guises, contributing to the hero's journey in varying ways. This framework outlines a series of events that can be viewed as flexible; characters might take on different roles within the same narrative depending on the plot's evolution and the characters' actions.

From my point of view, the spheres of action can be categorized into three groups: a hero-dominated group, a villain-dominated group, and a non-hero-dominated group. The former includes the hero, the donor, the helper, and the princess; the villain-dominated group encompasses the villain and the dispatcher; while the non-hero-dominated group aligns

with the false hero. As narratives evolve and new characters emerge, they can be evaluated and classified within these spheres of action, reflecting the dynamic nature of storytelling.

Propp believed that narratives share specific functions that contribute to their structure (Media Studies, no date). It seems that these rich functions can be briefly summarised as the background of the hero, the damage caused by the villain, a task for the hero, the seeker's counteracting process, the success of the hero assisted by a magical agent, barriers in the hero's way home, a second survival of the hero or an appearance of hidden issues, and the punishments of the villain or the false hero with a positive result for the real hero.

Alternatively, these functions can be divided into five parts. The first part is the introduction of the hero and damage by a villain; the second part consists of a request for a hero and a seeker goes through a counteracting journey; the third part can be considered as the middle point of the whole story, as it is the peak of the story with the hero's success through a help of magical agent; the fourth part brings new barriers and a second survival or new hidden obstacles for the hero; the fifth part is the ending of the whole narrative, and hero gains a positive result, and villain or false hero receives corresponding punishments.

The categorised functions can lead to a more fluid understanding of how characters operate within narratives. Instead of seeing these roles as static archetypes, recognising them as spheres of action allows for exploration of how characters manifest in various contexts, enriching both the storytelling experience and the analytical framework used to understand these tales. Through the spheres of action, we can appreciate the complexity of character functions and the variability in narratives. This recognition emphasises that character roles in storytelling are not given but are shaped through the interplay of narrative context and reader interpretation.

To unveil the mystery of symbolism in folklore, the concept of symbolic equivalences can be employed. Concretely, when a few themes fill the same slot in a story, it means they are permutable which can be clarified through a comparison of the "allomotifs" (Dundes, 2007). Symbolic equivalences arise from the comparison of tale variants. It means in allomotifs, symbolic equivalences can be identified, and they can also be replaced by each other as the variants of a motif. Filling the same gap implies that, from my perspective, these alternative

themes are exchangeable because they have a resembling function in the whole narrative. Although magic happens based on the same principles, fairytales remain intriguing and diverse as the manifestations of magic vary from culture to culture and era to era (Warner, 2018). That means allomotifs as the variants of a common tale exist in various cultures and eras. Moreover, since the metaphors at work delineate the semantic field, investigating these metaphors can provide approaches to grasping any contents the tale variants convey in countless ways (Silva, 2014). The tales are moulded to traditional motifs guiding the reader's expectations, but the routes to the end of the story are unpredictable. This unpredictability indicates the pathways to a universal motif contain countless possibilities for further explorations and creative experiments. The "constants and variables" (Propp, 1971) are what is the same and different in terms of narrative in fairy tales. The tale variants may be regarded as permutations of metaphors associated with a given motif. This concept is also associated with the "nature constant" of the human psyche as a kind of archetype:

In the folk tradition, there are two powers at work. There is one that tends to eliminate what is only personal and doesn't click or make sense to the general public. And there is another that tends to preserve the form...In these two ways the constancy of the archetype manifests. You could call the archetype the "nature constant" of the human psyche. It is eminently conservative, and furthermore it always eliminates impurities that have been added by individual problems. On account of that, we have in the classical folk tales an end product which represents in the form of symbolic images certain typical collective unconscious processes. Since fairy tales have a form by which they naturally repeat themselves, they are one of the best kinds of source material for studying the "nature constants" of the collective psyche. (von Franz, 1997, p. 17)

The "Natural constant" manifests the collective unconscious with reducing personal elements, and fairytales or folk tales use symbolic images to embody these archetypal elements in narratives. Furthermore, the stories convey the same thing – a universal statement in terms of the plight of humanity, so the historicity of the creators and society fades (Warner, 2018). Based on this point, if the content of a story communicates a concept that humans generally care about, the story will last in the mind longer and tend to be more attractive to readers as they can relate the issue from the narrative to themselves. Moreover, a story like this can cross the boundary of languages, countries and cultures due to the universality of human concerns. However, even though there are "universal analogies" despite what languages one may speak, the metaphorical processes remain context-dependent (Lévi-Strauss, 1984). This means readers should always consider the

contexts to comprehend what an element conveys. It is the different situations that produce countless variants. Contexts can enrich the narrative of the motif, so embedding a specific culture can enhance a universal narrative. Similarly, the identification and perception of what is universal and what is specific can help creators present a story with their features or contexts:

I did not want to focus around a specific theme but rather to wander through many countries and many types of fairy tales. I chose some that challenged me because they were not the usual type. I wanted to show their diversity and also their underlying similar trends, so that one could appreciate what is nationally or racially specific and what is common to all civilizations and all human beings. (von Franz, 1997, p. 7)

Likewise, Teverson stated that "...these international variants exhibit both continuities, which make it possible to identify stories as fictions of a similar type, and differences, which mark them off as variant performances of the same core narrative." (Teverson, 2013, p. 89). These statements appear to provide an ideal solution for creating a universal story while considering its contextual specificity. In this way, creators can construct diverse stories without losing the underlying resemblance. As a result, in a fairytale, you can find elements that are both national and transnational, and it not only reflects one culture of a certain ethnic group but also manifests the civilizations of humans. "The metamorphosis ... leads our attention to deeper cultural issues beyond fairy tale as a genre. This latter point becomes more important in cross-cultural studies." (Teverson, 2019, p. 344)

6.1.3 Symbolism and Functions of Fairytales

The inner world manifests in outward shapes in fairytales, and protagonists mutate into different shapes following their inner states. For example, the outer proof of the inner viciousness can be represented as a snake, a raven, a crocodile, or a tiger. However, the victims of metamorphosis are more innocent in a domestic animal form, such as an ass, a ram, a frog, a bird, or a hedgehog (Warner, 2018). Fierce or carnivorous animals seem to be used as symbols of negative images, and farm or herbivore animals are perceived as vulnerable groups. The image of the devil normally shows as a creature with an abnormal shape and often takes cunning disguises. The devil in fairytales shows in an unusual form,

and the body parts of a devil are composed of characteristics of fierce animals. The mutation of body parts reveals the dangerousness of the related characters:

Though each and every type of beast or creature invoked, be it an ostrich or a stork or a goose or a bear or a snake, carries a set of particular associations, the exact form of the bestial nether limbs is mutable: webbed, clawed, gnarled, three-toed, five-toed, encurled, club-footed, not to forget cloven, the appendage itself partakes of polymorphous perversity within the range of the base, not-human possibilities. Indeed, this very mutability informs the character of the heterodox and the dangerous. Bird, amphibian, lizard, serpent, the diabolical mutates into many guises ... it enacts aberration by failing to remain consistent even with itself. A demon on a medieval cathedral can have the head of a ram, the tail of a donkey, the feet of an eagle, the bottom of a gryphon, the ears of a bat and the elbows of a rhinoceros, and so forth. Shifting and slippery forms in themselves convey that chaos which is evil. (Warner, 1995, p. 124-p. 125)

In addition, the supernatural powers with the multiple currents are identified as dangerous, disguised friendly, or ambiguous, and there are temptations with presents, such as gingerbread houses with windowpanes of sugar or juicy red apples (Warner, 2018). It demonstrates that the harmless-looking objects in fairytales can also function as temptations or dangerous existences because of symbolic significance. Furthermore, anthropomorphic characters are often found in the narrative of fairytales:

...and fairy tales speak through beasts to explore common experiences... A tradition of articulate, anthropomorphized creatures of every kind is as old as literature itself: animal fables and beast fairy tales are found in ancient Egypt, Greece, and India, and the legendary Aesop of the classics has his storytelling counterparts all over the world, who moralize crows and ants, lions and monkeys, jackals and foxes and donkeys, to mock the follies and vices of human beings, and display along the way the effervescent cunning and high spirits of the fairytale genre. (Warner, 2018, p. 20)

There is a tradition of using anthropomorphic figures in fairytales or animal fables. In these tales, animals have usually been moralized with human features, and the weakness of humanity is revealed by anthropomorphic animals. Fairytales are grounded in foundational concepts of magical thinking, including the presence of natural magic, the idea of animist vitality, themes of animal metamorphosis and changeable bodies, and the influential force of promises and curses that guide the logic of the plots (Warner, 2018). That means that modern fairytales are inspired by the primary rules of magic thinking. Swiss alchemist Paracelsus (1996) first associated the elements earth, water, air, and fire with gnomes, sylphs, undines, and salamanders (Paracelsus, 1996), while Silver used the term 'elemental' to describe the four elements:

Gnome, being of earth
Undine, being of water
Sylph, being of air
Salamander, being of fire
(Silver, 2000, p. 38)

These four elemental archetypal beings inevitably become generic fairytale characters (Warner, 2018), and ordinary things or inorganic things can also be animate and dynamic. However, magical life forces move primarily by natural phenomena, including flora, fauna, and bodies. That is to say, earth, water, air, and fire are four elements corresponding to archetypal figures with similar qualities in fairytales. Meanwhile, both inorganic and natural phenomena can appear in an animate form. Besides, animals in fairytales function as metaphors and similes, offering a key to profound levels of meaning subtly (Cohen, 2008). An animal depicted is connected with its qualities and cultural relevance, and the choice of animal and action deserves further research (Campbell, 2014). That means metaphoric animals can function as symbols in fairytales and enrich the narrative ingeniously with their features and cultural contexts.

Fairytales liberate archetypes that lie in the collective unconscious – we are embracing an old precept, “know thyself”, while reading an excellent fairy story (Lewis, 1966, p. 27). Accordingly, the reason that we feel related to the fairytale is the existence of archetypes echoing the collective unconscious, as humans tend to need to know themselves. Every symbol is a bridge because every symbol contains a conscious aspect and an unconscious aspect (von Franz, 1997), and there are numerous symbols of the Self – a ball is a symbol of the Self; both the hidden treasure and the unobtainable treasure can be considered as a symbol of the Self. Assumably, the unconscious part of symbols enlightens people with their more profound significance.

6.2 Case Study: Symbols in Postmodern Picturebooks

Symbols as an intriguing device can display some concepts that are abstract or require to take extra efforts to make them clear. There are a plenty of symbols in the picturebook *Changes* (2008). The story shows that Joseph Kaye, as the protagonist in the picturebook,

notices that the ordinary objects in their home are changed in a weird way. Several ways of utilizing symbols can be seen in this narrative.

Noticeable transformations of the ordinary objects symbolize the emotional change of the character. When Joseph receives the message from his dad in the morning that something will change in the home, the ordinary objects in the house start to change. Specifically, a kettle turns into a cat, and the change happens gradually (fig. 6.2.1). The kettle first grows a cat ear, tail, and paw. In the following pages, the change becomes more apparent. The kettle handle is all covered with black and yellow strips of a cat. Then, the body of the kettle becomes the body of a cat and even two legs start to appear (fig. 6.2.2).

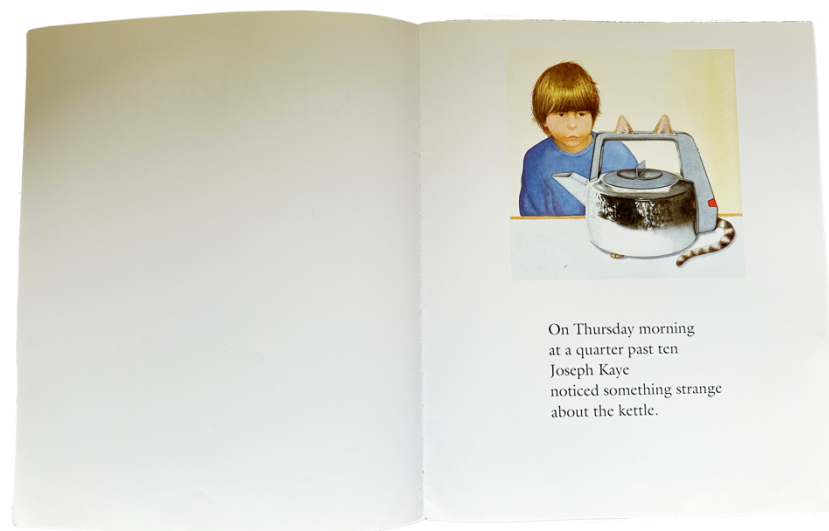


Fig.6.2.1 Browne, A. (2008) *Changes*. London: Walker Books.



Fig.6.2.2 Browne, A. (2008) Changes. London: Walker Books.

Similar changes happen in other ordinary things as well. Inside the house, a slipper becomes a raven in Joseph's room (fig. 6.2.6) and the sink turns into a human face (fig. 6.2.7); a more extended sofa in the living room has a crocodile's head (fig. 6.2.3); an armchair grows two gorilla hands at first (fig. 6.2.3), and then turns into the half body of a gorilla with becoming a complete gorilla in the next page (fig. 6.2.4); the football outside transfers into an egg being broken soon and becoming a bird in the next page.

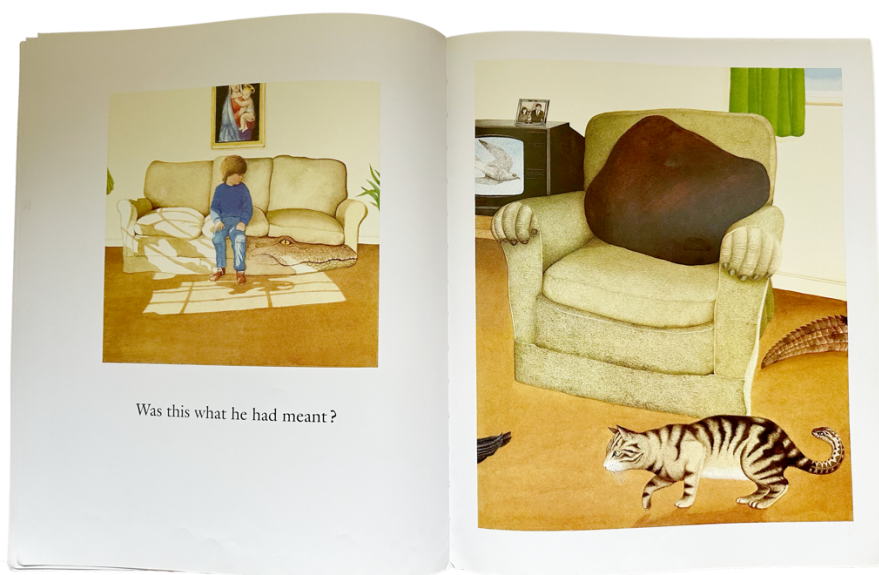


Fig.6.2.3 Browne, A. (2008) *Changes*. London: Walker Books.

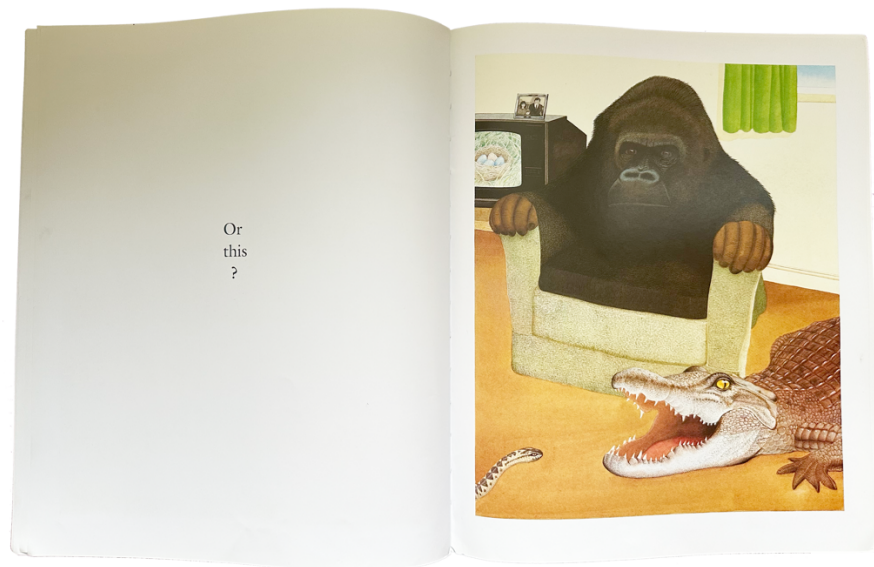


Fig.6.2.4 Browne, A. (2008) *Changes*. London: Walker Books.

Changes within change show up as humorous details. For instance, the cat's tail transforming from a kettle becomes a snake (fig. 6.2.4), and the crocodile transforming from the sofa tries to eat the snake. Also, the tail of the crocodile becomes a banana attracting the gorilla who transform from an armchair (fig. 6.2.5).

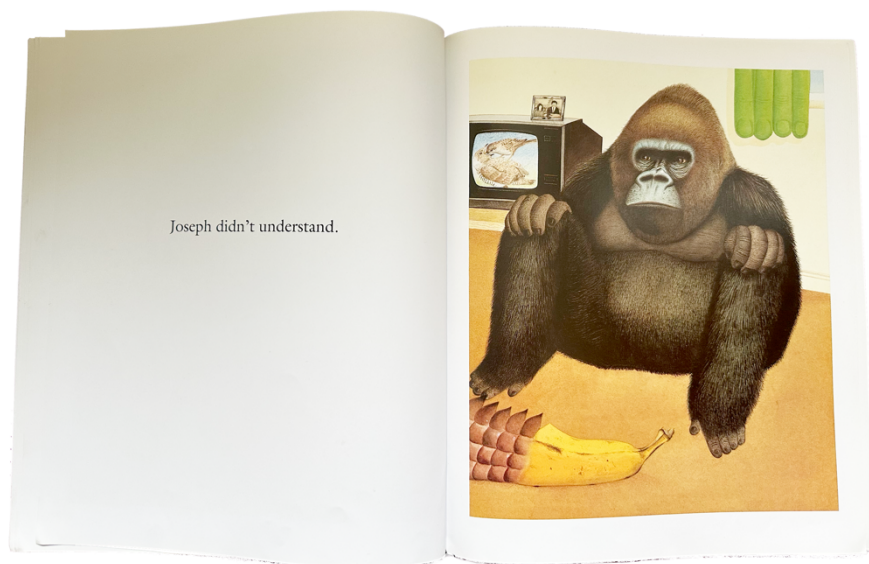


Fig.6.2.5 Browne, A. (2008) *Changes*. London: Walker Books.

Some objects function as subtle implications. They carry certain messages showing up in some spreads, which are subtle hints of the real change in the story of the picturebook. For example, a painting hanging on the wall in the living room depicts a mother holding a baby (fig. 6.2.3). The content in the painting implies the real change to be revealed later in the story (fig. 6.2.5) that Joseph's mother has a new baby who arrives at their home on that day. In addition, a white bird shows up in the TV in the spread with the armchair transforming into gorilla hands (fig. 6.2.3). In the next visual spread (fig. 6.2.4), the white bird in the TV lays some eggs which corresponds to the topic that Joseph's mother gives birth to a baby.

Some visual clues go through the overall narrative. The raven that transformed from a slipper in the former spread flies out of a window in the spread where a sink turns into a human face, and this clue is reflected through a mirror in the bathroom. Later, the raven shows up in the living room and stands on top of a wall outside. In the spread showing an armchair with gorilla hands, three visual clues appear in the same spread – a crocodile's tail, a raven's tail, and a cat. The three animals symbolize three objects in the home – a long sofa, a slipper, and a kettle, respectively. In addition, behind the first window is a black round shape, which is not apparent as a visual component in the whole spread.

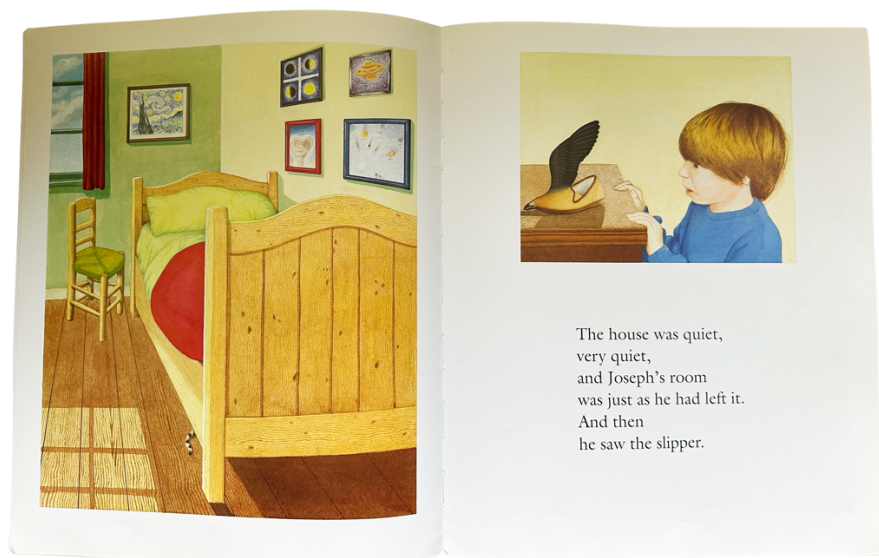


Fig.6.2.6 Browne, A. (2008) *Changes*. London: Walker Books.

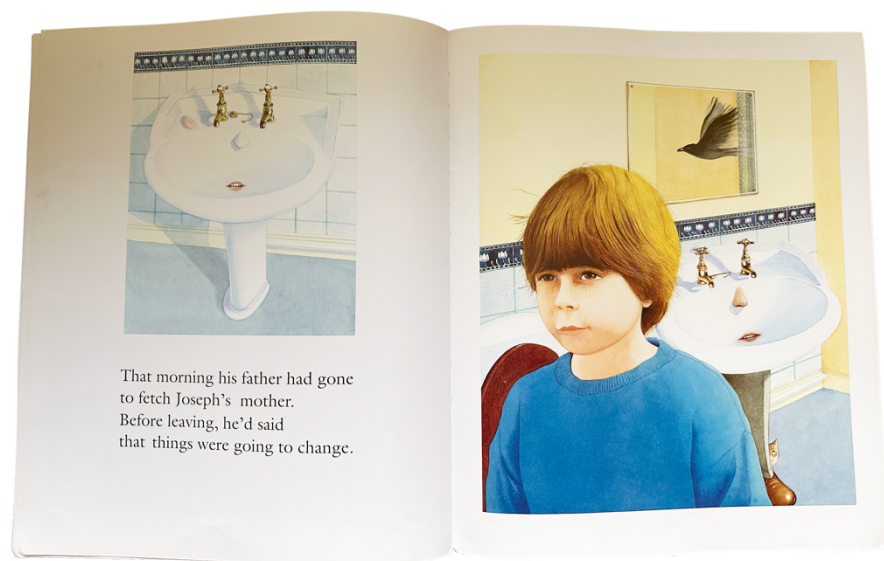


Fig.6.2.7 Browne, A. (2008) *Changes*. London: Walker Books.

Some visual objects that are not obvious may still play a key role in symbolizing a specific meaning in the story of a picturebook. For example, in a spread of *Little Red* (2016), Little Red Riding Hood holds a hammer in one of her hands. The hammer is a significant visual factor as a symbol of reversing the original fairy tale because it demonstrates and hints that Red Riding Hood kills the wolf instead of being eaten by the big wolf. Also, the spread of Little Red Riding Hood wearing a wolf costume implies that the girl is safe and sound, and the wolf is not.

Sometimes, symbols in picturebooks rely on schemata to work, which depends on the reader's life experience and the degree of knowledge to comprehend the creator's intention. The more familiar the experience of constructing schemata is, the easier the reader understands it. There is a spread where inside the head of the big black wolf is a spoon, a fork, and a plate with Little Red Riding Hood and her grandma. As in our daily life experience, we usually put food on plates. In this case, food is linked with Little Red Riding Hood and her grandma, or we can say that a plate with Little Red Riding Hood and her grandma symbolizes that both characters are regarded as food to the wolf in the narrative. The application of symbols relates to schemata and presents the visual narrative more directly.

Moreover, there is evidence of parody by associating famous paintings with the daily scene in this picturebook. For example, Joseph's bedroom corresponds to the painting *The Bedroom* (1889) by Vincent van Gogh. Another book, *Through The Magic Mirror* (2010), is filled with parodies based on the masterpieces of the Belgian artist René Magritte, resulting in an ironic effect. For example, the group of children from a choir floating in the air in a city in the picturebook *Through The Magic Mirror* (2010) is a parodic reflection of the painting *Golconde* (1953) by Magritte.

Picturebooks inspired by traditional tales can reflect contemporary values if adapted effectively. Both *Foxy!* (2012) (fig. 6.2.8) and *Honk Honk! Hold Tight!* (2016) (fig. 6.2.9) are adapted from traditional Japanese tales. *Seven Blind Mice* (2002) (fig. 6.2.10) is adapted according to the traditional Chinese tale about blind people touching an elephant. In *Home* (2015) (fig. 6.2.11 and fig. 6.2.12), cultural elements have been embedded in this picturebook. For example, where a French and a Japanese businessman live, although the home of the latter is a symbolic image. Also, Atlantians, who are from American Marvel Comics and a Norse god from Norse mythology, appear in the story, reflecting the cultural values. Particularly, in this spread of *Home* (2015) (fig. 6.2.12), the home of the Japanese businessman looks like a geometrical stone, which may make readers wonder whether the stone in geometrical shape symbolically stands for a steady and rational life. Furthermore, the symbolic subject may not be a single object in the story; it can be across the whole narrative. In *In This Book* (2014) (fig. 6.2.13), the text mentions "I" in every spread. Yet, the picture reveals "I" are different characters, demonstrating diverse species living in various environments and potentially inspiring the readers to embrace diversity.



Fig.6.2.8 Souhami, J. (2012) *Foxy!* London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books.



Fig.6.2.9 Souhami, J. (2016) *Honk Honk! Hold Tight!* London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books.



Fig.6.2.10 Young, E. (2002) *Seven Blind Mice*. London: Pearson.



Fig.6.2.11 Ellis, C. (2015) *Home*. Somerville: Candlewick Press.



Fig.6.2.12 Ellis, C. (2015) *Home*. Somerville: Candlewick Press.

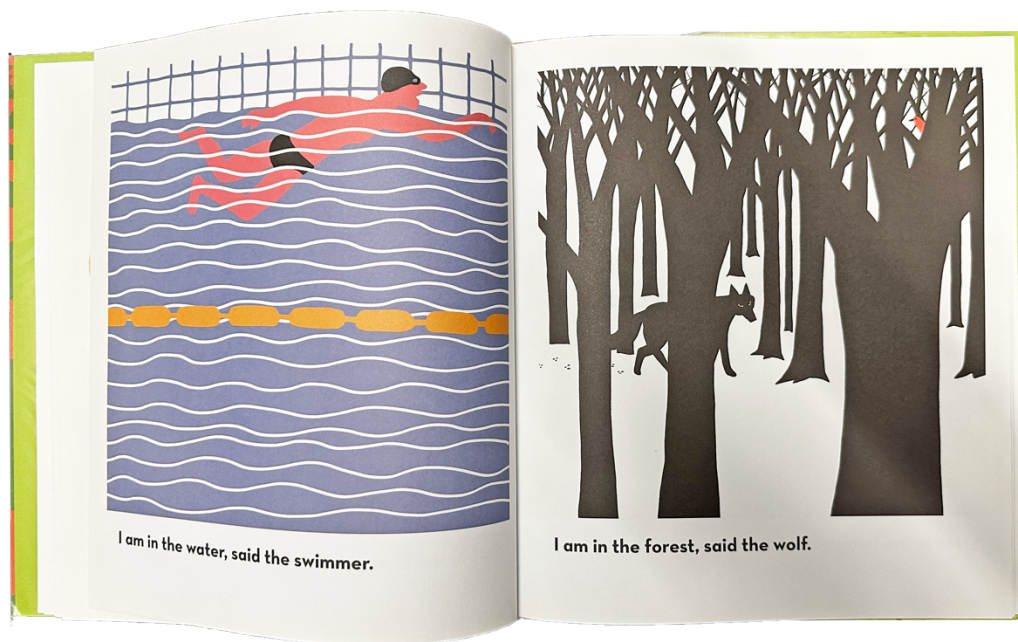


Fig.6.2.13 Marceau, F. (2014) *In This Book*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

6.3 Comparative Analysis of Use of Symbols in Picturebooks 1 *Responsible Me* and 2 *The Guardian Angel*

There are two main symbols in picturebook 1 *Responsible Me* (2021). One symbolic function is as a thread connecting the whole narrative, and another is cultural objects showing certain festivals belonging to specific cultures. Concretely, the egg, as an essential object in *Responsible Me* (2021), connects as a thread to the whole story and has a significant symbolic meaning within the narrative – a promise. The narrative unfolds from the egg, and to protect or ignore the egg means the protagonist keeps or breaks the promise she made. The character's actions around this object then can affect the meaning of the narrative. Additionally, cultural objects can be associated with a particular culture. In picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), the carp flag, the scary costumes, the lobster costumes, white dresses with hats, and candies shared by three kings stand for Children's Day in Japan, Columbia, Sweden, and Spain, respectively.

Compared with the symbols in picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), symbols become more evident in picturebooks 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), as the types and forms are more varied. There are ten aspects in which symbols are used in this narrative. Firstly, colours and objects can denote a character. The blue cap stands for the grandfather in the story because it was on the grandpa's head when he was human, and the blue cap reappears on the angel's head. That means the angel is the grandpa, as implied by the blue cap. Additionally, the changes in colour can stand for a particular emotion. In one spread with the little girl sitting on the ground, the saturation of the colour on the little girl is lower than the girl showing in other spreads, which shows the sad emotion of the little girl when she cannot find her grandpa.

The direction and position can function as symbols. When grandpa covers the black panther's eyes, the girl's eyesight is in the same direction. It means the grandpa protects and guards the little girl silently, as the little girl is in front of the grandpa and the dangerous panther, so she cannot see the danger behind her. Moreover, shapes can also be manipulated to symbolise a specific object. Most of the spread in the picturebooks are organic-like shapes, and these shapes are composed of the corresponding fruits and plants that may potentially benefit particular organs, so the composed groups of plants in the picturebooks symbolise organs.

The change in size has a symbolic meaning as well. In the spread with a brain-like maze, the size of the little girl presented is smaller, which illustrates that the character is vulnerable and facing overwhelming difficulty. Actions or gestures can also represent specific meanings. The Grandpa in the picturebook holding the big wave from covering the little girl means that grandpa is protecting the girl from danger. A certain character can imply an abstract affection. The angel form of the grandpa is from the affection of the girl to grandpa, and it can be a way in memory of the grandpa. Certain animals or natural elements can stand for specific meanings. In the picturebooks, the signal of danger is presented by the black panther and the big wave. Notably, the puzzle can be set as a symbol. There is a brain-like maze as a puzzle in one spread of the picturebook. The right path to solving the puzzle is a pathway shaped by the capital letter of the functions of the human brain, so the password for the maze symbolises the functions of the brain.

The whole narrative can also be a symbol of communicating a concept. The story in the picturebook tells a little girl's grandpa guardians her as an angel without her notice. The whole narrative can symbolise memorising a family member, as the angel is a fictional character in the story. In this way, the story communicates that even though someone important to you has passed away, the person may not have really gone and may have still existed in some way, such as in your heart. The similarity between picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), and picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), in using symbols is that both have used a symbolic thread throughout the narrative. The symbolic thread is the egg in picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), and the thread is the cap that symbolises grandpa both in human form and in angel form. The difference between the two books regarding the use of symbols is picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), adopted more ways of utilising symbols, such as colour, size, or shapes. The journey of embedding symbols in the two books is a shift from an unconscious use of symbols to a conscious use.

6.4 The Utilization of Symbols: Creating Ironic Counterpoint through Picturebook 3 *The Way to Happiness*

6.4.1 A Practice of Symbols and New Ideas for Creating a Third Picturebook

The section considers the practice of using symbols in a single illustration that contains different elements to enhance and imply the meaning of the narrative. My illustration, *Ode to Mother* (2023) (fig. 6.4.1), shows a little girl and a mother in different times and spaces but connected, symbolising their independence and dependence on each other. The piano score on the mother's hair was written by Akiyama Sayur, and it is a song about a mother's love. The carnation on the mother's head symbolises the child's love for the mother. The shell-shaped image on the body indicates that the mother's love for the offspring is years and months or that the pearl-like brilliance of the child cannot be separated from the hardships of the mother's upbringing. The tree shape behind the child represents the child thriving like a tree under the mother's love.

Visual practice of symbols - *Ode to Mother*



Fig.6.4.1 Yuqiao, Z (2023) *Ode to Mother*.

6.4.2 The Natural Elements as Symbols in the Picturebook *'I' Searcher*

In this section, I aim to show how animals and plants as symbols help the storytelling in picturebooks by using my previous picturebook, *'I' Searcher* (2020), as a starting point for researching symbolism and analysing the meaning of particular objects and their relation to the storytelling in this picturebook. This section is divided into two parts. The first part introduces this picturebook, including its storytelling and theme, while the second part demonstrates specific examples of using symbols.

1. Theme and Aim of *'I' Searcher*

The narrative features a lyrical fairy tale infused with natural elements while being closely tied to a real-life experience. The story's inspiration is from a reflection of real-life experience, and the natural elements in this picturebook, including plants and animals, are created based on an observation of real life. In addition, *'I' Searcher* (2020) relates to fulfilling a dream. The message conveys that individuals often project their own perspectives onto others, attempting to mould them into the person they desire. This can hinder one's ability to remain true to oneself and pursue personal goals.

2. Natural Elements as Symbols

Visual metaphor can be perceived as a subtle way or more acceptable way for children to comprehend some concepts or emphasise some emotions. Symbols can be observed in the animals and plants shown in the story, and they are adopted to symbolise the narrative concept:

Essentially, I borrowed animal and plant shapes to create a visually intriguing picturebook world ... the development of the environment was interlinked with that of the main character. Both character and environment acted as visual metaphors for a real child and the world he lived in. (Manolessou and Salisbury, 2012, p. 394)

In my practice, the picturebook portrays a girl on a journey of self-discovery who begins to question her identity as external voices infiltrate her thoughts. Overwhelmed by the weight

of these opinions, she ultimately chooses to silence the outdoor distractions and listen to her inner voice, embracing her true self as a girl passionate about growing flowers. The story concludes with a bloom of balloon flowers, symbolising the fulfilment of her dreams.

For example, a cat hides on the head of the little girl to make the girl look like a cat (fig.6.4.2.1). This metaphor symbolises that other people see “me” from their own perspective. At the end of the story, the little girl finally leaves the external voices alone. Instead, she starts to listen to her own inner voice. She holds a watering can in the blooming garden (fig. 6.4.2.2), which means she becomes the person she truly wants to be – a person who loves to grow flowers. This page symbolises that her dream has come true. Sometimes, it seems that the little squirrel is going to get the flower, and sometimes, the flower appears far away (fig.6.4.2.3), symbolising that the process of chasing dream is not smooth. The white balloon flower (fig.6.4.2.3), with different states, from the bud to the blooming, echoes the dreams gradually coming true.



Fig.6.4.2.1 Yuqiao, Z. (2020) *'I' Searcher*



Fig.6.4.2.2 Yuqiao, Z. (2020) *'I' Searcher*

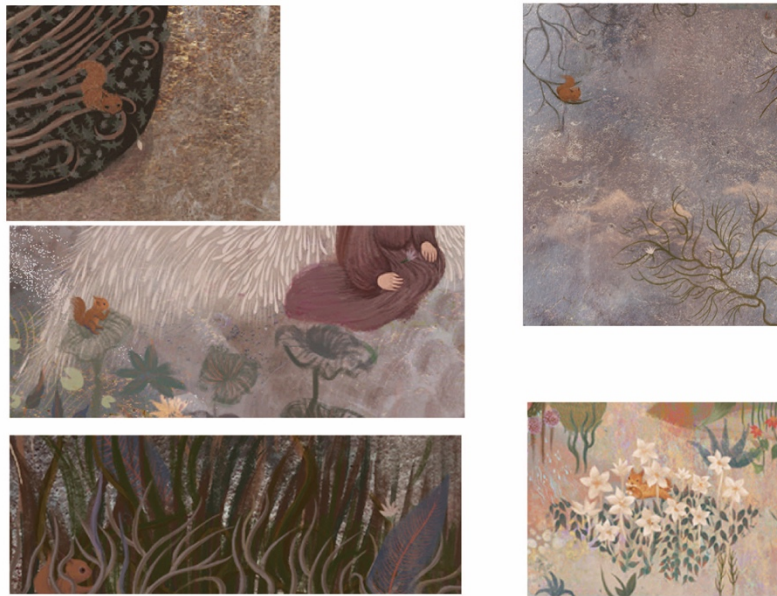


Fig.6.4.2.3 Yuqiao, Z. (2020) *'I' Searcher*

3. Natural Elements as Visual Metaphors in My Own Practice

According to Von Franz, personal elements deviating a story from the archetypal pattern would be corrected by retelling because anything incompatible with the collective psyche cannot survive. Fairy tales with collective structures can touch emotions more deeply, so only the things expressing a general human structure can last in people's memory and be passed on. Those things influenced by personal factors spread only in areas that share the same issue (Von Franz, 1997). The story I create follows a universal theme – knowing yourself.

Every symbol is a bridge because every symbol contains a conscious aspect and an unconscious aspect (Von Franz, 1997). In my opinion, the conscious part includes the meaning of the symbol, and the unconscious part is revealed when the symbol has been used and put in a specific situation to express a concept that a creator intends to convey. It is the symbolic meaning under the specific circumstance that interprets and decodes the unconscious part. Nature symbols exist in all human cultures and can be considered the symbols that have the greatest impact:

Of all symbolic sources, none has provided greater inspiration than the natural world. Its universal constituents, such as the Sun, Moon, stars and planets, flora and fauna and, indeed, the human body, are common to all cultures and to all people. (Gibson, 1996, p. 89)

It means that natural elements break the boundary or limit of different regions and cultures because of their universality. As people from various cultures are familiar with natural elements, so it becomes possible that those natural symbols have the most significant influence on people. What's more, people may have the greatest possibility of understanding this type of symbol compared with other symbols that exist in certain cultures or regions. The animals and plants are used as symbols in the picturebook. They metaphorically represent the intended concept and symbolize what I really try to express beyond the pictorial surface. The illustrations in the picturebook demonstrate a person seeking for herself because she doubts her identity when various external voices surround her. Different animals are visual metaphors for different people except a squirrel, which is used as a sub-plot that can reflect the central theme. Additionally, plants and weather play an important role in the narrative.

4. The Symbolism of Clouds and Fog

The symbolism of clouds "is of nebulousness, mystery, obscured truth and hidden secrets" (Gibson, 1996, p. 93). The obscured cloud scatters and spreads in various positions of the picture, thus forming an atmosphere of uncertainty and mystery. Furthermore, the clouds equal to "the transformation that humans must undergo to obtain spiritual enlightenment" in China (Gibson, 1996), so the atmosphere created by cloud is in line with the theme of the story, starting from confusion and vague. The fog works similarly:

The shrouding of the landscape in mist or fog obscures previously familiar land marks, rendering them hazy and mysterious and filling the viewer with uncertainty [...] fog is a sign that otherworldly forces are at work; with its dispersal will come a revelation of great magnitude. (Gibson, 1996, p. 94)

Fog also stands for an unclear state; once it reveals, there is spiritual enlightenment. It is an indication of the coming revelation, or, we could say, the disclosure is already there, and the fog veils the enlightenment temporarily on purpose.

The meaning of cloud and mist are varied – “in the clouds” can implicitly be a state that detaches from reality, and mist is linked with “a supernatural intervention” (Bruce-Mitford, 2019, p. 35). The visual metaphor of weather can stand for emotion or build an atmosphere in visual storytelling. In spread 3 in this picturebook, when the girl is confused, clouds and fog are used in the picture to symbolise the confusion about the ambiguity of self-definition. Although her true self is already there, it is hidden in her mind due to an ambiguous state.

5. The Symbolism of Seasons

Bruce-Mitford states, “The seasons are universally seen as symbols of birth, growth, death, and rebirth, and therefore the passing of time” (Bruce-Mitford, p. 40). In particular, spring can represent “rebirth and new life” as it is “Fresh, verdant, and full of promise” (Bruce-Mitford). In addition, spring and summer communicate a sense of vitality:

Spring is a time when living things revive [...] Summer is the season in which the wonders of the natural cycle are at their peak: the sun shines warmly, flowers are in full bloom, crops are ripening and there is a sense of happiness and well-being [...] in medieval Europe, the solar dragon or lion and the colour yellow were emblems of this season. (Gibson, 1996, p. 95)

From this point, we can regard spring as a meaning of revival. In the example of this picturebook, the self in the past or the old self diminishes, a new self with mindfulness grows. We can also consider it an awakening of the true self by borrowing the concept of spring. Summer, as the peak of the natural cycle, can stand for the highlight that happens when the dream comes true in the situation of this picturebook. Flowers are in full bloom, bringing the feeling of happiness equal to the emotion of joyfulness of the realisation of a dream. Yellow spread an atmosphere of bright positivity.

6. The Visual Metaphor of Flower and Tree

The balloon flowers can be regarded as a metaphor for “endless love” (Evans, 2021). When the protagonist finally leaves the external voices alone and starts to listen to her own inner voice at the end of the story, she holds a watering can in the blooming garden with the

balloon flowers. As the balloon flowers metaphorically stand for her passion for dreaming, she finally becomes the person she truly wants to be - a person who loves growing flowers on this page. The state of blooming of the balloon flowers symbolizes that her dream comes true. Bruce-Mitford mentions the visual metaphor of a tree:

A source of sustenance, shelter, building material, and firewood, trees are associated with fertility, longevity, and strength. They represent dynamic life, death, and new growth, and symbolically link Heaven, Earth, and the underworld. (Bruce-Mitford, 2019, p. 94)

Bruce-Mitford also noted that:

Trees have been revered since ancient times...They stand as natural monuments to the eternal cycle of life, death and time itself, marking its passing in annular rings...a symbol of the universe and creation...the cosmic tree may symbolize the means through which humans can overcome their base nature and ascend towards spiritual illumination. (Bruce-Mitford, p. 97)

Therefore, trees are “symbolic of free will” and the “search for spiritual enlightenment” (Gibson, 1996). At the beginning of the story, a tree is placed in the first spread, implicating the free mind and a heart eager for enlightenment.

7. The Visual Metaphor of Main Animals

a. The Symbolism of the Squirrel

Animals function as metaphors and similes offering a key to profound levels of meaning in a subtle way (Cohen, 2008), and an animal depicted is connected with its qualities and the cultural relevance, and the choice of animal and action deserves further research (Campbell, 2014).

The squirrel “signifies a hoarder” because the squirrel has a habit of actively seeking food and storing it in case of a shortage of food during winter in modern symbolism (Gibson, 1996). Inspired by the squirrel’s action of seeking as a hoarder, in my picturebook, the squirrel is energetically chasing a flower. The aim of the chasing is for sufficient food, while

the action is for a dream in this picturebook. The squirrel trying to get the special flower is equal to the intention of dream realization.

b. Cat

The cat is considered a characteristic of the goddess of liberty due to the nature of independence in Ancient Rome and was regarded as “a symbol of domesticity” as the guardian of homes (Gibson, 1996). This means that the cat has different symbolic meanings, and its use depends on the story the author wants to convey. In this picturebook, the cat is a visual metaphor for a group that takes domestic work as the dream. Furthermore, the cat hides on the head of the little girl to make the girl look like a cat. This metaphor symbolizes that other people see ‘me’ from their perspective.

c.Crane

According to Bruce-Mitford, “in Asia the crane’s careful movements represent tact. In China, it signifies immortality. It has also become a symbol of vigilance” (Bruce-Mitford, p.59). In this picturebook, the crane is a visual metaphor for a group people who are satisfied in a steady state and lack the courage to leave a comfortable zone.

d.Fish

Fish is not only the symbol of creativity and inspiration but also the unconscious mind because of its depth. The fish also represents freedom of mind. Additionally, fish represent “abundance” in China as it is Mandarin’s homophone of “Yu” (Gibson, 1996, p. 108). Fish can signify the wealthy in my picturebook and is the emblem of those who prioritize wealth above everything else.

e.Deer

The deer, as “the perennial symbol of the hunt” (Campbell,2014), represents someone who is a coward afraid of facing the true problems in the picturebook. Natural symbols composed

of universal constituents cannot only be found in all cultures of humans but also inspire the most compared with other symbolic elements.

6.5 The Analysis of Symbols in Picturebook 3 *The Way to Happiness*

The spread 1 (fig. 6.5.1), my intention was to create a visually rich and symbolically layered composition that blends elements from Chinese mythology, culture, and Aesop's fables, using the image of a girl carrying an overloaded plate to represent the multifaceted nature of cultural identity and the weight of tradition, and weaving together various cultural references and creating a complex interplay of symbolic meanings within the image. For Chinese mythology and culture, “麒麟,” Qilin in English, is a creature from Chinese mythology and culture. When this creature appears with a dragon, phoenix, or turtle in any form of visual art, people usually call them “四大瑞兽,” that is, the “Four Auspicious Animals” in Chinese culture. For the different combinations, there are corresponding meanings in Chinese culture. When the phoenix combines with a dragon, we call the situation “龙凤呈祥,” which means “prosperity brought by the dragon and the phoenix.” When the crane shows up with the turtle, it is “龟鹤延年,” which means “to live a long life like a tortoise or a crane.”



Fig.6.5.1 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

Apart from mythical and auspicious animals, I also incorporated auspicious fruits in traditional Chinese culture. In Chinese culture, pitaya, longan, orange, pomegranate, persimmon, and banana are all considered auspicious fruits and combinations and numbers can symbolize auspicious meanings. For example, two persimmons are “事事如意” because “柿” persimmon(shi) is the same pronunciation as “事” thing (shi), and “事事” means everything in Chinese. In the Chinese New Year, people put two persimmons together to wish “Everything goes well” due to the symbolic meaning of the two persimmons. Orange, “橙” (cheng) in Chinese, is the same pronunciation as “成” (cheng), which means “success or come true.” People in China send it to friends or relatives at festivals to communicate, “May all your wishes come true.” Other lucky fruits have their specific meanings as well. Pitaya for “flourishing,” longan, pomegranate for “prosperous,” banana for “treasures will be plentiful.” In addition to traditional culture, the illustration showing a rabbit and a turtle reflects a story around a hare and a tortoise from Greek Aesop's fables.

For spread 2 (fig. 6.5.2), I chose Chinese zodiac animals as visual components, which include the mouse, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig. Meanwhile, in this spread, the Chinese zodiac animal as part of traditional Chinese culture is combined with a round clock with Roman Numerals from one to twelve. Oracle bone inscriptions, as a kind of Hieroglyph in China, have been added in the inner circle echoes to the corresponding zodiac animal. Also, the Roman Numerals are used to indicate the order of years of Chinese zodiac animals.



Fig.6.5.2 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

Moreover, the placement of the clock hands—pointing to the dragon and the numeral 2—was deliberately chosen to reflect the specific time and month the illustration was created (February 2024), creating a unique temporal marker within the piece and effectively blending cultural symbolism with a specific moment in time.

My design choices in this spread were deliberately employed to explore the visual dynamics and to create an ambiguous visual narrative. I utilised the water element to create a visual bridge between reality and fiction, enhancing the dreamlike and surreal atmosphere of the piece; the lotus flower, rendered in a realistic three-dimensional style, was chosen to stand out against the more two-dimensional background elements, thereby deliberately blurring the lines between reality and fantasy and creating a captivating interplay of different visual styles and layers of meaning, thereby enriching the storytelling experience and inviting deeper viewer engagement and interpretation.

In spread 3 (fig. 6.5.3), I aimed to create a visually rich composition that blends symbolic elements from biblical traditions and Chinese culture, using the image of three sheep as a central motif to represent vulnerability in the face of the unknown; thus, I incorporated twelve diamonds (a symbolic number in Christianity), the sun and moon appearing at the same time, and three little sheep—a symbol of innocence and vulnerability, often used in Western art to represent those facing uncertainty—creating a visually engaging blend of Western and Eastern cultural symbols that invite a layered interpretation, enhancing the image's metaphorical depth and creating a unique blend of cultural references.



Fig.6.5.3 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

I selected three trees—the Tree of Life, the pine tree, and the oak tree—in spread 3 (fig. 6.5.3), drawing on both Western and Eastern traditions. The inclusion of the Tree of Life, representing eternal life, was intended to create a direct link to Western symbolic traditions. The pine tree, known for its resilience in Chinese culture, represents perseverance and fortitude. Finally, the oak tree, symbolising strength, loyalty, and faith in Western cultures. I aimed to create a rich visual representation of symbolic meaning rooted in both Eastern and

Western cultural traditions, seamlessly blending these diverse influences into a unified visual statement.

For spread 4 (fig. 6.5.4), four kinds of plants, “梅, 兰, 竹, 菊,” plum, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum, are employed as visual symbols of good qualities for a desirable person, have been frequently quoted in Chinese painting, Chinese poetry, and many other aspects of Chinese culture. In this picture, each kind of plant has been shown with diverse branches from different countries. The four kinds of plants, 梅, 兰, 竹, and 菊, showing up together symbolises good qualities for people, and each species corresponds to one specific quality in Chinese culture. The plum is a flower that blooms and survives in winter and cold environments. It still stands upright in the cold winter and perseveres despite difficulties and adversity. Therefore, the plum represents loyalty, perseverance, and noble qualities. The orchid grows in the mountains and is an exquisite flower with a delicate flavour, so orchids also symbolise elegance and nobility. For bamboo, its quality of continuous growth and persistence after years of vicissitudes makes it symbolise purity, simplicity, and strength. Chrysanthemums bloom in autumn and symbolise integrity and calmness.

The inclusion of diverse varieties of each plant, both common and uncommon, was designed to represent the challenges of embracing both the familiar and the unfamiliar, adding a layer of complexity to the illustration; thereby, the representation of the four gentlemen was enriched by including both commonly known and less commonly encountered varieties of each species, emphasising that confronting the unfamiliar and unfamiliar often requires more effort and can bring both great challenges and valuable rewards. This addition serves to deepen the symbolic meaning, going beyond simple representation to explore themes of personal growth and challenge.

The actions of the protagonist are inspired by the famous saying “非礼勿视, 非礼勿听, 非礼勿言, 非礼勿动,” coming from *Confucian Analects* 《论语》, which means “Do not look at what is contrary to propriety; do not listen to what is contrary to propriety; do not speak what is contrary to propriety; do not do what is contrary to propriety.” My intention was to use this visual representation to subtly engage the reader with this ancient wisdom and this

subtle introduction of a philosophical concept creates a more layered and engaging visual narrative.



Fig.6.5.4 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

In spread 5 (fig. 6.5.5), my intention was to visually represent the Chinese fable of the blind men and the elephant, using the image of six individuals interacting with an elephant to explore the limitations of partial understanding and the importance of holistic perspective; to do so, I depicted six characters interacting with different parts of an elephant, each character's interaction resulting in a unique and partial interpretation of the animal, visually representing how limited perspectives can lead to incomplete understandings, thereby highlighting the importance of seeking diverse viewpoints to form a complete understanding; the transformation of the elephant's body parts into different objects—a fan, a swan, a wall, a column, and a brush—was deliberately designed to visually represent each individual's limited perspective, reinforcing the fable's core message about the incompleteness of partial knowledge and the value of holistic thinking.

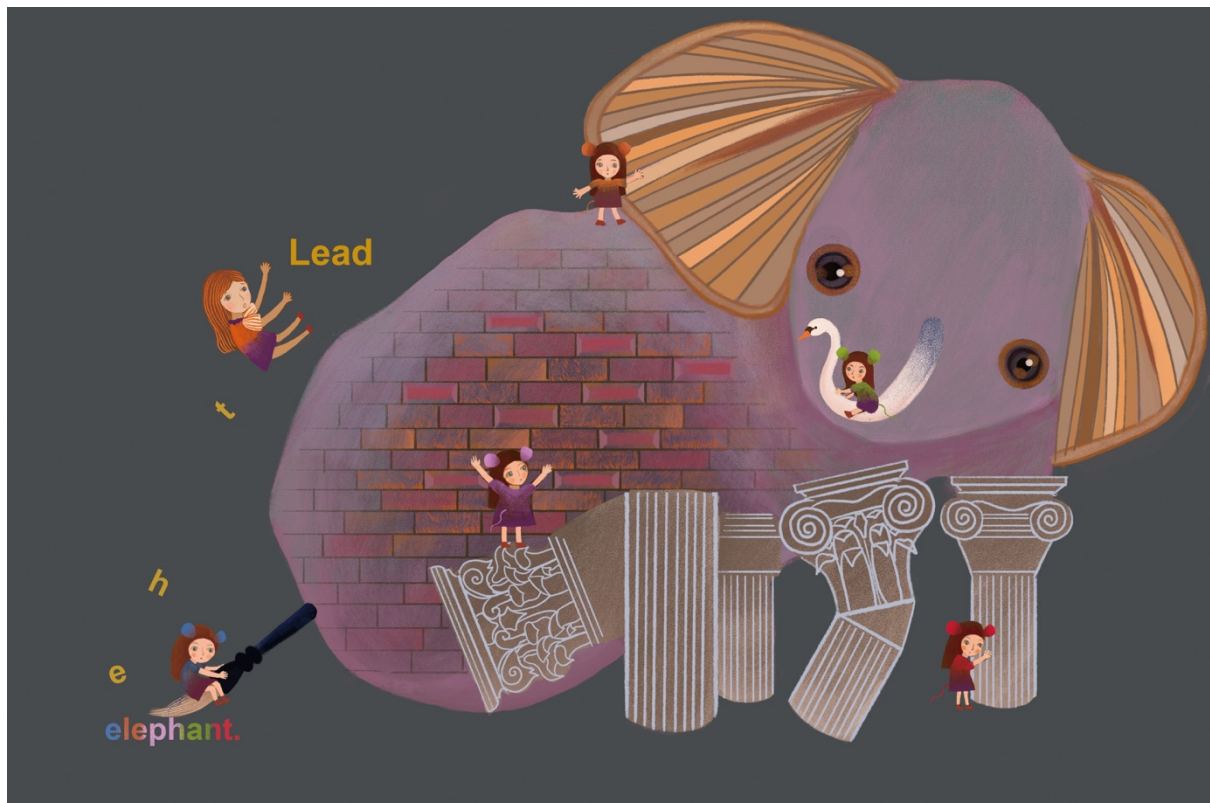


Fig.6.5.5 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

In the picture, the six characters judge what an elephant is like by touching it, and the elephant is transformed in each part they touch to hint at their partial conclusions visually. Concretely, one character touches the ear of the elephant and thinks the elephant is like a big fan; one character feels the trunk of the elephant and presumes the elephant is like a swan; one character holds the back of the elephant and supposes an elephant is like a brick wall; one character feels the leg of the elephant and believes an elephant is like a column; one character touches the tail of the elephant and assumes an elephant is like a writing brush.

My design choices in this spread were carefully considered to blend cultural references and to create a visually dynamic representation of the fable's central theme. The transformation of the elephant's legs into Western architectural columns (Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, and Composite orders) was intended to represent the influence of Western architectural styles on the character's perception, adding a layer of intercultural dialogue to the illustration, underscoring the influence of cultural context on perception; concurrently, the

transformation of the elephant's tail into an oriental brush was intentionally selected to represent the character's engagement with Eastern artistic traditions, creating a visually rich juxtaposition of Eastern and Western cultural influences within the single image, enriching the illustration's complexity and providing visual cues to deepen the reader's understanding of the fable's themes.

My intention in depicting the protagonist falling from the elephant was to visually represent the dominance of emotion over reason; therefore, I chose to depict the protagonist's fall from the elephant as a visual metaphor for the loss of control resulting from an overreliance on emotion and partial understanding; this was directly inspired by Haidt's concept of the "elephant and the rider" from *The Happiness Hypothesis* (2006), in which the elephant represents uncontrolled emotional responses while the rider represents logical thought; by depicting the protagonist's fall, I aimed to visually convey the failure of rational thought when faced with limited or conflicting information, creating a powerful visual representation that enhances the fable's core message about the limitations of partial perspectives.

The inclusion of seven mice with different coloured ears is an intentional intertextual reference to Ed Young's *Seven Blind Mice* (2002), a picture book that also adapts the same Chinese fable; by incorporating this intertextual element, I aimed to create a visual conversation with Young's work and to suggest that the story holds ongoing relevance and diverse interpretations; the corresponding colours of the mice's ears directly link to Young's version, further reinforcing the intertextual dialogue and inviting readers to consider the multiple perspectives and interpretations of the same underlying fable, thereby enhancing the illustration's intellectual and artistic depth.

I also intended to visually represent the evolution of female characters in literature, juxtaposing traditional and contemporary archetypes; therefore, I selected seven influential female characters—Cinderella, Rapunzel, Snow White, Ariel, Mulan, Alice, and Annie—each representing different facets of femininity and arranged them in a composition that visually separates traditional and contemporary representations; the four characters at the top (Cinderella, Rapunzel, Snow White, and Ariel), drawn from classic fairy tales, were intended to represent the more traditional portrayal of passive female characters, contrasting with

the three characters at the bottom (Mulan, Alice, and Annie), who represent a more modern, empowered, and adventurous portrayal of female characters, actively driving their own narratives; this visual juxtaposition directly illustrates the shift in the portrayal of female characters, emphasising the evolution from passive roles to more independent roles within children's literature, thereby highlighting a powerful narrative regarding female empowerment.



Fig.6.5.6 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

Additionally, I tried to visually contrast different artistic styles to explore themes of innovation and acceptance; the detailed and realistic artworks held by the seven female characters were deliberately chosen to represent established artistic traditions, contrasting with the seemingly simpler, more conceptual, and abstract artwork held by the smaller central figure (the little girl); the smaller scale of the little girl and her contrasting artistic style were intended to convey her feelings of self-doubt and hesitation, representing the potential challenges faced by those who embrace innovation and who dare to challenge established norms; the juxtaposition of these styles highlights the tension between

traditional artistic aesthetics and more modern, abstract approaches, suggesting that while established aesthetics might initially appear more readily accepted, the underlying concepts and communicative power of less conventional styles hold considerable value, urging viewers to look beyond the superficial to appreciate the substance.

In spread 7 (fig. 6.5.7), my intention was to explore the concept of phobias while subtly suggesting the possibility of overcoming fear. This spread contains different phobias: a fear of dogs, a fear of dolls, a fear of purples, a fear of balloons, a fear of vegetables, a fear of fishes, a fear of whales, a fear of flowers, a fear of mushrooms, a fear of birds, a fear of moon, a fear of numbers, a fear of dancing, a fear of mirrors, a fear of going to schools, and a fear of holy things. The inclusion of various phobias was to create a visually stimulating and slightly overwhelming visual experience, representing the often chaotic and overwhelming nature of phobias.

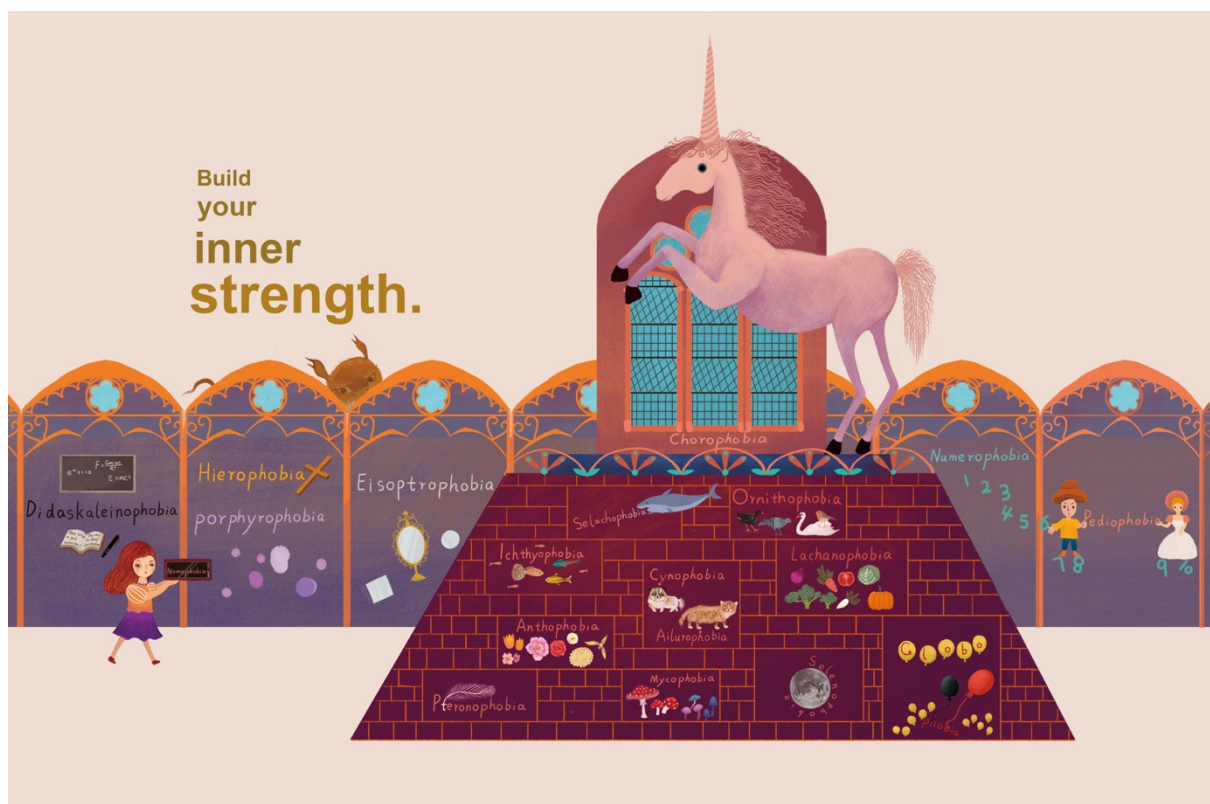


Fig.6.5.7 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

A unicorn symbolising courage stands on the top of the castle. I placed the unicorn around the text to suggest a fear of dancing, whereas the unicorn is dancing, forming an ironic effect. Meanwhile, there is a beast called “狺狺,” “qiúyú” in pinyin, symbolising timidity. This beast is from *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (1999), a book known for collecting mythic beasts in China. Hence, the symbolic meaning of the unicorn forms a counterpointing relationship with the actual action of the unicorn as well as the symbolic significance of 狺狺 because this beast is a symbol of a coward, although it presents a seemingly fierce beast, which ironically forms a contrast with its actual feature. This emphasises that appearances can be deceptive, thereby enriching the illustration's metaphorical depth.

Natural elements in spread 9 (fig. 6.5.8) include peacock, white swan, etc. They are all incorporated to communicate a message of the eternal. There are common symbols from Renaissance paintings. Moreover, the hourglass means a limited time and temporary things. The protagonist holding an hourglass suggests focusing on short-time things or a narrow view. In addition, the scene around the protagonist on the left bottom is inspired by a Chinese fable, “螳螂捕蝉, 黄雀在后,” which tells a story “to pursue a narrow gain while neglecting a greater danger” using events happened in animals “the mantis catches the cicada, unaware of the siskin behind.” These symbols were employed to visually contrast short-term and long-term perspectives. The juxtaposition of the timeless imagery of the peacock and swan against the fleeting nature of the hourglass visually represents the contrast between the ephemeral and the enduring, thereby visually reinforcing the message of “Take a long view,” emphasising the significance of long-term planning and foresight. This was intended to encourage a mindful consideration of both short-term gains and long-term consequences within a visual narrative.



Fig.6.5.8 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

6.6 A Comprehensive Analysis and Reflections of Multimodal Text and Image Relationship of *The Way to Happiness*

6.6.1 Typographic Experiments for *The Way to Happiness*

1. Spread 1

In the first spread, the text “Learn to say ‘no’” seems to influence the meaning of narrative when the texts are in different positions, scales, and brightness. My intention was to create a meaningful dialogue through the deliberate placement of the text “Learn to say ‘no’” between the dragon and the phoenix (fig. 6.6.1.2). By positioning these mythical creatures alongside the text, I aimed to suggest an exchange of wisdom, enhancing the narrative’s thematic depth. This design choice serves to illustrate that knowledge can come from several sources, emphasising the importance of perspective.

Additionally, the scaling of the words—from large and assertive with “learn” to smaller and more definitive with “no”—was a choice designed to demonstrate a diminishing command over the message (fig. 6.6.1.2). Likewise, the text with a change of brightness has more narrative significance (fig. 6.6.1.2) than the text without (fig. 6.6.1.1). My goal was to enhance the narrative’s emotional impact by incorporating variations in brightness. By utilising a gradient that transitions from high to low brightness, I aimed to symbolise the strength of the words are weakened from the first word ‘learn’ to the last word “no.”



Fig.6.6.1.1 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.



Fig.6.6.1.2 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

2. Spread 2

In the second spread, I aimed to draw attention to the word “affected” by presenting it in bold and large typography. This design choice was intended to merge the text with or become part of the graphic background, highlighting the character is affected by the environment (fig. 6.6.1.3). My intention here was to underscore the powerful influence of external factors on the character's emotional state, allowing readers to grasp the narrative's complexity.

Additionally, I sought to experiment with typography that interacts with water as a design choice. By allowing the text to blend seamlessly with visual elements, my intention was to enrich the narrative and create a subtle interplay between text and imagery. This typographic experiment demonstrates that the text is visually affected by the water revealing the responsive action of the character in the narrative (fig. 6.6.1.4). This effect

enhances the irony present within the story, inviting exploration of contrasts and deepening the audience's engagement with the content.



Fig.6.6.1.3 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.



Fig.6.6.1.4 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

3. Spread 3

In the third spread, I aimed to highlight a specific concept by placing “uncertain things” on horses. My intention was to convey their embodiment of the theme of uncertainty. When the words “uncertain things” have been placed on the horses, the uncertain things seem to denote the horses in the spread. In comparison, the effect diminishes when the text “uncertain thing” placed on the left page, next to the protagonist (fig. 6.6.1.5). Moreover, I made a conscious choice to split the word “uncertain” into “un” and “certain” across two horses (fig. 6.6.1.6). My intention was to create an element of irony and ambiguity that encourages deeper thought. By visually fragmenting the word, I aimed to prompt readers to contemplate the interplay between certainty and uncertainty, enhancing the thematic richness of the narrative and inviting reflection on its core ideas.



Fig.6.6.1.5 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.



Fig.6.6.1.6 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

4. Spread 4

In the fourth spread, my intention was to visually illustrate the concept of connection through the text “Accept the unexpected,” strategically placed in the centre of an illustration filled with diverse plant species. This placement not only unifies the various components of the plants but also signifies that these exotic species represent unexpected elements in the protagonist's journey (fig. 6.6.1.8). By positioning the text centrally, I aimed to emphasise its importance within the narrative, creating a visual anchor for the reader.

The connection between the text and the visual elements—the combination of the words with a branch that has orchid, the connection of the plum and orchid, the connection of bamboo and plum, the connection of the chrysanthemum and the little girl, the connection of the little girl and the orchid—was deliberately designed to communicate a simple yet profound idea: “everything is in connection.” This interconnectedness reinforces the narrative perspective, making it more impactful than a version without such integration (fig. 6.6.1.7). Through this design choice, I sought to enhance the thematic exploration of the unexpected and its role in the protagonist’s experience.



Fig.6.6.1.7 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.



Fig.6.6.1.8 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

5. Spread 5

In the fifth spread, my intention was to deepen the narrative by exploring the relationship between the character and the typography. The character's inability to guide the elephant creates an ironic counterpoint to the command implied by the text "Lead the elephant." (fig. 6.6.1.9) This contrast was purposeful, as I aimed to highlight the character's struggle and the complexity of her role through this visual irony. The visual narrative becomes even more engaging with the character attempting to hold the word "lead." (fig. 6.6.1.10) This embodiment symbolises her efforts to rationalise her connection with the elephant from a conceptual viewpoint, reflecting her determination.

Additionally, I aimed to enhance the spread's intrigue by incorporating visual elements that interact with the typography. For example, the elephant's tail morphs into a Chinese brush used for calligraphy. This choice was designed to create a harmonious relationship between the text and the visual component, evoking a natural feeling that enriches the narrative

experience. The practical function of the brush adds an amusing layer to the story, making it more enticing for readers.

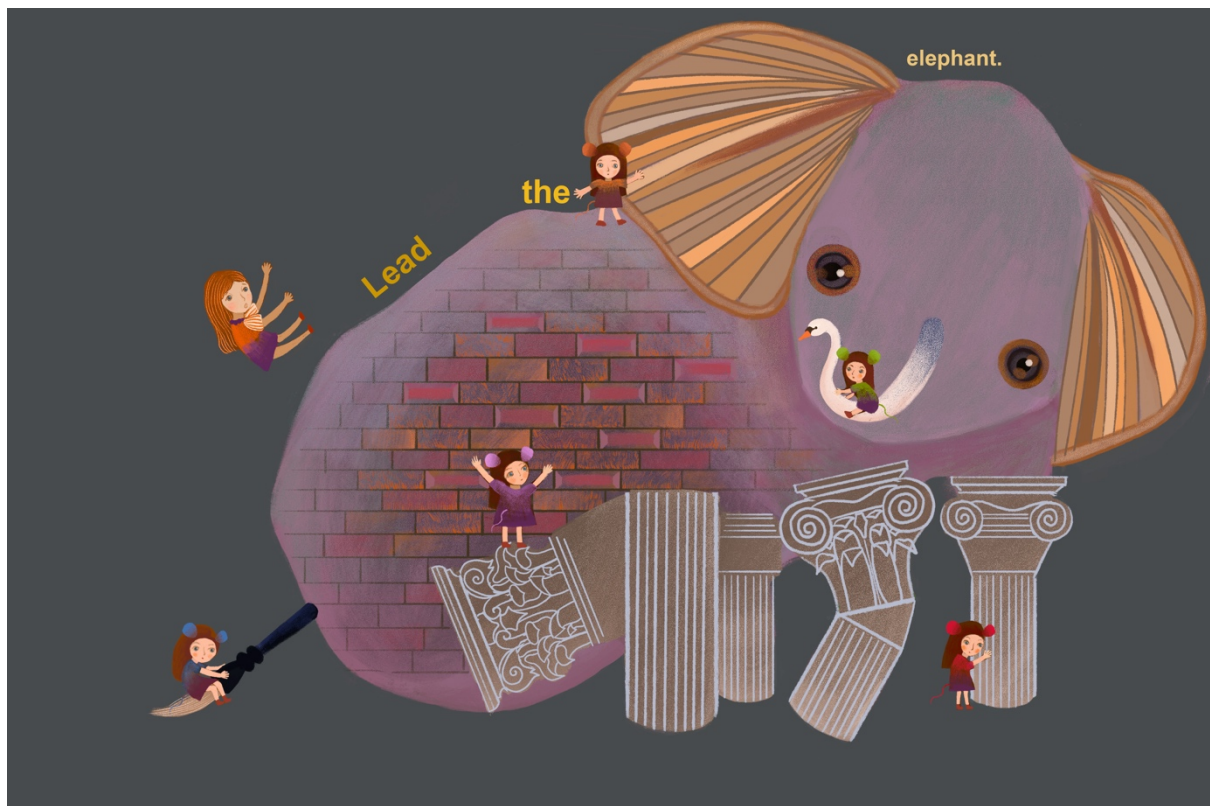


Fig.6.6.1.9 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

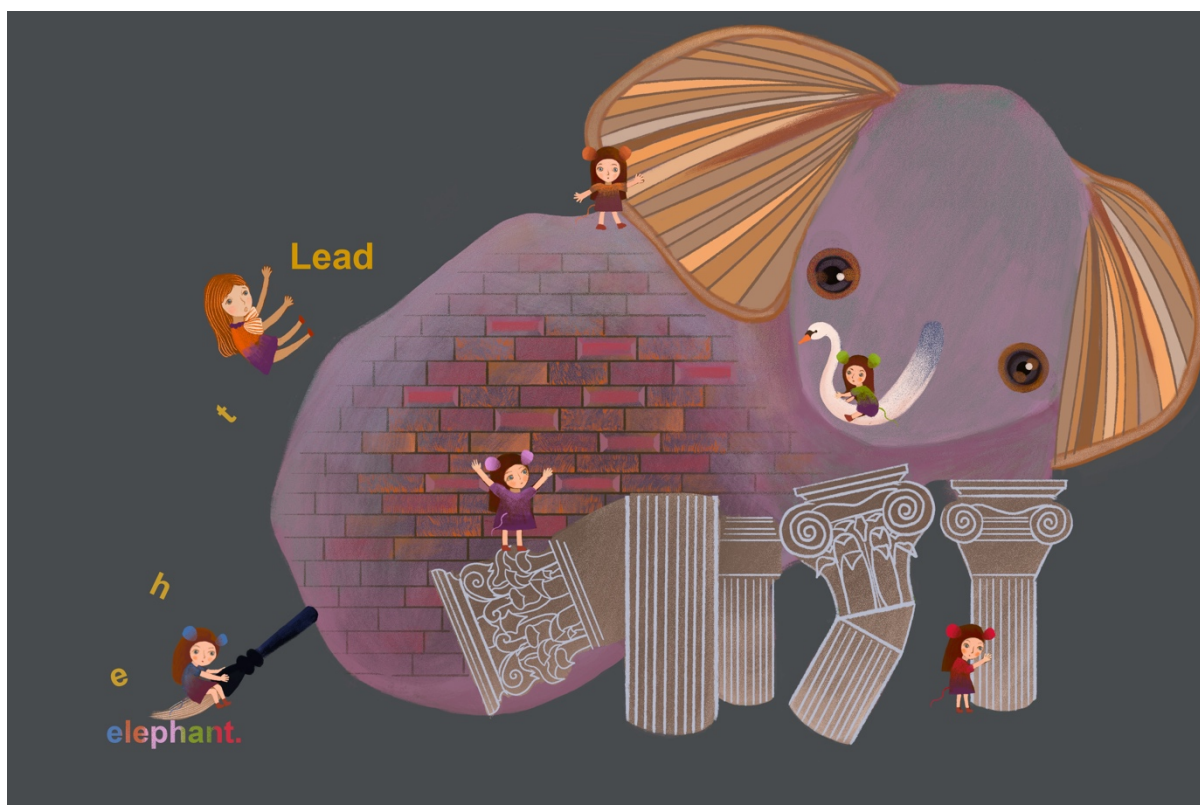


Fig.6.6.1.10 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

6. Spread 6

In the sixth spread, my intention was to present two typographic experiments that offer contrasting interpretations of the word “embrace.” In the first design, “embrace” is positioned between two characters, suggesting a direct connection (fig. 6.6.1.11). In the second experiment, I placed “embrace” in the gaps around various characters, symbolising how these women are collectively embracing their artwork (fig. 6.6.1.12). This approach was designed to foster a sense of community and support among the characters.

Furthermore, the placement of the word “imperfection” on the paper held by the protagonist was a deliberate choice intended to invite multifaceted interpretations. In this context, “imperfection” may suggest that the artwork itself is flawed or convey the idea that it represents a significant title for a drawing. The use of quotation marks adds depth, revealing layers of meaning that challenge the perception of perfection in art.

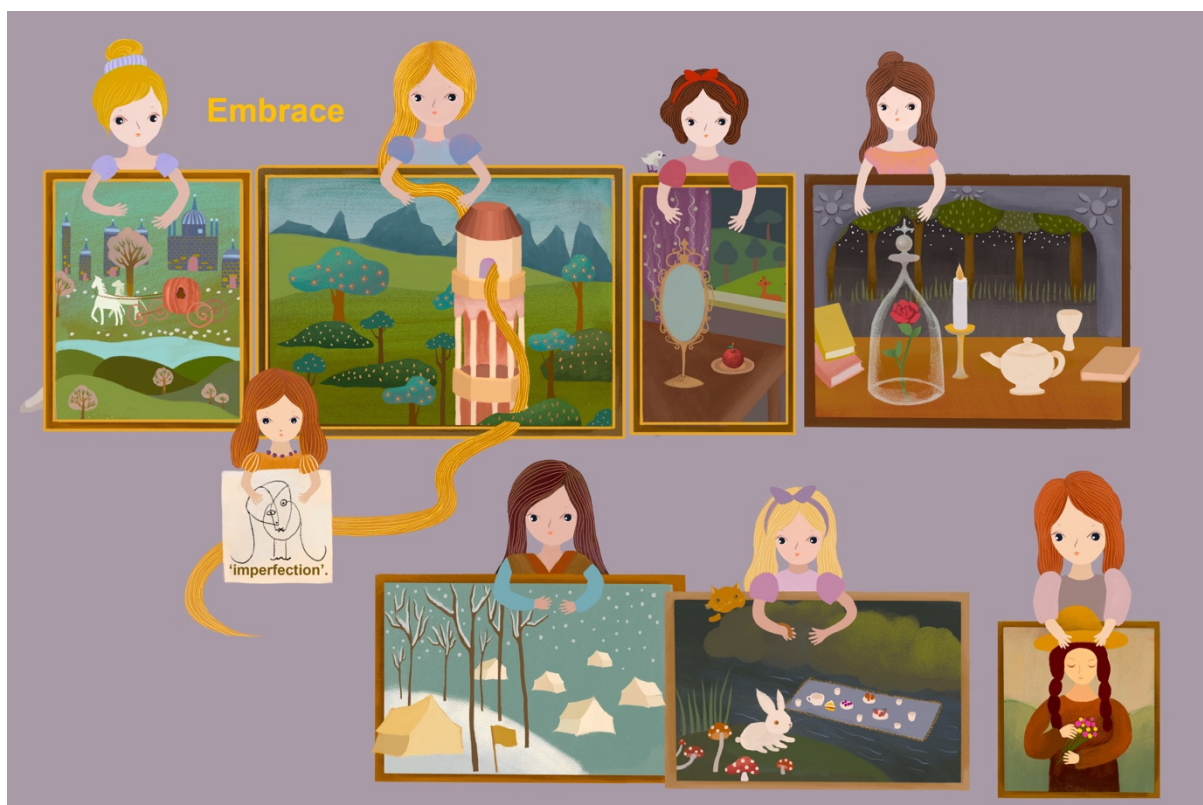


Fig.6.6.1.11 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

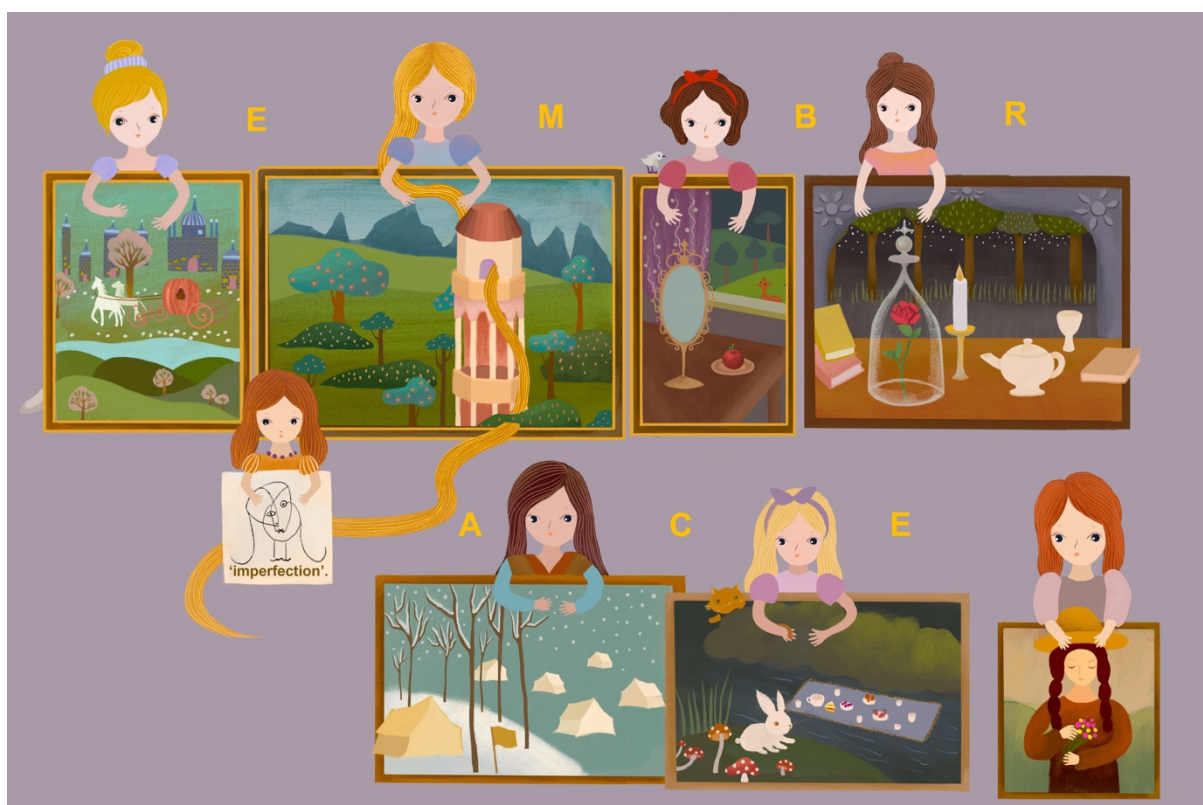


Fig.6.6.1.12 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

7. Spread 7

In the seventh spread, I aimed to visually explore the phrase “Build your inner strength” by arranging the text in the shape of a trapezoid, echoing the architectural form of a castle. My intention was to create a visual metaphor for strength and fortitude. The text's placement has a significant impact on the overall narrative, whether located beneath the protagonist or in the blank area at the top left (fig. 6.6.1.13).

When the trapezoidal text is positioned beneath the protagonist, it suggests that her inner strength is built upon the foundation of the text. However, this arrangement can mislead due to the castle symbolising the construction of phobias, complicating the intended message. Additionally, the trapezoid's large presence disproportionately weighs the bottom left of the spread, creating a visual imbalance that detracts from the overall effect. Conversely, positioning the text in the blank space not only alleviates this imbalance but also enhances the visual gravity of the design (fig. 6.6.1.14).



Fig.6.6.1.13 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.



Fig.6.6.1.14 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

8. Spread 8

In the eighth spread, my intention was to enhance the meaning of the phrase through the strategic arrangement of the text, which features a significant gap between the words. This design choice creates a visual emphasis that draws the audience's attention. The elongated appearance of the words serves to echo the semantic content of "long time," (fig. 6.6.1.16) making it more engaging compared to a version without any alterations in shape (fig. 6.6.1.15).

I also aimed to explore the contrast of placing the text "Take a long view" both inside and outside the lake. Positioning the text within the lake while angling its shape allows it to visually float on the water, effectively integrating it into the surrounding environment. This design choice reinforces the metaphor of taking a broader perspective on life, as the text becomes a part of the lake's composition.

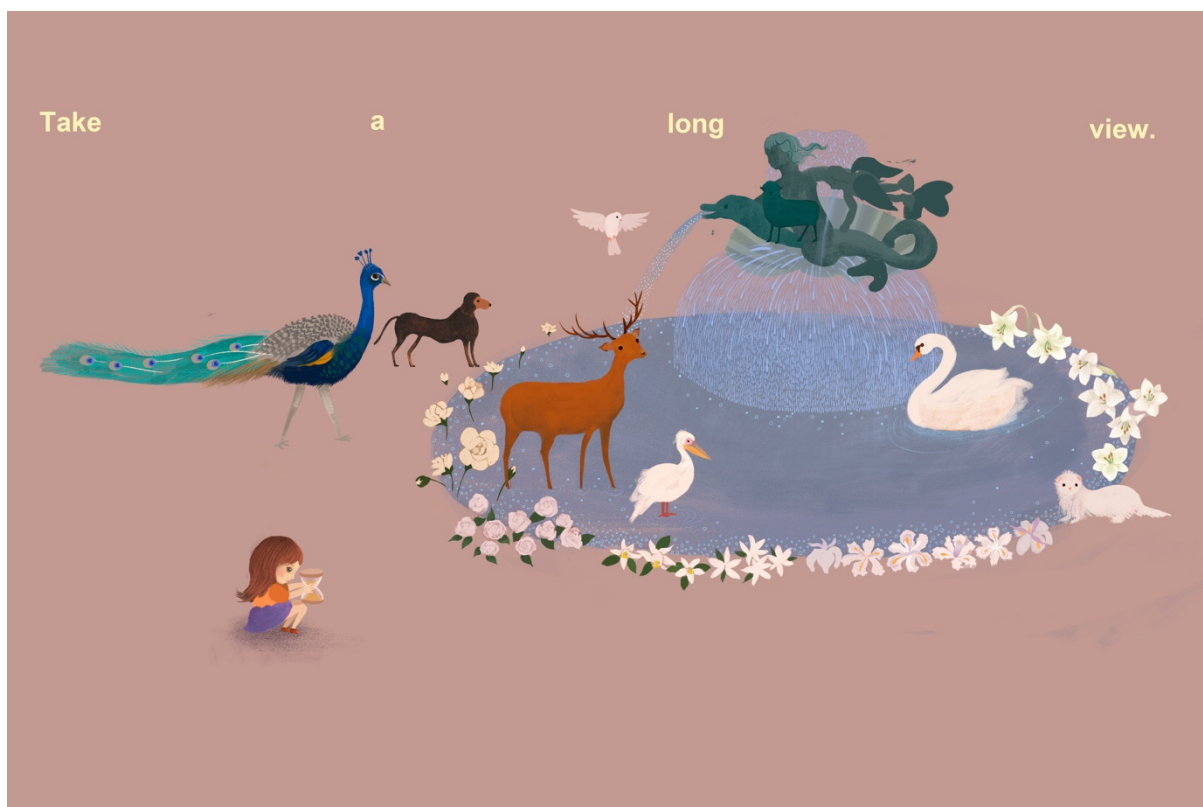


Fig.6.6.1.15 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

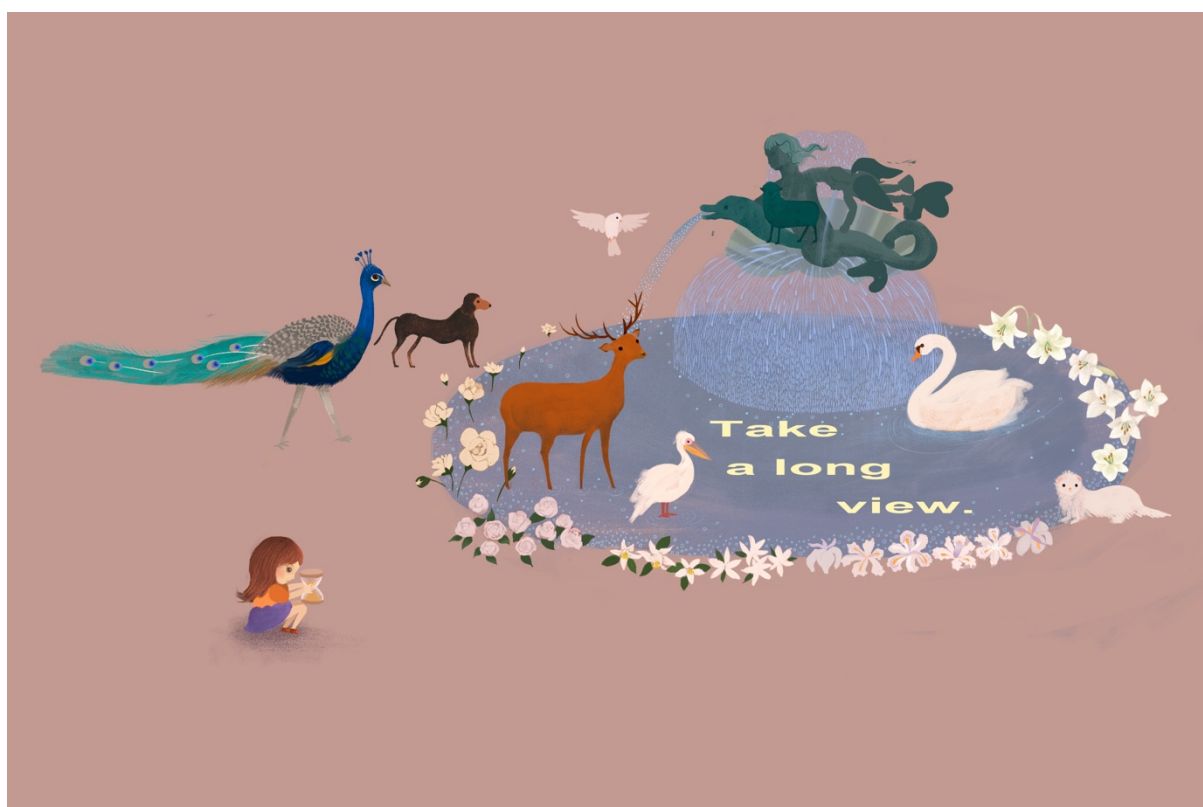


Fig.6.6.1.16 Yuqiao, Z (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.

6.6.2 A Comprehensive Analysis

In the first spread (fig. 6.5.1), my intention was to illustrate the internal struggle of the little girl, who, as a “people pleaser,” inadvertently overburdens herself by accepting too many objects that visually exceed her capacity to hold. This contrast with the directive text “Learn to say no” emphasises her conflict. I positioned the text alongside the mouths of the phoenix and dragon, creating an ambiguity regarding which creature is imparting wisdom. This placement fosters a “duck and rabbit” effect, where the relationship between the text and visual elements is intentionally unclear, further enriching the narrative's complexity. Additionally, I aimed to incorporate cultural symbolism through the turtle, which varies between Western and Eastern interpretations. In Western fables, the turtle represents persistence and humility, as evidenced by its victory in a race against the rabbit. In contrast, the turtle signifies longevity when depicted with a crane in Chinese culture. This duality of meaning, enabled by the turtle’s placement in the illustration, forms a visually striking cultural counterpoint.

In the second spread (fig. 6.5.2), I intended to create an ironic counterpoint with the text “Not affected by environment.” The character’s action of opening one eye while meditating on the lotus ironically contradicts the directive to maintain focus. I aimed to create an ambiguity about whether this distraction results from the dragon flying around her or from her own lack of self-control in the face of her surroundings. This irony is further amplified by the design of the experimental typography. While the text suggests an ideal of remaining unaffected, its visual presentation is altered by the surrounding water, as half of the words appear in a purplish-blue hue, mirroring the liquid element. The typographic treatment aligns with the character's distracted gaze, creating an ironic contrast between the semantic meaning of the words and the visual representation of the narrative.

In the third spread (fig. 6.5.3), I crafted the text “Do not be afraid of uncertain things” to reflect the protagonist’s fear of the unknown creatures before her as she hides behind the Tree of Life. This design choice reinforces her vulnerability, drawing on the oral fable of sheep, which symbolises fragility and a lack of courage. The visual representation of the uncertain entities takes the form of four horses, inspired by biblical revelations. Irony

pervades this illustration, as the horses depicted possess human faces and bunny ears, adding layers of ambiguity. This choice challenges perceptions of fear, suggesting that these creatures, initially symbolising disaster, may represent harmless, playful beings in disguise. Ultimately, this duality implies that the four horses do not forecast misfortune, inviting readers to reconsider their preconceptions about the unknown.

In the fourth spread (fig. 6.5.4), my intention was to explore cultural components through a visual representation that juxtaposes action and text. The text “Accept unexpected” contrasts sharply with the little girl, who consciously refuses to engage with her surroundings by covering her eyes, ears, mouth, and nose. This intentional blocking signifies her unwillingness to accept the unexpected, directly opposing the message conveyed by the words. Additionally, I aimed to extend the traditional proverb “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil” to include “smell no evil,” thereby enriching the irony in the illustration. This extension highlights the depth of the little girl’s rejection and underscores the cultural wisdom surrounding acceptance.

In the fifth spread (fig. 6.5.5), the text “Lead the elephant” stands in stark contrast to the visual narrative, where the character fails to exert control over the elephant and falls off its back. My intention was to convey that rationality cannot dominate subjectivity, illustrating how characters form judgments based on limited experiences rather than a comprehensive understanding of the elephant. The character's inability to maintain control over the elephant symbolises the overarching theme of this illustration: when subjective perceptions override rational thought, chaos ensues. The visual representation of the character struggling to hold the word “lead” serves as a metaphor for the challenges of managing one’s perspectives in the face of overwhelming subjectivity.

In the sixth spread (fig. 6.5.6), I sought to introduce dual layers of significance with the text “embrace ‘imperfection.’” This phrase suggests that finding happiness involves accepting one’s flaws, while the accompanying image shows the protagonist’s timidity regarding the value of her artwork. The small size of the little girl further emphasises her insecurity. The quotation marks around “imperfection” intentionally imply that what is perceived as an imperfection is, in reality, a superficial judgment about one’s work. This representation

critiques societal stereotypes regarding artistic quality. The irony is not limited to the relationship between text and image; it is also found within the visual narrative itself. The little girl's drawing functions as a self-portrait, reflecting her identity and the identities of the seven female characters depicted in their own creations. This concept echoes principles from cognitive psychology, suggesting that individuals project their experiences and perceptions onto their work, thus revealing deeper insights about their understanding of the world.

In the seventh spread (fig. 6.5.7), I planned to convey irony through the text "Build your inner strength." The image depicts the protagonist constructing a castle from her various phobias instead of building a foundation of inner strength. This juxtaposition highlights a deviation from the intended message of empowerment, showing that the character is inadvertently fortifying her fears. Additionally, I incorporated elements of intertextuality by reintroducing vegetables that appeared earlier in the picture book 2, as well as reflecting on the recurring motif of the mirror, linking the various themes throughout the narrative, and enriching the reader's experience.

In the eighth spread (fig. 6.5.8), I focused on the contrast between the temporary and the long-term, as articulated by the text "Take a long view." My intention was to depict this conflict visually through the little girl's fixation on an hourglass, symbolizing the transient nature of time. Her actions diverge from the directive of the text, emphasising the theme of short-term focus. The surrounding scene, featuring a mantis capturing a cicada while being oblivious to a siskin, further reinforces this concept of immediate action overshadowing broader perspectives.

While elements indicative of eternal themes from Renaissance art are present and align with the phrase "Take a long view," the behaviours of both the little girl and the mantis underscore a preoccupation with the present rather than a contemplation of the long-term. This deliberate contrast encapsulates the ongoing tension between immediate gratification and the wisdom of foresight.

6.7 Conclusion

Symbols in fairytales have transcultural and transnational traits as they are associated with human nature. In addition, fairytale as a secondary world allows readers to become subcreators. In terms of archetypes and universal themes, the psyche of the collective decides what should remain and what should disappear through the retelling of the stories, which means those stories that support the archetypal pattern stay and narratives with personal factors which deviate from a general human structure cannot last, because those stories in consonance with the psyche of the collective can evoke people's deeper emotions and last in their memories. Therefore, for the third picturebook creation, I have chosen ways to happiness as the conceptual subject because happiness, as one of the common topics or shared objectives filling in the lives of most people no matter the change of time and location, is following the deep desire of human in terms of spirituality. Notably, to evoke people's empathy and enjoy the narrative is not only relying on the sole factor of choosing an archetypal theme but is also affected largely by the ways of the narrative.

Embedding ironic counterpoint through weaving multimodal text and image interaction makes the targeted theme livelier and more intriguing. Before the analysis of how the counterpointing text and image relationships function ironically with a highlight on symbols through experimenting in the third picturebook, a review of how symbols function in the previous two books can help to provide a clearer picture of what are symbols in picturebooks and how these symbolic elements communicate the theme of a picturebook. In the comparative analysis of symbolic use between picturebook 1 *Responsible Me* (2021), and picturebook 2 *The Guardian Angel* (2022), the latter utilises symbols in various ways, mainly associating colour, size, action, and direction with symbols. After an initial practice of symbols and a review of my previous picturebook in which I unconsciously used natural elements as symbols, the creation of picturebook 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), embeds various kinds of symbols into the storytelling of this book. Six fields are inspirations for the symbols used: mythology, traditional culture, bible, fable, fairy tale, and Renaissance painting.

Symbolic representations in the third picturebook, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), are blended in multimodal communication through the textual and visual modalities. A range of narrative strategies manifest the diversity within the multimodal text and image relationships. Incongruity forms between words and images either through deviation or contradiction; ambiguity arises from the position of the typography; the link of the experimental typography and the meaning of the narrative; the embedment of cultural elements empowering the narrative; actions of characters indicating the third story behind the text and the image being a solo narrative line separately; the size of a character hinting the situation of the surrounding or the feeling of the character; the employment of intertextual components connecting the visual references with the original story.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

This chapter revisits research questions, aims, and objectives, demonstrating the original focus and goals, whether this PhD project manifests them all, and if extended findings appear after completing the research. The three experimental picturebooks adopt different narrative approaches, highlighting the cultural significance of symbols through experimental practices focused on exploring ironic counterpoint. The comparison of these aspects enables an understanding of how these dimensions function. Regarding the contribution to knowledge, the PhD projects combined with the reflection of key theories can be helpful to picturebook creators, designers whose works are related to text and image relationships and academic researchers. Additionally, some conference papers and illustration and picturebook awards allow the PhD to reach wider audiences.

7.1 Revisiting Research Questions, Aims and Objectives

Multimodal text and image relationships are considered exceptionally significant in the storytelling of picturebooks. Neither mode can work alone because each mode has its specific function and cannot be replaced. The strength of picturebooks as one of the important book forms lies in the interplay between words and images, yet the field of the text-image relation has not been explored adequately. Ironic counterpoint was coined by Perry Nodelman, and it can be perceived as a milestone for constructing a concept – the third story. It means that words alone are a story, and pictures alone are another story. However, if they work concurrently, new meanings are generated, forming the third story where the readers are required to engage in the narrative that the creator elaborately designs actively. They can utilise their imagination in this silent but powerful gap.

Even though there are many scholars have realised that the relationship between words and images plays a key role in the narrative of picturebooks and the importance of text-image interactions should not be underestimated, few interpretations are analysing how the text-image relation works in the narrative and especially how ironic counterpoint functions. Few studies examine ironic counterpoint in depth by exploring the subcategories of this concept

or combining such an analysis with picturebook experiments in various narrative settings. This PhD research aims to resolve how ironic counterpoint works in different narrative settings by conducting related visual experiments and comparing how the change of elements can influence the meaning of narrative in picturebooks. This study constructs a potential framework that can be helpful to picturebook creators, designers, and researchers interested in text-image relations.

The research question lies in using ironic counterpoint as one kind of multimodal text and image relationship in the narrative of picturebooks. The research projects do not merely adopt and reflect related theoretical context with case studies to support the experimental picturebook practice in different narrative environments, but also focus on forming the exact methods and practical guidelines that can achieve an effect of ironic counterpoint in the narrative within specific narrative settings containing text-image relations. The change of textual and pictorial components in picturebooks can form ironic counterpoint. The observation of eight subcategories can also be perceived as a supplement to the approaches shaping ironic counterpoint.

Through a series of visual experiments from three picturebook projects, all six original aims, which are listed again in below, have been achieved:

1. Produce multimodal interplay between the textual mode and visual mode in examples of picturebook narratives.
2. Test the concept of the third story in my research.
3. Examine the application of ironic counterpoint in the narrative of picturebooks.
4. Identify new subcategories of ironic counterpoint through analysing text and image relations in existing picturebooks and applied in my own practice.
5. Analyse how changes to elements in picturebooks contribute to the meaning of the narrative using multimodal theories.

6. Construct new approaches based on observation and reflection through experiments and practice related to multimodal text and image interactions.

Specifically, for the first aim, the multimodal words and images interplays are generated by creating picturebooks. These interactions can be observed in the first picturebook, *Responsible Me* (2021), with the typographic experiments. They can also be found in the third picturebook, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), highlighting diverse symbols with a comprehensive test of multimodal text and image relationships. For the second aim, the concept of the third story has been tested with adequate examples within picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), and picturebook 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024). The third story, created by ironic counterpoint, exists in the various narrative settings of the PhD projects, and the third story has new meanings generated through diverse approaches in those visual experiments. For the third aim, the application of ironic counterpoint can be found in both existing picturebooks as case studies and my experimental illustration practices.

For the fourth aim, an extended sub-category of ironic counterpoint as a new finding has been identified and explained in the thesis, combined with picturebook examples and my own picturebook practices. There are eight potential sub-categories for ironic counterpoint: multi-perspective narrative, anthropomorphic objects, silent clues, space manipulation, reversal plot, abstract and figurative content, parallel worlds- actual and imaged, and fairy-tale subversions. For the fifth aim, how the changes of elements can influence the meaning of narrative has been analysed in picturebook project 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), and picturebook project 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022). The former explored how the change of textual components affects the significance of a story in picturebooks. The possible influential factors for the typographic experiments include scale, arrangement, style, weight, space, text on the characters' body, composed words, and highlighted keywords. *The Guardian Angel* (2022) examined how the change of visual elements influences the meaning of a narrative in picturebooks. The potential aspects include colour, size, position, and direction. For the sixth aim, new approaches have been constructed utilising the relationship between the text and the image, which can be referenced from reflecting on the visual experiments of the three picturebooks, case studies, and the subcategories identified above.

In addition to these original aims, some new objectives have also been achieved from the reflection of the theoretical reading and experimental practices. Specifically, the significance of symbols has been noted from the process of picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022). The function of symbol and the application of symbols in picturebooks have been embedded into the final project, combined with a comprehensive use of ironic counterpoint as one type of multimodal text-image relationship.

7.2 The Comparison of Narrative Approach, Cultural significance, Symbols, and Experimentation in Three Picturebook Projects during PhD study

7.2.1 Narrative Approaches in Three Picturebook Projects

Picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), describes an event that happens from the beginning to the end, integrating Children's Days in different countries. The goal for the main character is to protect an egg while she fails to take responsibility. Ironic counterpoint arises from the text, informing readers how she is responsible for the egg in various situations, in comparison with the image, revealing what the girl does in fact. Picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), demonstrates two situations of human life through the perspective of a little girl facing the loss of her beloved grandpa. Even though the human form of grandpa has disappeared, she has been protected by a manifestation of her grandpa in the form of an angel. Additionally, vegetables and fruit in this picturebook are composed in the shape of organs, potentially healthy for these organs. Notably, visual metaphor plays a key role in the process of narrative, such as the black panther standing for danger, the grey tone implying passive moods, or the direction suggesting the silent help supporting the girl. Moreover, the significance of symbols has become apparent since this project. Picturebook 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), uses multiple situations to present ways to be happy. It is inspired by traditional Chinese culture, Greek Aesop's Fables, western fairy tales, and symbolic objects in Renaissance paintings. Texts in the story calmly narrate philosophical words, and approaches that can direct to happiness, yet images humorously demonstrate the ways that can hinder one's steps to happiness, which forms a counterpointing relationship ironically.

Furthermore, from my observation, two types of threads connecting plots have been identified from the three picturebook projects: “event as thread” and “topic as thread.” In concrete terms, picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), and picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), use “event as thread” because both state one primary event, starting from the beginning to the end. Picturebook 1 *Responsible Me* (2021) presents an event in which a little girl takes on duty, the process of how she ‘tries’ to fulfil her promises and what the result is at the end. Picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), shows the journey of a grandpa and a little girl – how they spend time together, what the little girl does when the grandpa passes away, how the grandpa transforms, and what the grandpa in angel form does later. Picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), and picturebook 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), have utilised “topic as thread.” Five spreads in picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), describe what the children’s day is like in five countries, with each one being an independent narrative. Topic as thread is more evident in picturebook 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), with every spread narrating its own story yet centred around a shared theme.

7.2.2 Cultural Significance in Three Picturebook Projects

At first, all three picturebooks deal with a subject that may concern people across various cultures. Such subjects can be considered motifs that meet the deep requirements of the human spirit. In other words, topics breaking the limit of culture as motifs align with the collective psyche. The motif for picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), is a promise. Picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), is about loss, and picturebook 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), is about happiness. Although the motif decides its value, which is beneficial for most people, the significance of the specificity of individual cultures cannot be ignored. In picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), diverse cultures have been demonstrated by depicting Children’s Days in Japan, Columbia, Sweden, and Spain in the visuals.

In picturebook 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), cultural elements are stressed and contained in various symbols that are utilised in illustrations. Those symbols are from different resources, primarily traditional Chinese culture, with Greek Aesop fable, the Bible, Renaissance paintings, fairy tales, and children’s literature. Behind the diverse symbols are

the rich components of influential cultural contexts. A significant tale will integrate not only a common theme that people from all cultures can enjoy but also present certain cultural elements that enrich the story by adding specific aspects of that culture. Without awareness of the common theme, only a particular group can share their interest in and emphasise the tale. And that tale will not be kept in the human mind and will not endure. Without the speciality, a tale may fall into cliché and lose innovation and a refreshing perspective.

7.2.3 The Employment of Symbols in Three Picturebook Projects

At the beginning of this research, the significance of symbols was not realised until the creative process of picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), which focused on the function of images. The theoretical lens for picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), started with the function of images and then how visual metaphors work in the creation of picturebooks. An awareness of the symbols arose from this stage and received fuller representation in picturebook 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024).

The PhD presents an iterative process of using symbols in three picturebooks. In picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), only one object can be perceived as evidence of using the symbol. An egg in picturebook 1 *Responsible Me* (2021) stands for a promise that the main character is meant to fulfil. In picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), more visual evidence of symbols emerges. A blue cap symbolizes the grandpa of the protagonist. The grey tone creates an atmosphere of sadness, which means colours imply a particular emotion in the narrative of the picturebook. A black panther sneakily approaches the little girl in the story, but its eyes are covered by the grandpa in an angel form, suggesting the grandpa protects her from danger as a guardian of the little girl. The fierce animal in the narrative symbolizes a dangerous situation. Bigger and smaller scales in this narrative also hint at the degree of the strength.

With the awareness of how symbols are crucial in visual narratives, picturebook 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), highlights the employment of symbols, and each spread can be considered an experiment of symbolic interplays. The symbolic combinations involve traditional Chinese culture, with Greek Aesop fable, the Bible, Renaissance paintings, fairy

tales, and children's literature. In this way, more potentials of the application of symbols generate visual surprises for the readers. Although it may look like a random choice of symbols, they are all centred around the same theme. It not merely depends on the reader's experience and knowledge to comprehend its narrative but also needs to consider the story's context.

7.2.4 Typographic and Pictorial Experiments in Three Picturebook Projects

As an initial experimental approach focusing on the changes in typographic elements, the typographic experiments for picturebook 1 *Responsible Me* (2021) examine how the change of textual components can influence narrative meaning in picturebooks. The experimental aspects include scale, arrangement, style, weight, space, text on the characters' bodies, composed words, and highlighted keywords. Along with completing the experiments for picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), the idea of what to focus on conducting experiments for picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), arises.

Since the first project examines the change of the typographic components to the significance of a story, the next project can highlight the change in the pictorial elements to the meaning of the narrative. After finishing the visual experiments for picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), the finding of how the change of pictorial component can influence the meaning of a narrative in picturebooks involves colour, size, position, and direction. Notably, in the visual experiments of picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), texts have been deliberately omitted to focus purely on changing pictorial elements to the meaning of the narrative.

With the completion of typographic experiments, and pictorial experiments, the understanding of how each aspect affects the meaning of the narrative in picturebooks has been deepened. When reviewing the practice in picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), and picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), the importance of symbols begins to appear, which then resulted in conducting picturebook 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024).

For the last but crucial project, a comprehensive use of multimodal text-image relation has been demonstrated. Moreover, ironic counterpoint is generated in each spread, with an independent narrative supporting the core concept altogether. Symbols play a primary role in accompanying the multimodal text-image narrative to work more engagingly.

7.3 Contribution to Knowledge

This primary contribution of this research is that it extends the concept of ironic counterpoint. Although scholars have realized concepts of irony and counterpointing relationships in picturebooks, and the concept of ironic counterpoint has been proposed by Perry Nodelman, what are the potential sub-categories of ironic counterpoint and how to achieve the effect have not been studied further. This research focuses on resolving these issues. The sub-categories of ironic counterpoint have been identified.

The first subcategory is a multi-perspective narrative. Being aware of this method in creating a picturebook allows creators to present a story on a deeper level with different voices speaking about the same event. The second subcategory is anthropomorphic objects. In this way, the character's mood can be ingeniously indicated by anthropomorphic objects. For example, fierce anthropomorphic objects may suggest that the character is terrified. The third subcategory is silent clues. It means visual clues not mentioned in the text, and these unspoken clues function as visual paratexts in the story, engaging readers to explore and think about what is happening. The fourth subcategory is space manipulation. This approach utilizes space to constantly demonstrate a world inside a world, bringing visual surprise and creating curiosity in exploring narrative.

The fifth subcategory is the reversal plot. This method challenges readers' expectations based on their preconceived knowledge, which enhances the narrative if appropriately set. The reversal plot as an unexpected event may impress the reader's understanding of the narrative. The sixth subcategory is abstract and figurative contrast. In this way, both modes create meaning and invite readers to participate actively in interpreting the story by considering the two modes simultaneously. In this approach, text can be abstract, images can be figurative, and vice versa. It adequately shows the importance of words and images

working concurrently, as neither can comprehensively present the narrative. The seventh subcategory is parallel worlds-actual and imaged. In this approach, characters conduct actions in two worlds one in real world and another in the imaginary world. The adventurous world in the imagination counterpoints with daily life, forming an ironic contrast. It brings humour and inspires the creativity in the audience. The eighth subcategory is fairy-tale subversions. It helps break the stereotypes of traditional tales and adds a reflection of the spirit and issues of contemporary society.

This study also constructs approaches to achieving the effect of ironic counterpoint, which will benefit illustrators, picturebook makers, and designers whose work involves text-image relations. These approaches can be categorized as two series of experiments - the change of the typographic elements and the change of the pictorial components. How these influential elements belonging to words and images can change the meaning of the narrative has been demonstrated in the main body of the thesis in detail, especially in chapter 4, chapter 5, and chapter 6. Notably, even though practitioners can use the direction and aspects of the experiments as a reference, they would still need to combine the experiments with the work's specific context. Because there is no single factor deciding the final narrative effect in a work with multiple factors. Ironic counterpoint relies on the function of the specific factor and the surrounding context.

Studying the multimodal text and image relationships in picturebooks benefits multimodal narrative analysis. It can be regarded as a reference to forming a narrative through the interplay between different modes. The approach and process of conducting this research also show the possibility of how to test and what aspects to experiment with for researchers and practitioners whose work involves multimodal narrative study. Furthermore, it may also be helpful for designers who mainly employ experimental typography and theorists of visual art and iconology.

7.4 Testing Work in Conferences and Illustration Awards

During my PhD study, two papers have been accepted by two conferences, respectively, and one of the picturebook practices for PhD has received a picturebook award and an

illustration award. Both papers have examined the application of visual metaphors in picturebooks. The difference is that one paper, *Exploring visual metaphor in narratives of loneliness and loss in picturebooks* (2022), analyses how visual metaphor works in the narrative of loneliness and loss, and another paper, *Creating Visual Metaphors Through Natural Elements in Picturebooks* (2023), explores how natural elements as symbols work in picturebooks. The former paper has been presented at a comics conference in the Netherlands. It is for “Isolation, Arts, Engagement”, The 3rd International Amsterdam Comics Conference Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, which happened from 6-8 October 2022. The latter paper was presented at a conference on children’s literature in Bellevue. The title of the conference is “ChLA 2023 Sustainability Through Story: Eco-Justice, Children’s Literature, and Childhood”, conducted from June 15 to June 17, 2023. In terms of practice, *The Guardian Angel* (2022) has received both the Cheltenham Illustration Award and a picturebook award Fab prize. It may show the test of visual narrative using metaphors and potential symbols, which seem to work at both theoretical and practical levels.

Yet, from my perspective on the two papers and the award picturebook experiment, combined with my observation and reflection of the other excellent scholars presenting at conferences and awarded picturebook illustrations, some aspects still can be improved. For example, more expansive use of visual metaphors and more resources around natural symbols can be added in the two papers, respectively. For practice, more narratives and clues can be added. It may also be a good choice to create a series of picturebook on similar topics. This awarded picturebook experiment aims to relieve people who suffer loss and tells metaphorically and subtlety. Other aspects of mental health can be explored as well.

7.5 Future Work and Research

For my future work and research, I hope to explore the therapeutic function of picturebooks by utilising what I have found across PhD studies. The competitive working or study environment and high stress in work and life can sometimes be a painful burden to people’s emotional health. If not dealing with this kind of situation properly, it can lead to severe mental illness or physical suffering, which may result in a situation constantly and heavily

relying on medical treatment. If emotion and mental health can get early attention once the passive emotions emerge, it can curb the situation becoming severe and uncontrollable.

In terms of the creative thoughts about the projects in the future. It seems feasible to combine anthropomorphic characters, philosophical words, and symbols with cultural significance in a therapeutic narrative. This also means it would be a direction for exploring the practical application of picturebook in helping those who suffer negative emotional experiences, such as a fear of uncertainty, stress in study, work, and life, or internal friction of personal experience.

The potential idea for future work is mainly inspired by the reflection of picturebook practices during my PhD. In concrete, the future direction arises from the embedment of cultural significance in picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), and picturebook 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), the employment of symbols appearing in picturebook 1, *Responsible Me* (2021), starting in picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), dominating in picturebook 3, *The Way to Happiness* (2024), and the awareness of reliving sadness in picturebook 2, *The Guardian Angel* (2022), which is created to cure people who suffer the mental hurt or face the problem of separation.

Overall, this PhD research explores the potential ways of adopting ironic counterpoint in the picturebook within separate contexts by conducting picturebook experimentation and reflecting primary theories that concern multimodal text and image relationships. The outcome can be, to some extent, regarded as a reference for practitioners whose works involve text/image relations. During the process, additional findings include an awareness of the importance of symbols, visual metaphors, and cultural significance contained in the context of each story. Also, the sub-categories of ironic counterpoint have been identified, which opens an entrance for researchers to examine deeper and designers to explore. Hence, the benefits of this study are not limited to the picturebook itself but to a broader field involving multimodal study. Hopefully, future practice and academic research will use the fruits from this PhD as a solid base to wonder, explore and generate new valuable findings.

Bibliography

Academic Sources

- Abbott, H. (2002) *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Agosto, D. (1999) 'One and Inseparable: Interdependent Storytelling in Picture Storybooks', *Children's Literature in Education*, 30, pp. 267–280.
- Ambrose, G. and Harris, P. (2011) *The Fundamentals of Typography*. Sydney: AVA Publishing.
- Ambrose, G and Salter, B (2019) 'The dichotomic tension of experimental typography', *Paper presented at Typoday India 2019*, Mumbai, India, 2/03/19 - 4/03/19.
- Anstey, M. and Bull, G. (2000) *Reading the Visual: Written and Illustrated Children's Literature*. Sydney: Harcourt.
- Arizpe, E. and Styles, M. (2003) *Children Reading Pictures: Interpreting Visual Texts*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Arnheim, R. (1969) *Visual Thinking*. London: University of California Press.
- Arnheim, R. (1974) *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*. London: University of California Press.
- Athanasiou-Krikelis, L. (2020) 'Mapping the Metafictional Picturebook', *The Ohio State University Press*, 28(3), pp. 355–374.
- Atkin, A. (2022) *Peirce's Theory of Signs*. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/peirce-semiotics/> (Accessed: 24 November 2022).

- Auden, W. (2015) *The Complete Works of W. H. Auden, Volume V: Prose*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Baines, P. and Haslam, A. (2002) *Type and Typography*. London: Laurence King Publishing.
- Bal, M. (2017) *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Bang, M. (2000) *Picture This: How Pictures Work*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.
- Barthes, R. (1967) *Elements of Semiology*. Translated from the Spanish by A. Lavers and C. Smith. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd.
- Barthes, R. (1978) *Image-Music-Text*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Betton, J. (2017) *Picture Book Structure: Mid-Point Reversal Stories*. Available at: <https://jenbetton.blogspot.com/2017/08/picture-book-structure-mid-point.html> (Accessed: 24 May 2024).
- Birrell, A. (1999) *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*. London: Penguin Classics.
- Bodmer, G. (1992) 'Approaching the illustrated text, Teaching children's literature: Issues, pedagogy, resources', *Modern Language Association*, 38, pp. 72–79.
- Bradford, C. (2011) 'Children, Visual Images, and Narratives', *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures*, 3 (1), pp. 182-195.
- Bruce-Mitford, M. (2019) *Signs & Symbols: An illustrated guide to their origins and meanings*. London: Dorling Kindersley Ltd.
- Burke, K. (1969) *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley: The University of California.

Campbell, G. (2014) *The Oxford Handbook of Animals in Classical Thought and Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Candy, L., Edmonds, E. and Vear, C. (2021) *The Routledge International Handbook of Practice-Based Research*. London: Routledge.

Carter, R. (1997) *EXPERIMENTAL TYPOGRAPHY (Working With Computer Type, No 4)*. Crans-Pres-Celigny: Rotovision.

Cech, J. (1983) 'Remembering Caldecott: 'The Three Jovial Huntsmen' and the Art of the Picturebook', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 84, pp. 110–119.

Chatman, S. (1980) *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Chen, C. (2014) 'Contrastive Study of Time as Space Metaphor in English and Chinese', *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 4(1), pp. 129–136.

Clement, L. (2013) 'On Beyond Z: The Visual Imagination and Postmodern Children's Picture Books', *Literature and Interarts: Critical Essays*, pp. 53–78.

Coats, K. (2019) 'Visual Conceptual Metaphors in Picturebooks: Implications for Social Justice', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 44(4), pp. 364–380.

Cohen, S. (2008) *Animals as Disguised Symbols in Renaissance Art*. Leiden: Brill.

Colomer, T., Kümmerling-Meibauer, B. and Silva-Dáz, C. (2010) *New Directions in Picturebook Research*. London: Routledge.

Cousins, C. (2012) *Color and Cultural Design Considerations*. Available at: <https://www.webdesignerdepot.com/2012/06/color-and-cultural-design-considerations/> (Accessed: 25 November 2022).

Cullen, K. (2012) *Design Elements, Typography Fundamentals: A Graphic Style Manual for Understanding How Typography Affects Design*. Beverley: Rockport Publishers.

de Beaugrande, R. and Dressier, W. (1981) *Introduction to Text Linguistics*. London: Longman.

Debes, J. (1968) 'Some foundations of visual literacy', *Audio Visual Instruction*, 13, pp. 961–964.

Dolan, E. (2020) 'Humour in Picturebooks: an examination of its construction and emergence through creative practice' [online] Available at: [<https://aru.figshare.com>] [Accessed 17 April 2025].

Doonan, J. (1993) *Looking at Pictures in Picture Books*. Stroud: Thimble Press.

Drucker, J. (1994) *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909-1923*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dundes, A. (2007) 'The Symbolic Equivalence of Allomotifs: Towards a Method of Analyzing Folktales', Edited by Bronner, S. *Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes*. Logan: Utah State University Press, pp. 319–324.

Eco, U. (1976) *A Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Escalera, J. and Kirkendall, G. (2016). *The Joy of Lettering: A Creative Exploration of Contemporary Hand Lettering, Typography & Illustrated Typeface*. California: Walter Foster Publishing.

Evans, J. (ed.) (2015) *Challenging and Controversial Picturebooks: Creative and Critical Responses to Visual Texts*.

Fang, Z. (1996) 'Illustrations, Text, and the Child Reader: What are Pictures in Children's Storybooks for?', *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 37(2), pp. 130–

142. Available at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol37/iss2/3
(Accessed 6 March 2021).

Forceville, C. (1996) *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising*. London: Routledge.

Forceville, C. (2009) *Multimodal Metaphor*. Edited by C. Forceville and E. Urios-Aparisi.
Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Forceville, C. and Urios-Aparisi, E. (eds) (2009) *Multimodal Metaphor*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Genette, G. (1983) *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Gibson, C. (1996) *Signs & Symbols*. New York: Barnes & Noble

Golden, J. (1990) *The Narrative Symbol in Childhood Literature: Explorations in the Construction of Text*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton

Goldstone, B. (2004) 'The Postmodern Picture Book: A New Subgenre', *Language Arts*, 81(3), pp. 196–204.

Gombrich, E. (1984) *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. London: Phaidon Press.

Gras, I. (2018) 'Metaphorical Display of Moods and Ideas in Picture Books', *Text and Image in Children's Literature*, 19 (2), pp. 23-39.

Gray, C. and Malins, J. (2004) *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design*. London: Routledge.

Gray, C. (1996) 'Inquiry through practice: developing appropriate research strategies', *No guru, no method*. Available at: <http://carolegray.net/Papers%20PDFs/ngnm.pdf> (Accessed 20 March 2021).

Grieve, A. (1993) 'Postmodernism in Picture Books', *Explorations into Children's Literature*, 4(3), pp. 15–25.

Groensteen, T. (2007) *The system of comics*. Mississippi: The University Press of Mississippi.

Hallberg, K. (1982) 'Litteraturvetenskapen och bilderboksforskningen', *Tidskrift for litteraturvetenskap*, pp. 3–4, 163–168.

Happonen, S & Stephens, J. (2003) 'Bending and Reaching - Emotion and the Expressive Body in Some Australian and Finnish Picture Books'. *International Research Society for Children's Literature (IRSCL) Congress*, Norway. Unpublished.

Haidt, J. (2006) *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*. New York: Basic Books

Harkins, M. (2013) *Understanding type*. London: AVA Publishing

Heller, S. and Anderson, G. (2016). *The Typography Idea Book: Inspiration from 50 Masters*. 1st ed. London: Laurence King Publishing.

Horton, I and Gray, M. (2022) *Art History for Comics: Past, Present and Potential Futures*. Cham: Springer International Publishing AG.

Iser, W. (1972) 'The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach', *New Literary History*, 3(2), pp. 279–299.

Jewitt, C. (2009) *Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*. London: Routledge.

Kiefer, B. (1995) *The Potential of Picturebooks: From Visual Literacy to Aesthetic Understanding*. New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs.

Kintsch, W. (1977) 'On Comprehending Stories', Edited by Just, M. and Carpenter, P. *Cognitive Processes in Comprehension*. London: Psychology Press, pp. 33–62.

McCoy, K. and Frej, D. (2009) 'Typography as Discourse', Edited by Armstrong, H. *Graphic Design Theory: Readings from the Field*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, pp. 81–83.

Kolb, D. (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Kress, G. (2010) *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*. London: Routledge.

Kummerling-Meibauer, B. (1999) 'Metalinguistic Awareness and the Child's Developing Concept of Irony: The Relationship Between Pictures and Text in Ironic Picturebooks', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 23, pp. 157–183.

Kummerling-Meibauer, B. (ed.) (2014) *Picturebooks: Representation and Narration*. New York: Routledge.

Kummerling-Meibauer, B. (ed.) (2018) *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Lagopoulos, A. & Boklund-Lagopoulou, K. (2021) *Theory and Methodology of Semiotics: The Tradition of Ferdinand de Saussure*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Lakoff, G. (1987) 'Image Metaphors', *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, 2(3), pp. 219–222.

Lakoff, G. (1993) *The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor*. 2th edn. Edited by O. Andrew. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (2003) *Metaphors We Live By*. London: University of Chicago Press.

Leavy, P. (2017) *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. New York: Guilford Press.

Lévi-Strauss, C. (1984) 'Structure and Form: Reflections on a Work by Vladimir Propp', *Theory and History of Folklore*, 5, pp. 167-188.

Lewis, D. (2001) *Reading Contemporary Picturebooks: Picturing Text*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Lewis, C. (1966) *Of This and Other Worlds*. London: Geoffrey Bles.

Lonsdale, M. (1993) 'Postmodernism and the Picture Book', *English in Australia*, 103, pp. 25-35.

Lucy, N. (1997) *Postmodern literary theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Lupton, E. (1996) *Mixing Messages: Graphic Design in Contemporary American*. London: AVA Publishing. London: Thames and Hudson.

Manolessou, K. (2012) *A Practice-based Investigation of Animal Character Development in Picturebook Illustration*. PhD thesis. Anglia Ruskin University. Available at: https://aru.figshare.com/articles/thesis/A_Pactice-based_investigation_of_animal_character_development_in_picturebook_illustration/23759025?file=42195501 (Accessed: 28 August 2024).

Manolessou, K. and Salisbury, M. (2012) 'Being there: The role of place in children's picturebooks', *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, 4(3), pp. 367–399.

Mantei, J. (2014) 'Interpreting the images in a picture book: Students make connections to themselves, their lives and experiences', *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 13(2), pp. 76–92.

Marsh, E. and White, M. (2003) 'A taxonomy of relationships between images and text', *Journal of Documentation*, 59(6), pp. 647–672. doi:10.1108/00220410310506303.

Massey, I. (1980) 'Words and Images: Harmony and Dissonance', *The Georgia Review*, 34(2), pp. 375–395.

McCallum, R. (1996) 'Metafiction and Experimental Work', Edited by Hunt, P. *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, pp. 587–598.

McCloud, S. (1994) *Understanding comics*. New York: HarperPerennial.

McCoy, K. and Frej, D. (2009) 'Typography as Discourse', Edited by Armstrong, H. *Graphic Design Theory: Readings from the Field*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, pp. 81–83.

McIntosh, P. (2010) *Action Research and Reflective Practice: Creative and Visual Methods to Facilitate Reflection and Learning*. London: Routledge

McMahon, J. (2003) 'Perceptual constraints and perceptual schemata: The possibility of perceptual style', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 61(3), pp. 259–272.

McNiff, J. and Whitehead, J. (2002) *Action Research: Principles and Practice*. London: Routledge.

McNiff et al. (1996) *You and Your Action Research Project*. London: Routledge.

Media Studies. (no date) *Vladimir Propp's 7 Character Types and Narrative Theory* Available at: <https://media-studies.com/propp/> (Accessed: 12 March 2023).

Meek, M. (1988) *How texts teach what readers learn*. Stroud: Thimble Press.

Miers, J. (2022) 'Psychologies of Perception: Stories of Depiction', Edited by Horton, I and Gray, M. *Art History for Comics: Past, Present and Potential Futures*. Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, pp. 75–95.

Mikkelsen, N. (2000) *Words and Pictures: Lessons in Children's Literature and Literacies*. Boston: McGraw.

Miles, B. and Huberman, M. (1994) *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook (2nd ed.)*. London: Sage Publications, Inc.

Mills, B. (2011) 'A pleasure working with you: Humour Theory and Joan Rivers', *Comedy Studies*, 2(2), pp. 151–160.

Mitchell, W. (1981) *On Narrative*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Mitchell, W. (1995) *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Moebius, W. (1986) 'Introduction to picturebook codes', *Word & Image*, 2(2), pp. 141–158.

StudySmarter. (no date) *Narrative Perspective* Available at: <https://www.studysmarter.co.uk/explanations/english/language-analysis/narrative-perspective/> (Accessed: 25 May 2024).

Moss, E. (1990) 'A certain particularity: An interview with Janet and Allen Ahlberg', *Signal*, 61, pp. 20–26.

Nalkara, S. (2018) 'Postmodern Picture Books as Multimodal Texts: Changing Trends in Children's Literature', *AWEJ for Translation & Literary Studies*, 2(1), pp. 88–96.

Nelson, R. (ed.) (2013) *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nikolajeva, M. and Scott, C. (2000) 'The Dynamics of Picturebook Communication', *Children's Literature in Education*, 31, pp. 225–239.

Nikolajeva, M. and Scott, C. (2006) *How Picturebooks Work*. New York: Routledge.

Nikolajeva, M. (2008) 'Play and Playfulness in Postmodern Picturebooks', Edited by Sipe, L, and Pantaleo, S. *Postmodern Picturebooks: Play, Parody, and Self-Referentiality*. New York: Routledge, pp. 55–74.

Nodelman, P. (1988) *Words About Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books*. Georgia: University of Georgia Press.

Nodelman, P. (1992) *The Pleasures of Children's Literature*. London: Longman.

Norton, D. (1987) *Through the eyes of a child: An introduction to children's literature*. Columbus: Merrill.

O'Halloran, K. (2004) *Multimodal Discourse Analysis: Systemic-Functional Perspectives*. London: Continuum.

Painter, C. and Martin, J. (2013) *Reading Visual Narratives: Image Analysis of Children's Picture Books: The Art of Visual Storytelling*. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing Ltd.

Palmer, J. (1987) *The Logic of the Absurd: On Film and Television Comedy*. London: BFI Publishing.

Palmer, R. (2016) 'Understanding Graphic Narrative through the synthesis of comic and picturebooks' [online] Available at: [<https://aru.figshare.com>] [Accessed 17 April 2025].

Pantaleo, S. (2005) "'Reading" Young Children's Visual Texts', *Early Childhood Research & Practice*, 7. Available at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1084869.pdf> (Accessed: 6 March 2021).

Paracelsus, P. (1996) *Four Treatises*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Patton, Q. (2015) *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Peirce Edition Project (1998) *The Essential Peirce, Volume 2: Selected Philosophical Writings (1893-1913)*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Perrault, C. (1967) *Contes*. Paris: Garnier.

- Prince, G. (1973) *A Grammar of Stories: An Introduction*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Prince, G. (1982) *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Prince, G. (2003) *A Dictionary of Narratology*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.
- Propp, V. (1971) *Morphology of the Folktale*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Pullman, P. (1989) 'Invisible Pictures', *Signal*, 60, pp. 160–186.
- Purcell, J. (2016) "'Seeing the light": A cognitive approach to the metaphorical in picture books', *Children's Literature in Education*, 49 (3), pp. 356-375.
- Ramos, A. (2020) 'When Reading Becomes a Game: Parallel Narratives in Portuguese Picturebooks', *Filoteknos*, 10, pp. 345–357.
- Rankel, K. (2024) *What Do Balloon-Flower Flowers Mean?*. Available at: <https://greg.app/balloon-flower-flowers/> (Accessed: 25 May 2024).
- Rau, M. (2011) 'Metaphors in picturebooks from 0 to 3', Edited by B. Kummerling-Meibauer. *Studies in written language and literacy*, 13, pp. 141–160.
- Refaie, E. (2003) 'Understanding visual metaphor: The example of newspaper cartoons', *Visual Communication*, 2(1), pp. 75–95.
- Refaie, E. (2009) 'Metaphor in political cartoons: Exploring audience responses', Edited by Forceville, C. and Urios-Aparisi, E. *Multimodal Metaphor*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 173–196.
- Ricoeur, P. (1984) *Time and narrative*. Chicago: University of Chicago press.

- Rimmon-Kenan, S. (1983) *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. London: Methuen.
- Roxburgh, S. (1983) 'A Picture Equals How many Words? Narrative Theory and Picture Books for Children', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 7 (8), pp. 20-33.
- Rudd, D. (2003) 'Review of the book Reading Contemporary Picturebooks: Picturing Text', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 27(1), pp. 147–152.
- Ryan, M. and Anstey, M. (2003) 'Identity and Text: Developing Self-conscious Readers', *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 26(1), pp. 9–22.
- Salisbury, M. (2004) *Illustrating Children's Books: Creating Pictures for Publication*. London: A & C Black Publishers Ltd.
- Salisbury, M. (2007) *Play Pen: New Children's Book Illustration*. London: Laurence King Publishing.
- Salisbury, M. (2022) *Drawing for Illustration*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.
- Salisbury, M. and Styles, M. (2012) *Children's Picturebooks: The Art of Visual Storytelling*. London: Laurence King Publishing.
- Scholes, R. and Kellogg, R. (1966) *The Nature of Narrative*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schwarcz, J. (1982) *Ways of the Illustrator: Visual Communication in Children's Literature*. Chicago: American Library Association.
- Scieszka, J. and Smith, L. (1989) *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs!* New York: Viking Children's Books.
- Serafini, F. (2010) 'Reading multimodal texts: perceptual, structural and ideological perspectives', *Children's Literature in Education*, 41, pp. 85–104.
- Shinohara, K. and Matsunaka, Y. (2009) 'Pictorial metaphors of emotion in Japanese comics', Edited by Forceville, C. and Urios-Aparisi, E. *Multimodal Metaphor*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 265–296.

- Short, T. (2007) *Peirce's Theory of Signs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Siddall, J. (1997) *Postmodernism and children's picture books*. BA thesis. Edith Cowan University. Available at: https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/680 (Accessed: 21 June 2023).
- Silva, F. (2014) 'Fairy-tale symbolism', Edited by Tatar, M. *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 97–116.
- Silver, C. (1999) *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness: Fairies & Victorian Consciousness*. New York: Oxford University Press USA.
- Sipe, L. (1998) 'How Picture Books Work: A Semiotically Framed Theory of Text-Picture Relationships', *Children's Literature in Education*, 29, pp. 97–108.
- Sipe, L. (2012) 'Revisiting the Relationships Between Text and Pictures', *Children's Literature in Education*, 43, pp. 4–12.
- Smith, H. and Dean, R. (eds.) (2009) *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Solomon, M. (2013) *The Art of Typography: An Introduction to Typo.Icon.Ography*. New York: Art Direction Book Company.
- Somekh, B. (2006) *Action Research: A Methodology for Change and Development*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Soundy, C. (2015) 'Making Sense of Children's Drawings and Semiotic Explorations', *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, 43(3), pp. 39–46.
- Stockwell, P. (2002) *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Stott, J. (1982) 'It's not what you'd expect: Teaching irony to third graders', *Children's Literature in Education*, 13, pp. 153–163.

- Sullivan, E. (2016) *The art of illustration*. New York: Dover Publications Inc.
- Tannen, D. (1984) 'Introduction, Coherence in spoken and written discourse', *Norwood*, pp. xiii–xvii.
- Teverson, A. (2013) *Fairy Tale*. London: Routledge.
- Teverson, A. (2019) *The Fairy Tale World*. London: Routledge.
- Tolkien, J. (1947) *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Triggs, T (2003) *The Typographic Experiment: Radical Innovation in Contemporary Type Design*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Trites, R. (1994) 'Manifold Narratives: Metafiction and Ideology in Picture Books', *Children's Literature in Education*, 25(4), pp. 225–242.
- Turner, M. (2002) 'The Cognitive Study of Art, Language, and Literature', *Poetics Today*, 23(1), pp. 9–20.
- Uhlig, B. (2022) 'Colour in Comics: Reading Lorenzo Mattotti Through the Lens of Art History', Edited by Gray, M. and Horton, I. *Seeing Comics through Art History*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 141–160.
- Unsworth, L. and Wheeler, J. (2002) 'Re-valuing the role of images in reviewing picture books', *Reading: Language and Literacy*, 36, pp. 68–74.
- Van Dijk, T. (1982) 'Episodes as units of discourse analysis', Edited by Tannen, D. *Analyzing Discourse: Text and Talk*. Washington: Georgetown University Press, pp. 177–195.
- Van Leeuwen, T. (2005b) 'Typographic meaning', *Visual Communication*, 4(2), pp. 137–143.
- Vandergrift, K. (1987) *Child and Story: The Literary Connection*. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers Inc.

- von Franz, M. (1997) *Archetypal Patterns in Fairy Tales*. Toronto: Inner City Books.
- Wakeford, J. (2002) What does it mean to be original? Document used in various workshops on PhD developments.
- Warner, M. (1995) *From the Beast to The Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers*. New York: Vintage.
- Warner, M. (2018) *Fairy Tale: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wu, S. (2014) 'A Multimodal Analysis of Image-text Relations in Picture Books', *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 4(7), pp. 1415–1420.
- Yuqiao, Z. (2022) 'Exploring visual metaphor in narratives of loneliness and loss in picturebooks', in *Isolation, Arts, Engagement: The 3rd International Amsterdam Comics Conference*, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.
- Yuqiao, Z. (2023) 'Visual metaphors through natural elements in picturebooks', in *ChLA 2023 Sustainability Through Story: Eco-Justice, Children's Literature, and Childhood*, 15-17 June.
- Yus, F. (2009) 'Visual metaphor versus verbal metaphor: A unified account', Edited by Forceville, C. and Urios-Aparisi, E. *Multimodal Metaphor*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 147–172.
- Zakia, R. (2002) *Perception and Imaging*. Oxford: Focal Press.
- Zipes, J. (2006). *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*. London: Routledge.

Picturebooks

- Agee, J. (2021) *The Incredible Painting of Felix Clousseau*. London: Scallywag Press.
- Altés, M. (2020) *My Grandpa*. London: Macmillan Children's Books.

Antony, S. (2014) *The Queen's Hat*. London: Hodder Children's Books.

Banyai, I. (1995) *Zoom*. London: Puffin.

Barnett, M. and Klassen, J. (2015) *Sam and Dave Dig a Hole*. London: Walker Books.

Brendan, W. (2016) *They All Saw a Cat*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Brown, R (1983) *If at first you do not see. Achill Island*: Red Fox.

Browne, A. (1977) *Voice in the park*. London: Corgi Childrens.

Browne, A. (2008) *Changes*. London: Walker Books.

Browne, A. (2010) *Through the Magic Mirror*. London: Walker Books.

Browne, A. (2016) *Willy and the Cloud*. London: Walker Books.

Browne, A. (2024) *Big Gorilla*. London: Walker Books.

Bunting, L. (2020) *Another Book about Bears*. New York: Scholastic.

Burningham, J. (1977) *Come Away from the Water, Shirley*. London: Red Fox.

Chmielewska, I. (2019) *In Half full or half empty*. Guangxi: Guangxi Normal University Press.

Dalvand, R. (2020) *Mrs Bibi's Elephant*. London: Flying Eye Books.

Davies, B. and Brown, D. (2021) *I Love You More Than All the Stars*. Wilton: Tiger Tales.

Dawney, G. and Barrow, A. (2014) *A Possum's Tail*. London: Tate Publishing.

Deuchars, M. (2018) *Bob's Blue Period*. London: Laurence King.

Eland, E. (2019) *When Sadness Comes to Call*. London: Andersen Press.

Ellis, C. (2015) *Home*. Somerville: Candlewick Press.

Ellis, C. (2016) *Du Iz Tak?* London: Walker Books Ltd.

Erlbruch, W. (2016) *Duck, Death and the Tulip*. Wellington: Gecko Press.

Gomi, T. (1999) *Spring Is Here*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Gravett, E. (2011) *The Odd Egg*. London: Macmillan Children's Books.

Gravett, E. (2013) *Matilda's Cat*. London: Two Hoots.

Hodgkinson, L. (2016) *Are You Sitting Comfortably?* London: Bloomsbury Children's Books.

Horacek, P. (2011) *The Fly*. London: Walker Books Ltd.

Hutchins, P. (1967) *Rosie's Walk*. London: Red Fox Picture Books.

Jeffers, O. (2010) *The Heart and the Bottle*. New York: HarperCollins Children's Books.

Kellaway, M. (2024) *Slug Life*. Edinburgh: Rocket Bird Books.

Kim, M. (2023) *Snail*. London: Pushkin Children's Books.

Kitamura, S. (2021) *Lily takes a walk*. London: Scallywag Press.

Klassen, J. (2012) *I Want My Hat Back*. London: Walker Books.

Lee, J. (2018) *Door*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Lionni, L. (1995) *Little blue and little yellow*. New York: William Morrow.

Marceau, F. (2014) *In This Book*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

McBratney, S. and Jeram, A. (2014) *Guess How Much I Love You*. London: Walker Books.

Melville, E. (2019) *Umbrella*. London: Scallywag Press Ltd.

Molly, B. (1999) *When Sophie Gets Angry-Really, Really Angry*. New York: Scholastic.

Prasadam-Halls, S. and Javens, B. (2016) *Two Can*. London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books.

Shigemori, C. (2014) *De qui a peur le grand méchant loup?* Vanves: Nobi Nobi.

Smith, L. (2016) *There Is a Tribe of Kids*. New York: Roaring Brook.

Smith, L. (2017) *A Perfect Day*. New York: Roaring Brook Press.

Souhami, J. (2012) *Foxy!* London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books.

Souhami, J. (2016) *Honk Honk! Hold Tight!* London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books.

Stoeke, J (2012), *Minerva Louise*. London: Puffin.

Willems, M. (2013) *That Is Not a Good Idea!* New York: Balzer + Bray.

Woodcock, F. (2018) *Look*. New York: Greenwillow Books.

Woodcock, F. (2019) *Hello*. New York: Greenwillow Books.

Woollvin, B. (2016) *Little Red*. Georgia: Peachtree Publishers.

Xuewei, Q., Shiqi, Wu. and Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *Visit the Forbidden City to See China*. Jiangsu: Phoenix Science Press Ltd.

Young, E. (2002) *Seven Blind Mice*. London: Pearson.

Paintings

Magritte, R. (1953) *Golconda* [Oil on canvas]. Available at: <https://www.renemagritte.org/> (Accessed: 20 August 2024).

Van Gogh, V. (1888) *The Bedroom* [Oil on canvas]. Available at: <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/> (Accessed: 20 August 2024).

Personal picturebook & Illustration

Yuqiao, Z. (2020) *'I' Searcher*.

Yuqiao, Z. (2021) *Responsible me*.

Yuqiao, Z. (2022) *The Guardian Angel*.

Yuqiao, Z. (2023) *Ode to mother*.

Yuqiao, Z. (2024) *The Way to Happiness*.