

# “Why don’t we see him?”: Questioning the frame in illustrated children’s stories

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**Résumé:** *D. Thorpe situe son analyse du texte illustré dans la problématique de la censure de la littérature pour la jeunesse. L’observation des réactions de sa petite fille aux images montre à quel point les censeurs se trompent dans leur appréciation des oeuvres pour enfants. Les illustrations comportent en effet une polysémie qui échappe au sens univoque que les censeurs croient percevoir ou veulent imposer au texte. Celui-ci n’est pas ainsi un objet fixe ou statique à dominer ou à censurer mais le lieu d’un échange où les sens en apparence contradictoires de l’écrit et de l’image ouvrent la voie à une interprétation plurielle.*

“Why don’t we see him?” my daughter kept asking me. She was referring to Franklin, the protagonist of Paulette Bourgeois’s *Hurry up, Franklin*; the absence she was asking about sprang from the illustrator Brenda Clark’s decision to exclude Franklin from the frame in certain key illustrations to the story. My daughter knew Franklin must be about, but she was puzzled that he wasn’t being shown to us.

Indeed, her questions about the illustrations in this book were quite persistent. She wondered about other details in the text that were kept out of view, and about the presence in the pictures of details not mentioned in the text at all. For instance, when Franklin finally arrives at Bear’s birthday party, we see not only all the animals encountered en route, but others as well. “Where did they come from?” my daughter wanted to know.

The answers I have come up with on such occasions vary widely. Adult readers may find themselves inventing tangents to the story to explain, say, where the “others came from.” Or, the picture itself may become a focus for discussion, exploring how the things seen point to things unseen. At one point, an analogy to photography helped me: “The person taking the picture is never in the picture, but you know she’s there by the way everyone smiles at her.”

Clearly, however, all such occasions are not intended to somehow “fix” the story and confine its meaning. The “story” is neither just in the text nor just in the illustrations; it moves in a field that both inhabit. That field is open at its edges; neither author nor artist could quite contain it. The reading of any story, and certainly reading an illustrated story to preschool children, is an opportunity to experience the pleasures of narrative, and those pleasures are open-ended.

This essay looks closely at the adult's and the preschool child's shared encounter with the illustrated story. The pleasure in such encounters is partly in the fact that two forms of reading are made possible: the adult reads out the words while the child "reads" the picture. Such reading takes a number of forms. A child may look to the picture for an image just described in words, for the pleasure of recognition: "There it is! I see it!" Just as naturally, however, a child may query the visual exclusion of some detail from the text ("Why don't we see it?"), or be puzzled by the artist's choice of perspective ("Why don't we see her face?"). Or, a child may discover some image not indicated in the text at all, yet which seems a natural extrapolation of it. A child's "reading," especially when spoken in comments such as these, should not be seen as an interruption of, or a distraction from, the literary text, but rather as an important supplement to it. Children's readings of pictures develop their awareness of narrative possibility, their understanding of narrative connection, and their appreciation of narrative illusion.

To recognize what is plain and to search for what is hidden: these are the twin activities engaged in the "reading" of illustrations. But how exactly are these activities performed, and how do they interact? To develop a model for understanding this interaction, I will adapt ideas taken from three sources: (i) developmental psychology; (ii) literary theory; and (iii) practical commentaries by authors and illustrators of children's books. Having synthesized a vocabulary from these three sources, I will look closely at a few recent Canadian illustrated children's books.

From Piaget on, there has been a close attention to the stages in the child's growing ability to master the world. Developmental models for the acquisition of reading skills, complemented by studies of children's own storytelling habits, have offered many influential generalizations. Thus, we have heard that while preschoolers can follow a simple plot, they are incapable of making one; that though they can follow a character's actions they don't think about the character's motives; that they have no appreciation of style; that they believe everything. An inevitable feature of such generalizations is the use of a progressive argument. It is not just that reading habits change, but they must be assumed to be changing from the simple to the complex, from the naïve to the sophisticated, from the delusional to the real. In developmental models, whether cognitively-focused as in the Piaget tradition, or affectively-focused as in the Freud tradition, the rich fantasy life of children can be seen as a stage to be outgrown, a disguised rehearsal for a "real" engagement with life in adulthood.

In the context of such progressive arguments, the use of pictures in preschool texts can be given a merely pragmatic value. The picture, say, helps connect a character to a situation for a child who would otherwise struggle to fathom the connection. Margaret Donaldson, for example, points out the limitation of children's ability to connect pictures and words this way:

For there would also seem to be, at the very least, the issue of *control*—the question of how much ability the child has to sustain attention, resisting irrelevance while he considers implications. And young children seem not to be very good at this. For instance, Lesley Hall carried out experiments in which she asked her subjects to decide whether statements were true or false in relation to pictures and then recorded eye movements as the subjects searched the pictures and reached a decision. She found that children as young as four could organize their search patterns to some extent if no irrelevant pictures were shown but that the presence of irrelevant pictures was 'more efficacious in "attracting" the gaze than was any cognitive plan in "projecting" it.' In other words, the amount of deliberate control which the children exercised in this context appeared to be quite limited. (93)

I do not dispute this finding on its own terms, but in order to see this limitation, one clearly has to normalize a certain standard of "relevance." One assumes what the picture is "about," that the difference between true and false will be self-evident to the adult, and that it shows a lack of control to be "attracted" to irrelevancies. Outside the controlled conditions of an experiment, in dealing with actual children's books and actual readers, each one of these norms and assumptions becomes quite problematic.

In recent years there have been several accounts of child development more directly attuned to the practice of reading, and these studies, to my mind, point us in a more helpful direction. In his book *Becoming a reader: The experience of fiction from childhood to adulthood*, J.A. Appleyard develops a developmental model that contains five stages. The process he describes, however, is not so much progressive as accretive. The final stage involves a varied application of the skills and responses acquired in all of the previous stages. In the preschool stage, the reader is characterized as a "player." To "play" with texts is in one sense, as in Donaldson, a sign of a limitation, but for Appleyard the child grows not by leaving play behind, but by augmenting it:

... even the considerable achievements of three-year-olds as players leave them with an uncertain grasp of the boundary between the fantasy world and the world of pragmatic consequences when they listen to stories .... The child has to learn through experience that story events occur in a specially marked or framed context, a storytime or playtime that has both internal cues ... and external signals ... which signal fictiveness and allow the child to accept the 'as if' world of make believe .... The evidence for this is inferential, but all that we know of how preschool children learn the narrator role suggests that the listener role undergoes a simultaneous evolution in the direction of increasing competence at managing the boundaries of the fictional world and of increasingly playful exploration of that world. (50-51)

Growing sophistication with stories, then, is not so much a matter of acquiring a greater mastery of the "truth" and the ability to discriminate "relevance" as it is an increased responsiveness to the conventions of representation. The story is both something to be known and something to be explored.

In this sense the text is not a static object to be controlled, but the site of a dynamic encounter. Ellen Winner has speculated that the very limitation of the preschool child's cognition is what ensures the continued vitality of the text:

Children's appreciation of stories presents something of a paradox. They can ignore or misunderstand many fundamental aspects of a story and yet be so fascinated by something in it that they insist on hearing it over and over again. This is a difficult issue to resolve. One possibility is that children are gripped by the one aspect of a story that they seem to understand: its structure. ... While children may be interested in the story's structure, they may also be captivated by those aspects that they do not quite understand ... Perhaps it is for this reason that children insist on hearing the same story over and over again. By hearing it repeatedly, they can begin to assimilate it. (304-5)

This process of repetition is, as in Appleyard, an accretive one. To "assimilate" a story is not to suddenly displace an incorrect reading with a correct one, but to achieve a response that is richer and more layered than before.

At the end of this process, of course, is the adult reader. In the situation in which the adult reads a story to a preschooler, Appleyard's first and fifth stages coincide; they are partners in a shared event. A literary theory which addresses the full complexity of the adult's engagement with a text will help supplement these developmental accounts.

One need not be accounting for child readers turning into adult readers to see the text as dynamic. The theoretical school known alternately as "reader-response" theory or "reception" theory tries to describe a dynamic model for all reading situations. In some cases, as in the work of Norman Holland, such models are explicitly Freudian. The text is dynamic in that reading it stages a contest between the reader's fantasies and the reader's repressive defences. Such models can thus be quite idiosyncratic and overly dependent on some biographical foundation. At the opposite extreme, the theory of Hans Robert Jauss situates the dynamic historically, so that a given response to a text reveals a culture's "horizon of expectations." Any model of reading as exploratory play would then be constrained by such a horizon; to explore beyond that horizon would be possible only in the context of an entire cultural shift of horizon.

In some cases a theorist can see the reader's response as a kind of tension between individual and cultural patterning, as in this example from David Bleich:

If a child identifies a giant with a parent, the identification makes sense only in view of the child's own feelings and motives for making it; otherwise it is formulaic knowledge applied rather than subjective knowledge gained. (137)

None of these theorists, however, deal particularly with problems of illustration.

For my purpose here, the most provocative such model is that found in Wolfgang Iser's *The act of reading*. For Iser, a text is constructed out of a number of largely fragmentary elements. The "meaning" of the text lies not in the elements themselves, but in the synthetic process by which a reader connects the elements and divines a pattern to them:

... the text cannot at any one moment be grasped as a whole. But what may at first sight have seemed like a disadvantage, in comparison with our normal modes of perception, may now be seen to offer distinct advantages, in so far as it permits a process through which the aesthetic object is constantly

being structured and restructured. As there is no definite frame of reference to regulate this process, successful communication must ultimately depend on the reader's creative activity. (112)

The outcome of this synthetic activity is the formation of "images." Unlike "normal perception," which is of objects actually present to our senses, the reading of stories involves responding to words, not objects. The images we form in response to words are thus at a further remove from reality:

Thus the image brings something to light which can be equated neither with a given empirical object, nor with the meaning of a represented object, as it transcends the sensory, but is not yet fully conceptualized .... The true character of these images consists in the fact that they bring to light aspects which could not have emerged through direct perception of the object. 'Imaging' depends upon the absence of what appears in the image. (136-7)

The dynamic of reading thus involves a continual adjustment of one's image of the text, that image being a mental construct in which memories of what the text has already said and expectations of what the text will say next must be harmonized.

That they are harmonized, and that the reader eventually arrives at a coherent realization of the text's meaning, is perhaps surprising, given all the variables Iser has described. One wonders how the "image" of the text would be sustained in the face of an actual representation of it. Though Iser does not consider the genre of illustrated books he does briefly consider the collision of novel and film based on novel:

[The] strange quality of the image becomes apparent when, for instance, one sees the film version of a novel one has read. Here we have optical perception which takes place against the background of our own remembered images. As often as not, the spontaneous reaction is one of disappointment, because the characters somehow fail to live up to the image we had created of them while reading .... The difference between the two types of picture is that the film is optical and presents a given object, whereas the imagination remains unfettered. Objects, unlike imaginings, are highly determinate, and it is this determinacy which makes us feel disappointed. (137-8)

While such disappointment is something I suspect most readers can easily recall experiencing, it is equally common to have such a collision of images re-open the novel, and perhaps sensitize one to meanings that one hadn't notice before. Iser does not consider the dynamic involved in such a re-reading.

If Iser is correct in describing reading as a process of forming images that will resist outside revision, then it scarcely seems possible that a reader could enjoy an illustrated book; yet adults and children alike clearly do. Note, however, that Iser is considering two discrete artworks: the example he uses is *Tom Jones* the novel (1749) and *Tom Jones* the film (1963). With an illustrated book, however, the child experiences text and illustration simultaneously. In most preschool books, there is an illustration on every page, so that the child's experience is continuously visual. There may still be jarring moments of the sort Iser describes, when image collides with perception, but in an illustrated book such

moments form the dynamic which defines the genre.

Indeed, consideration of illustrated books helps remove some of the more rarefied aspects of Iser's theory. The reader's image is not some artificially pure thought, preserved at the cost of never seeing any objects with our senses. The illustrated book, like all books, involves the reader in the creation of patterns of meaning, but those patterns are continually challenged by the evidence of the reader's eyes.

If a literary theorist can see a visualization of a story as a disappointing intrusion on his mental image of that story, is the relation between author and illustrator then occasionally an antagonistic one? The evidence offered by authors' and illustrators' comments on their craft is rather mixed. An extreme position is proclaimed by the Russian children's author Kornei Chukovsky in his *From two to five*:

Those lines that serve no purpose for the illustrator are also largely useless to the child. The children's author must, so to speak, think in pictures. (If the reader leafs through my children's tales, he will find that *Tarakanishche* [*The cockroach*] calls for twenty-eight illustrations according to the number of images given .... (145-6)

When a story's visual aspect is considered so fundamental, it is not surprising that authors often assume control over the illustrations. Edward Ardizzone claims that "the best picture books have been created by artists who have written their own text. It is a one-man job" (Egoff *et.al.* 291). Perhaps few authors have achieved the trust of a Robert Munsch who, in answer to an interviewer's question about how much input he has into the artwork for his books, said:

It depends. With Michael Martchenko, I've gradually had less and less because I find that I just like what he does and I trust him to come up with neat ideas. (Kondo 29)

This shows a refreshing openness regarding the status of his own stories, an impression reinforced by the knowledge of the evolution of his stories through multiple tellings. The published text is clearly just the momentary stabilization of a proliferating invention. Martchenko's illustrations release the energy that was inherent in the story's genesis all along.

A certain tact apparently governs the right distance between illustration and story. Even in a story conceived as text and illustration by one artist, a delicate balance must be struck. Maurice Sendak calls it "interpretive illustration":

It involves a kind of vigorous working with the writer. Sometimes you're the writer, too, so you're working with yourself; then the difficulty and strain and joy of that particular work is the balancing between the text and pictures. You must not ever be doing the same thing, must not ever be illustrating exactly what you've written. You must leave a space in the text so the picture can do the work. Then you must come back with the word, and the word does it best and now the picture beats time. (Egoff *et.al.* 326)

In one sense this reads like a strategy for avoiding the collisions Iser alluded

to above, while creating opportunities for the playful exploration of picture and text that Appleyard and Winner call for. A similar point seems to be made by Roger Duvoisin when he says that “even in children’s-book illustrations it is worthwhile to think of the narrative elements as materials with which to build a beautiful page instead of concentrating on them for their own sake” (Haviland 185-6). An illustration must thus have its own visual integrity; its status as something separate from the text creates a tension that is productive. In Winner’s terms, it is a version of this tension that will keep drawing a child back to the book, to explore the “space in the text” further.

Let us now look at a representative selection of contemporary Canadian illustrated books for preschoolers, to see the ways in which this encounter is managed. With two of the examples, author and artist are one person, with the others involving two creators. One of the stories is traditional, the rest original, though with various traditional analogues. Both texts and illustrations cover a range of styles.

First let us return to our opening example, Bourgeois and Clark’s *Hurry up, Franklin*. Franklin is slow, “even for a turtle,” and the main source of uncertainty in the story regards whether he will make it to Bear’s birthday party on time. The bulk of the narrative follows Franklin’s journey, structured as a series of encounters that all threaten to waylay him. Though the narrative is focused on Franklin throughout, three of the illustrations keep Franklin out of view. It was this exclusion which prompted the words which form my title.

In attempting to understand the tact the artist exercises here we should also see something of how the child interacts with the story at these points. Figure 1 shows the first of Franklin’s encounters, with a rabbit. Rabbit’s function is mixed: he tempts Franklin to play, yet also reminds him, and the reader, of the route Franklin will take to Bear’s house.

The illustration shows a very naturalistic rabbit crouching in a bed of wildflowers in the foreground, while the background shows the windings of the path Franklin must take. Why is Franklin himself not shown? My daughter’s uncertainty about where he was is intensified by the visual suggestion of the illustration. Though the path is plainly visible, it occupies only the margins of our gaze. One’s attention is easily absorbed by the rabbit and the flowers. In the ensuing illustration, which shows Franklin and Rabbit in carefree play, the flowers have apparently grown so high that they dwarf and surround the animals playing in their midst. Franklin is back

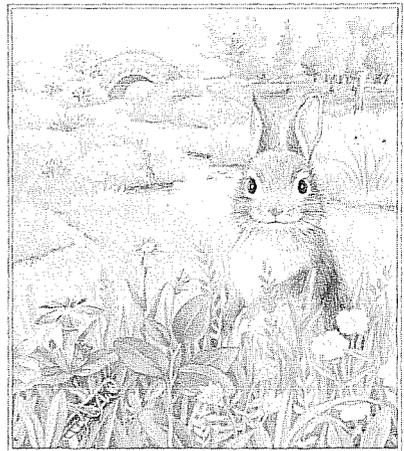


Figure 1

in the centre, but the path is nowhere visible.

The second encounter, with an otter, accentuates the effects of the first.



Figure 2

Again, we see the encountered animal up front and up close, amid flowers and foliage, but this time we have lost sight of the path, and the background is composed almost entirely of opaque water (see figure 2). Franklin's absence from the frame seems to encourage an even stronger suspicion that the goal of the journey may be forgotten. The climax of uncertainty is the encounter with Fox (figure 3). Here the tempter almost fills the frame, though the body and even parts of the face are obscured by a network of branches. The design is suggestive of a dense forest, a place of concealment and surprise, and seems strongly reminiscent

of the encounter with the Wolf in "Little Red Riding Hood." For the child, not seeing Franklin here is potentially a sign of his being lost irrevocably, a visual intensification of the text's suggestion that they might play hide and seek.

Turning the page, however, our attention is restored to something of its initial bearings. Fox is shown emerging from a small bush in an open field, his front paws actually stepping onto the path, his mouth now open in a friendly expression. Franklin is back in the frame, and leaning in the right direction, as the text tells us that Franklin "was just about to step off the path when he remembered it was a very special day and he couldn't be late." After an encounter with a snail, in which Franklin's visual presence is reinforced by the way *he* now fills the frame, Franklin reaches the party in the nick of time.



Figure 3

It puzzled my daughter that not only had Fox, Otter and Rabbit preceded Franklin to the party, but so had several other animals that we hadn't met before. This addition is consistent with the suggestions made by the prior illustrations. Just as the child is continually made aware of the multiple stories possible along the way—that Franklin will make it, that he will play too long, that he will become lost—so we see at the end that his journey was simply one of many made by various converging paths through

the woods.

One could go further in pointing out how Brenda Clark's use of detail adds dimensions of meaning to this central principle of the journey. All along the way, the illustrations show us not only the principal animals, but a host of others: snake, ducks, dragonfly, fish, butterfly, ladybug, etc. All of them are going somewhere, it seems, but none of them end up at Bear's party, though a few bees trail Franklin into Bear's house and head for the kitchen table. Franklin's journey is in part a descent into the wildness of nature, where only some of the animals are personified and become involved with us.

Even the key encounters, as we have seen, are ambiguously handled. Otter, Rabbit, and Fox are all presented to us initially as wild animals. Their mouths are closed (even though the text has them talking), their faces expressionless. They stare at the viewer with the steady attention of animals in the wild. All of this is a visual correlative to the feeling of insecurity associated with Franklin's progress, a feeling instilled in part by Franklin's momentary invisibility. The sense of restored security in the party scene is accompanied by a visual revision of Otter, Rabbit, and Fox (figure 4).



Figure 4

They now sit upright in chairs like personified animals, have expressive faces, and wear party hats.

How much of this detail registers with the child, and on what level it registers, is, of course, highly variable. It would presumably be only a much older child who might be alert enough to notice that the three animals have gained something else they didn't have before, and which they never have in the wild: an opposable thumb.

It would seem that Brenda Clark has followed both Sendak's and Duvoisin's advice in not simply repeating the detail of the text, but rather by creating an oblique selection of the text's detail, and in turn constructing a visual narrative that both supports and extends the text. The slight dissonance between picture and text is enough to stimulate the kind of playful exploration that Winner and Appleyard called for, while, in Iser's terms, the tactical withdrawal of the object

perceived seems to create fresh opportunities for the reader to “image” a larger range of narrative possibilities.

My second example shows a strikingly similar strategy, but this time in dealing with a traditional and very familiar story. H. Werner Zimmermann’s *Henny Penny* provides a retelling of the tale with Zimmermann’s original illustrations. The text will pose no surprises; it recounts the story in a fairly standard form. The story is in one sense the converse of *Hurry up, Franklin* in that while it is again structured as a series of encounters with a temptation to folly, it is now seen as folly to join the journey instead of staying put. Hysterical concern is played off against sober contentment and domestic industry. This very stability gives the artist an opportunity to enlarge the reader’s response through visual suggestion.

Two brief examples will suffice. Figure 5 shows Ducky Lucky afloat in a millpond.

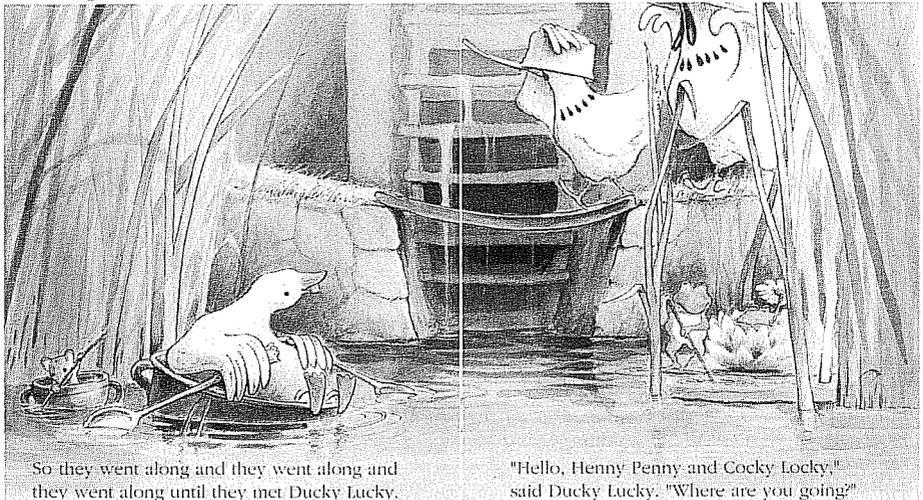


Figure 5

He appears to be accompanied by a mouse in a cup, while nearby are two frogs. In the background, on a path at right angles to the viewer’s gaze, Henny Penny and Cocky Locky are crossing the millstream by a rather precarious plank. Their resolution is suggested by their orderly progress in single file and synchronized step. Their folly is suggested by the huge pots they wear on their heads, almost totally obscuring their vision. The narrative point at issue is whether Ducky Lucky will join them. The very familiarity of the story, with its ritual repetitions already in place, assures us of the inevitability that Ducky Lucky will join, yet the illustration reminds us of those who don’t join. The overturning of the order of things (the absurd possibility of the sky falling) is re-asserted every time a bird puts a pot on his head, yet normalcy is also asserted by the mouse being able, in the ensuing frames, to stay afloat in his cup (figure 6).

Our two frogs for some reason also turn head-over-heels, yet they in turn are observed by two stationary frogs who now appear in the foreground.

As with *Hurry up, Franklin*, then, the narrative has become crowded with other animals, each one a potential reminder that the actions of the principals are both inevitable and quite arbitrary. In another frame, the birds pass a group of horses; only the youngest horse watches them while the rest graze on oblivious of the passing procession. A sense of the fictiveness of narrative focus, though reputedly

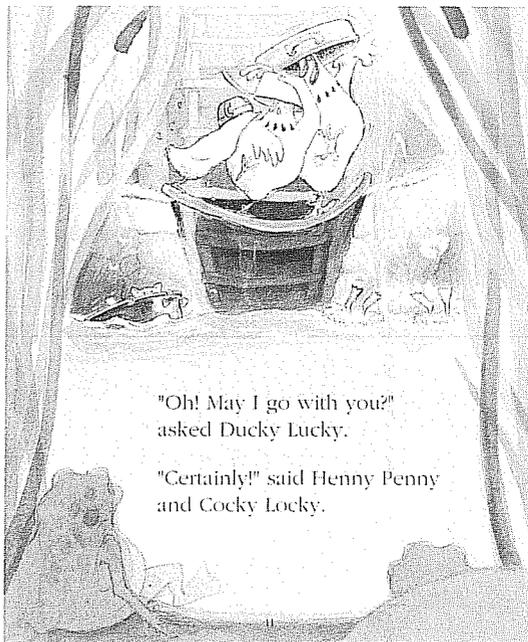


Figure 6

available only to much older and more sophisticated readers, may develop in response to such scenes in the early form of a series of questions: "Why didn't the mouse go too?" (the answer "only the birds are going" makes narrative sense, if no other kind of sense) or "Why did the frogs fall in?"

The story's final frame (figure 7) is a wonderfully rich composition that suggests not only the presence of other actions simultaneous with the main one, but also the possibility of the recurrence of the entire story. The fox with his full



Figure 7

belly occupies the middle of the frame, his posture of contented repose echoing the posture of many of the other sane animals in the story. In the background we see the passing plumes of the king's carriage, a closing reminder of the failure of the birds' mission. The birds themselves remain only in a stray feather and discarded pot in the foreground. Dominating the composition, however, are two more animals never mentioned in the text, a pair of squirrels gathering acorns. This is a visual tie to the story's opening frame, which showed the squirrels high up in an oak tree, with one of their acorns about to drop onto the head of Henny Penny, just visible far below. Throughout the story, then, Zimmermann's illustrations manipulate perspective and point of view to provide not only a sense of alternate narratives, but also an ongoing critique of the narrative we are listening to.

A critique of a slightly different sort is found in Robert Munsch's *Pigs*. This text traces Megan's growing awareness of the truth that "pigs are smarter than you think." Michael Martchenko's illustrations, it seems to me, do not simply show that same truth, but rather playfully explore it. Consider Megan's first

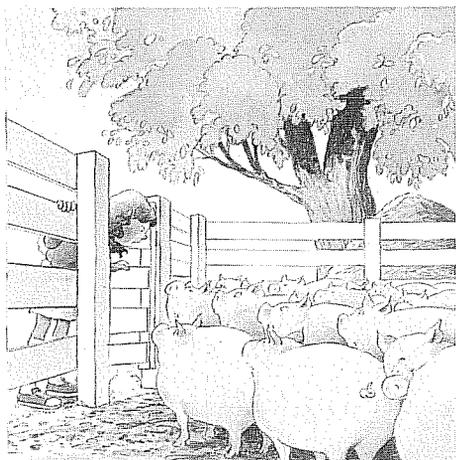


Figure 8

confrontation with the pigs (figure 8). She is determined to prove the above adage wrong and taunts the pigs about their stupidity. Martchenko's illustration is wilfully ambiguous. The pigs appear *en masse*, all apparently lump-like and indifferent, except for the pig in the right foreground, who turns and winks knowingly at the viewer. In a way the illustrator is stealing the author's thunder by a few seconds, hinting that the mask of dumbness conceals an intent to stampede.

Stampeding through an open gate is in itself natural behaviour in pigs, however, and not a sign of exceptional intelligence. The winking pig simply makes the promise of intelligence more explicit. When the text becomes more explicit about this issue, Martchenko is allowed bolder measures. Figure 9 shows the scene where the pigs have invaded the Principal's office. As Munsch tells it: "There was a pig drinking the principal's coffee. A pig was eating the principal's newspaper. And a pig was peeing on the principal's shoe." Only two of these details make it into Martchenko's illustration, while many more are added. The displacement of humans by pigs is accentuated by a pig not only drinking from the principal's cup but also brazenly lounging in the principal's chair and wearing her glasses. Another pig appears to be appreciating a joke with a party on the other end of the



Figure 9

phone line. Such evidence is offset, however, by the rest of the frame, which depicts a general swine-like omnivorousness. Martchenko's sense of how provisional his own illustrations are is deftly suggested by having a pig devouring a copy of Munsch/Martchenko's *I have to go!*

The story's focus is on Megan's eventual ability to master the situation and learn a lesson. Yet the chief visual delight of the book seems to lie in the artist's extemporizing on a theme that the story leaves inde-

terminate, the issue of just how intelligent pigs are. Megan seems satisfied that the pigs are at the end safely penned up again. The artist, on the other hand, has taken liberties as the pigs have, and the dynamic of release versus confinement gives him a clear identification with the pigs as visual playmates. Regardless of how a child reader might, if asked, summarize what the story was about, the illustrations have involved the child in an exploration of just how much variety a set of characters who never speak in the story can have.

A more specifically focused kind of visual opportunity is presented by Stéphane Poulin's *Can you catch Josephine?* In this case the narrative focus is comparatively simple: a boy discovers that his cat has followed him to school. She escapes from him and he struggles to catch her, comforted in the end by the discovery that the principal has had the same thing happen to her. The bulk of the narrative is a prolonged chase scene, exploring the various corners of the school and the multiple encounters possible in such a setting.

Though the story is extremely simple, the visual field of the illustrations is rich and densely-detailed. Poulin's chief visual strategy is to keep Josephine the cat small by never showing her in closeup, so that we are always losing her in the density of the visual field. Though she is always present, the reader experiences something of the same uncertainty she felt surrounding Franklin's disappearances. The child in this case mimics Daniel's hunt for his cat in the simple task of trying to spot where she has been hidden by the artist. In figure 10, for example, Daniel fails to see Josephine at all.

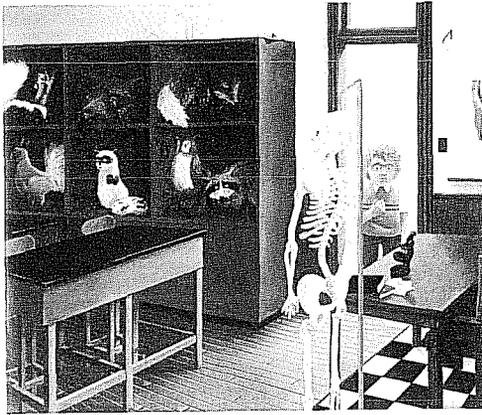


Figure 10

The child reader, assuming she finds the cat, thus experiences the story in two ways simultaneously. She continues to fear that Daniel may never find his cat while enjoying the satisfaction that she herself will always find her. My final example, Peter Eyvindson's *Old enough*, with illustrations by Wendy Wolsak, shows an entirely different kind of sympathy between artist and illustrator.

Wolsak has used the illustrations

not just as representations of characters and events in the text, but as metaphoric recreations of that text. Here the artist does not simply add details that the text doesn't mention, but allows the illustrations to make statements that words couldn't make, yet which somehow respond to the essence of those words.

Eyvindson's text tracks a father's evolving relationship with his son, starting with the son's birth, and closing with the interaction between the father (now also a grandfather) and his grandson, a period of well over twenty years covered in a condensed series of leaps. In the opening illustration (figure 11) father and son are everything to each other.

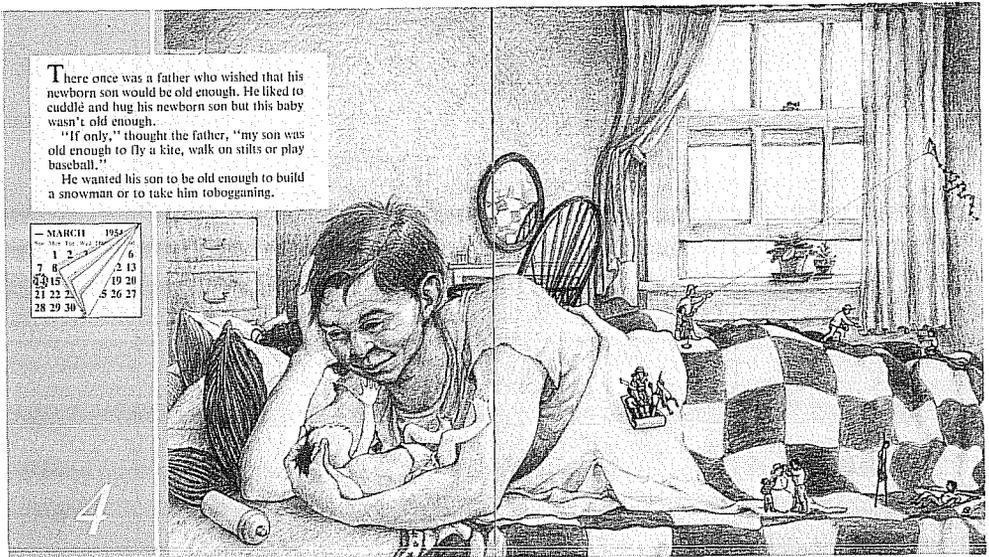


Figure 11

Their heads are close together and they look at each other; the world outside the open window is somehow invisible, and in any case neither is looking that way. The text tells us of the father's wishes for his son. Spread out on the checked bedspread are a series of small pairs of playing figures, each one actualizing one of the father's fantasies of his future life with his son. The issue that both text and illustrator are facing is how real the father's fantasies are. To the child seeing the illustration the action figures seem real enough, though she may be puzzled as to why the father and son don't seem to notice them. An extraordinarily alert child might notice that the mirror in the background throws back a reflected image of the bedspread on which no action figures appear. This is thus a composition which combines a double vision of narrative possibilities. In the background the window opens onto a world that doesn't seem to exist yet, and the mirror fails to confirm our expectations of life. In the foreground we have a composition of human figures telling us that anything is possible and that all we need in the world is each other. The shifting balance of this double vision is what the story will explore.

The next frame repeats the situation of the first, only now the baby is looking outward, apparently toward the window, while the father holds him from behind. From there on the perspective of the story shifts. We see the growing boy playing in the outside world, while through the open window we see the father absorbed in other matters, so that he is not even looking out. A calendar on a side panel of each page reminds us of how much time has passed in this way. Father and son aren't shown looking at each other again until twenty years later, when, against a blank white background, the father (who now needs glasses) suddenly sees his son again and realizes that a life has passed which he has missed.

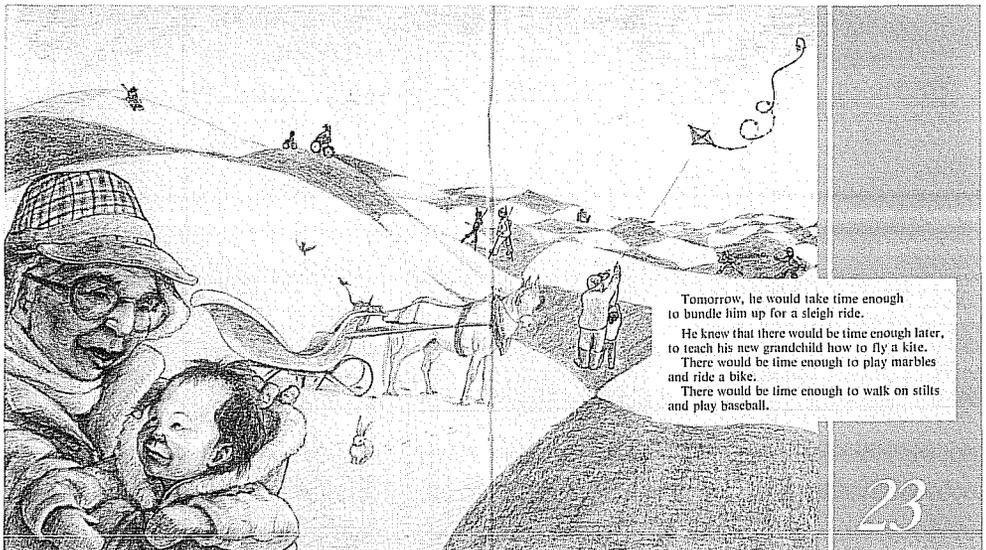


Figure 12

In the next frame after this we see the father reaching out to his new grandson. The supporting details (blanket, mirror, and window) are present again, but have been re-arranged so that the mirror now faces the window. The shift in narrative prospect indicated in the text (that the grandfather will be able to play more with the grandson than he did with the son) is subtly indicated in the way the mirror reflects both the grandson and the outside world, and in the way the grandfather, in reaching toward his grandson, is also leaning toward the window. In the second-last frame of the story (figure 12) we see grandson and grandfather playing together. At first glance it appears to be an outside scene in winter. They wear winter clothes in a snowscape complete with horse and sleigh. As the eye follows the scene farther into the background, however, we notice that the patch of snow is just the first square in a receding checked blanket. The landscape, and the life, have turned into an image of the father's fantasy many years ago. The timeless aspect of this visual fusion is indicated in part by the disappearance of the side calendar panel that has marked the passing of time till now.

Perhaps many of these visual details will escape a preschooler. The doubleness of vision that the story allows for is important, though, for two reasons.

First, the adult's sense of discovery with these books is in some ways just as crucial as the child's, for our habits of reading and exploring stories and pictures act as models for the child's. As Eyvindson's story should remind us, the shared nature of the encounter with a preschool book is itself a precious thing.

Second, there is a real risk of patronising the child by assuming that since some material is beyond the child, the child should not be exposed to it. Here, too, it seems to me, artists show a kind of tact in giving images that are sufficient to tell a story, yet also suggestive of the other story that might be told, or the other meaning that might be noticed. We have all witnessed the pleasure a child takes in experiencing a story for the first time, yet just as vital is the pleasure of discovering something one has missed, the pleasure of an expanding attention. The pre-schooler, as Winner reminded us, is virtually the prototype of the re-reader. Though some children are almost obsessively committed to a particular wording, and become intolerant of variations, who knows how their eye may wander in and out of the illustration while the familiar words are repeated? To assume that there is nothing but an exasperating repetition in such moments is to risk finding ourselves in the position of the father in *Old enough*, finding that the child has grown up without us. Children do grow up by progressing from simple stories to complex stories, but they can also grow within a story, by exploring the suggestions found within the frame of an illustration.

When a child questions what is present, or what is missing, in an illustration, then, such questionings should be welcomed not only as enrichments of the story itself but as opportunities for exploring the process of fiction. For in illustration as in writing, the creative process is fictional—a selecting, ordering process of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion. The static frame of the picture is the illusory containment of narrative possibility. In that frame the past events of the

story converge while the future events diverge from its limits. In a good illustration, then, we marvel not only at what has been captured but also at what has eluded, as yet, representation. To paraphrase Margaret Laurence (6), we come to value the pictures most for what is hidden in them.

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