

Editorial

In recent decades, scholars have developed an ever-deepening knowledge of the narrative effects of pictures and of the psychology of pictorial perception. But discussion of the art in Canadian books for children still consists far too often of nothing but brief, vague, and very impressionistic evaluative comments. We are told that the illustrations in a picture book are “lively” or “whimsical” or “colourful,” and very little else.

The paper call I sent out after being asked to guest-edit a *CCL* special section on illustration was an attempt to correct that situation. It asked for rigorous analysis of picture books—analysis that would be “informed by knowledge of theory from one or more of a variety of different fields.” The result was gratifying indeed: enough excellent articles to fill both this and the next issue of *CCL*.

The eleven articles in these two issues all offer stimulating and carefully detailed analysis of a wide variety of Canadian picture books. In doing so, they refer to a wide variety of theoretical contexts, from across the spectrum of intellectual disciplines: chaos theory, the philosophy of Bachelard, aspects of cognitive and developmental psychology, the psychoanalytical insights of Freud and Jung, theories of puppetry and of comic-book art, the analytical techniques of art history, reader-response and other literary theories. The contributors also often make use of recent theoretical efforts focused specifically on developing an understanding of the distinctive features of picture book narrative, including the semiotic theory I outline in my own book, *Words about pictures: The narrative art of children's picture books* (U of Georgia Press, 1988). Taken together, then, the articles in this and the next issue suggest numerous new paths *CCL* readers might follow in developing deeper understanding not only of the individual picture books and illustrators discussed, but also of the picture book in general as a unique and delightfully complex form of storytelling.

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