CREATIVITY, IMAGINATION AND PLAY IN CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS: THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING.

by

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DECLARATION

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Creativity, imagination and play in children's picture books: the importance of creative problem-solving.

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

15 September 2023

SIGNATURE DATE

SUMMARY

TITLE:

Creativity, imagination and play in children's picture books: the importance of creative problem-solving.

SUMMARY:

This practice-based study sets out to identify creative triggers found in contemporary children's picture books that encourage playful approaches in readers with a view to them applying their imaginations as they navigate their way through the books' spreads. Through the lenses of narratology, psychology and phenomenology, the study unpacks postmodern narrative devices found in contemporary picture books with reference to the work of Martin Salisbury, Perry Nodelman and Donald Winnicott. Winnicott's theories regarding the 'True Self', 'true play', the 'transitional object' and 'transitional space' played a key role in this study. Eleven creative triggers were identified and used to examine contemporary children's picture books. These were then put into practice to create a series of books for my art practice under the title *Cautionary tales for Grown Ups from Children/Cautionary tales for children from Grown Ups*.

KEY TERMS:

Donald Winnicott; imagination; play; playfulness; creativity; narratology; picture books; postmodern narrative devices; formal elements; creative triggers; narratology; true play; transitional object

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Firstly, I would like to thank Prof. Keith Dietrich for his guidance as my supervisor, as well as Prof. Gwenneth Millar, Prof. Bernadette van Haute and the administrative staff of the Department of Art and Music for their help and advice. I would also like to thank all the individuals who participated in the focus group sessions by sharing their childhood stories with me and allowing me to take inspiration from them. Furthermore, a special thanks to the following people who assisted me with creative and academic feedback and guidance: Mieke du Plessis, Marnell Kirsten, Rachel Collett, Esti Joorst, Simoné Scott and Wayne Simpson.

PREFACE

Background

I have worked as a lecturer in the creative field for over ten years. Currently, I lecture Illustration at an advertising college and work as an illustrator. I have always been curious about how different creative approaches allow for different results.

I noticed in my own creative practice that my output could be influenced positively when I allowed myself the opportunity to play, make mistakes and explore. I experienced that certain playful and imaginative processes allowed for more playfulness and imaginative thinking, creating a kind of snowball effect. I have witnessed similar results with my students when I apply the same approach. When I encourage them to explore a new medium, technique or concept without fear of judgement, they are able to make unique discoveries and this has led to my teaching motto “Play until something happens”.

My interest in this area started with an investigation into the creative practices of the Dadaists for my honours dissertation and shifted into the realm of narratology and contemporary picture books. I am curious about the positive effect an illustrator can have on their audience in stimulating them to play and use their imaginations more freely while experiencing their picture books. This dissertation was born of this curiosity and explores systems and devices that illustrators can use to craft picture books more playfully.

This qualitative study lies within the realm of narratology, psychology and phenomenology. It explores the aforementioned lenses of the disciplines listed above with the purpose of understanding how creativity is spurred on through playing and using one's imagination. Information was gathered through research and focus group studies. The findings of this study may contribute to the illustrator's task of composing picture books that encourage playfulness and imaginative thinking. This document unpacks the study of play and imagination theoretically in Chapters Two and Three through the lenses of narratology, psychology and phenomenology. Chapter Four applies the theory of the above frameworks by assessing the content of contemporary picture books. Chapter Five unpacks my practice-based study of my picture books that form a boxset titled *Cautionary tales for Grown Ups from Children/ Cautionary tales for children from Grown Ups*. These stories are inspired by my personal childhood experiences and the stories collected from focus groups held with participants of a millennial demographic. Chapter Six concludes with a list of my main findings.

Boundaries and limitations of the study

As I do not have a background in psychology or phenomenology, these disciplines do not form the focus of this study. Instead, my study draws from the theoretical frameworks of these disciplines. Additionally, this is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to becoming more creative. Rather, these are some of my

observations as a practising illustrator, illustration lecturer and former child,[1] which may help fellow creative in their journey.

Play and imagination

There is a distinct overlap of play and imagination where playing occurs when the imagination is actively put to use and imagining takes place when one is being playful. These activities feed into each other and loop back again. One uses the imagination daily without realising it, and this occurs in any small task that requires us to imagine ahead or think an idea into being.[2] Children use their imaginations to transform anything into an object to play with. As Cass (1971: 95) explains, even mundane objects like building bricks can be used by a child at play. Children use their imaginations as substitutes during play as they "turn on imaginary taps, drink imaginary cups of tea, use bricks, beads or turn any handy object into food and so have exciting tea-parties with nothing real to eat or drink" (Cass 1971: 47). Play allows the child to sort "out the world of reality and phantasy and [discover] the point at which they spill over into each other and separate" (Cass 1971: 43). Therefore, it can be said that play leads the child into the imaginative world.

Notes on terminology

For the purposes of this document, the following terms will be explained to provide further context in relation to the process of reading and interpreting images:

Pronouns

In this document, I will use the terms 'their' and 'them' as opposed to his/her, he/she or him/her to more inclusively refer to any individuals. In the case of specific

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[1] I have written "former child" to playfully refer to the adult who remembers themselves as a child.
[2] As adults, we use our imaginations when we put together an outfit or plan a different route to work or employ empathy to imagine ourselves in others' circumstances.

individuals, I will apply their preferred pronouns. This is not meant to make commentary on gender politics, but rather an attempt to neutrally navigate through the study.

Gustafsson Sendén, Bäck and Lindqvist (2015: 2) mention that the discussion of the gender-neutral pronoun “hen” was initiated in the 1960s when linguists suggested a more “gender-neutral pronoun would be a more rational choice in comparison to a generic he or using double forms (i.e., he and/or she).” Later, in the 1970s, the generic use of the masculine pronoun ‘him/he’ or its use in terms like ‘mankind’ to refer to people, in general, was challenged (Gustafsson Sendén, Bäck & Lindqvist, 2015: 1, 2). Norris and Welch (2020: 2) describe the use of he/ she pronouns to be “rigid” and explain that this had come “out of a patriarchal, heteronormative tradition that conceives of gender as biologically determined” being that society perceives non-binary individuals “as deviant, delusional or just plain difficult.” In 2012, a children’s picture book was published with non-gendered pronouns for the reason that these “non-gendered pronouns allow [the reader] to visualize and develop their stories much more freely” (Gustafsson Sendén, Bäck & Lindqvist, 2015: 2).

The term “they” is referred to by Norris and Welch (2020: 3) as “gender-indeterminate”. By using the pronouns ‘they/them’ in this document when referring to the anonymous, general public, I “refrain from adding gender marking to the act of reference” (Norris and Welch 2020: 3). I also write like this as a way to remove “gender from one’s place in language,” allowing for “the third person [to be] radically anonymous” (Norris and Welch 2020: 3). Furthermore, the publication manual by American Psychological Association (APA) suggests the use of a neutral word when referring to “they or them and states that “he/she or (s)he are awkward and distracting” (APA 2012: 74).

University spaces have called for this shift in language with the intention of building “more inclusive environments for transgender students and those not conforming to gender” (Norris & Welch 2020: 1). Academic spaces of learning “have moved beyond

implementing non-discrimination policies to actively promoting the use of gender-inclusive pronouns in their student handbooks, classroom rosters and student housing assignments." Norris and Welch (2020: 2) talk about how educators ask their students to declare their pronouns so that they might be addressed correctly and this has become a common practice in these spaces. The use of 'they' and 'them' when referring to the anonymous audience member is one way in which I am attempting to make this document more inclusive as I interact with students with gender-neutral pronouns every day. I cannot imagine them reading this document and feeling unconsidered or, even worse, excluded.

Illustration

Illustration can be seen as any crafted image that conveys a message.[3] Outside the field of illustration, the obvious definition of "to illustrate" is to "make (something) clear", with the origin of the term coming from the Latin, meaning to "illuminate" or "shed light on" (*Oxford Dictionary* 2010 Sv. "illustrate"). In the Western art history timeline, decorative illustrations are seen in illuminated manuscripts accompanying texts of the late Middle Ages. These illustrations served the purpose of embellishing the text. Literary theorist, Brian McHale (1987: 188), writes that illustration's role was downgraded by the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century from "its place in the serious novel, displaced downward and outward in the literary system until its last strongholds were popular magazine fiction and children's literature". The purpose of illustration in the late nineteenth century was to accompany a design at the start of the advertising era, promoting commodities, "from chocolate to bicycles to celebrities" (Doyle, Grove & Sherman 2019: 1424). Examples of this are Henri Toulouse-Lautrec's illustrated posters advertising events at the Moulin Rouge, Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations for Oscar Wilde's play *Salome* promoting his theatre productions, and Alphonse Mucha's illustrations that embellished packaging, adding to the experience

[3] I am aware that all crafted images have sign value and thus, have meaning. Furthermore, in this context, I am not referring to images in phatic expression that serve the purpose of a social connection and communication as opposed to the kind of communication that requires a response.

of purchasing an item. And so, illustration has shown its ability to adapt its purpose to its context and has had various relationships with text.

As British artist and illustrator Mark Wigan outlines in his book *Thinking visually for illustrators*, the field of illustration is constantly evolving (Wigan 2006: 7). He cites illustrator Fritz Eichenberg who defined the illustrator in 1978 as an "artist whose education knows no beginning and no end" as they are always learning and adding to their skillset. Wigan (2006: 7) expands on this definition within a twenty-first-century context saying that "illustrators are transcending traditional boundaries, creating highly personal static and moving images in a myriad of art and design contexts". The illustrator practices contemporary art and follows the trends of image-making and image-reading so that they can produce clear images that communicate clear messages of their time. They are responsible for creating images "from the absurd to the whimsical, decorative to informative" as they infuse their own creative personality into the subject matter to convey messages that move the viewer (Wigan 2006: 7). It is valuable for the illustrator of picture books to have these multifaceted skills today as they are the overall curators and navigators of the story. My study looks at the manner in which the picture book creator curates each page of the book thereby encouraging the viewer/reader to navigate through the pages more playfully and imaginatively.

Contemporary illustration

Some of the best explanations of contemporary illustration come from present-day statements by individuals who are practising illustrators. Martin Salisbury is an active illustrator and educator who developed the first master's programme for children's book illustration in the UK at Anglia Ruskin University (Salisbury 2004: 7). In his introduction to *Illustrating Children's Books*, Salisbury (2004: 6) points out that it is challenging to put into words an accurate description of contemporary illustration for picture books because the academics who write about it are mostly trained in "word-writing rather than picture-writing" whereas practising illustrators are active in the art of

picture-making and not word-making. Sara Barnes is a contemporary illustrator and popular creative influencer through her social media account and blog, *The Brown Paper Bag*. She describes illustration as a kind of "visual imagery that is best known for interpreting, depicting, explaining, and/or decorating the words" (Barnes 2020: Online). Contemporary illustrator and author of *Art Inc.* Lisa Condon describes the illustration industry as being more commercial than the field of fine art as it can be both an art form and a source of income (Condon 2014: 133).[4] She believes that illustrators need to have an artistic inclination and should have the ability to problem solve (Condon 2014: 134). Barnes' 2020 article on the Modern Met's website takes this definition further as it mentions that illustration serves many purposes as it "illuminates stories in books and magazines" through its choice of colour and unique features.[5] It can also "adorn package design", "make digital media" seem more organic and relatable, it can "take a social stand" and serves to advertise products or can convey a concept in the media (Barnes 2020: Online). It should be noted that when this document mentions the term illustration, it is referring to the term in this contemporary form.[6] Contemporary illustration thus has a range of roles: it continues to serve its older roles of illuminating stories and accompanying advertisements as visual embellishment, but in addition, it can also serve the purpose of conveying a socio-political message as in contemporary art.

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[4] Not to say that one cannot earn an income from creating fine art images. Rather the field of illustration sees the image making process as a collaborative act, working with the client and their brief, whereas in the field of fine art, an image or artwork is created, still with a purpose, and then it finds a home.
[5] It should be noted that sometimes the illustration precedes the story as Joane Halse writes in her thesis *Framing the Text: An Investigation of Collage in Postmodern Narrative Illustration* (2006: 81) stating that "the written text could function immediately without the presence of the visual text; however, the illustrated narrative was reliant on the word for stature and validation."
[6] Added to that, this document does not disregard any previous form of illustration but rather focuses on the contemporary form.

The picture book[7]

The term "picture book" is one that most people are familiar with, and this section contextualises this term within this particular study and indicates how the picture book may come in different forms.

As stated by Sara Barnes in the above section, illustration can come in many formats, styles and mediums but it serves one purpose which is to tell a story. Like modes of illustration, modes of storytelling have also changed over the years: first passed down orally, then recorded on stone, papyrus and eventually paper. The notion of the illustrated picture book aimed at children is a rather recent concept (Salisbury 2004: 8). Zhihui Fang, professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Florida, uses the writing of Carl Tomlinson and Carol Lynch-Brown (1996) to define picture books as "profusely illustrated books in which the illustrations are, to varying degrees, essential to the enjoyment and understanding of the story" (Fang 1996: 130). Picture books help children to find meaning in the visuals around them as they offer a "unique opportunity for children to develop visual literacy" (Galda & Short 1993: 506). Salisbury (2004: 6) points out that the creators of picture books have the responsibility of helping children make sense of "a world they have not yet begun fully to experience". The way in which a picture book tells stories can shape how a child engages with a future challenge and this can assist them in forming their own responses. John Berger, author of *Ways of* Seeing, states that "seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognises before it can speak" (1972: 7).

In his *More words about pictures: Current research on picture books and visual/ verbal*

[7] Gail Ellis, Tatia Gruenbaum, Sandie Mourão and Anneta Sadowska are educators who are passionate about the field of the picture book and aim to share their knowledge of the field with children in Europe. In their blog, *Picturebooks in European Primary English Language Teaching* also known as PEPELT (2017), they specify the language around the picturebook: "'Picture book', 'picture-book' and 'picturebook' are all ways of writing this word, but using the compound form – picturebook – reflects the very nature of this very special artefact, one that brings pictures and words together to create meaning."

texts for young people, William Moebius (professor of literature at the University of Massachusetts) devotes a chapter to the distinction between the images of the fine art world and the picture book. He notes that the picture book is different in that it can draw the viewer in to interact with its contents, making it far more accessible than any other art form found in art museums (Hamer, Nodelman & Reimer 2017: 30).[8] He refers to many famous paintings from the perspective of the viewer standing in front of the artwork. By contrast, the picture book can be removed to any space and engaged with in any form, for instance, comfortably lying down. "The picture book is touchable, chewable, portable, floatable in bathtubs, renewable, sustainable" says Moebius, and depending on how the reader chooses to engage with it, their experience of the book will change making its format fluid (Hamer, Nodelman & Reimer 2017: 31). It should be noted that the practical work that I have produced to accompany this dissertation, consisting of a series of small picture books, prints and wearable illustrated items, intentionally invites the viewer in to physically engage with, and take the lead in, the interpretation of its content. The intention behind this is to stimulate independent sense-making based on how the viewer chooses to engage with the artworks and items. I have chosen to present my work in a commercial space, like a bookstore, that is open to the general public and situated in a bustling area with foot traffic. This context creates a comfortable space so as to invite the viewer in to come and engage with my body of work as my stories gain meaning when they are shared.

[8] Of course, this is not always the case as some so-called "serious art" can also invite the viewer in to interact with it.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction and overview

Introduction

The processes of my professional practice and personal experiences have shaped my curiosity to embark on this study with a view to engage in academic scholarship regarding my interests in creativity in general, and illustration in particular.[9]

I am an educator, lecturing illustration at an advertising college in Cape Town. My research has informed my teaching and my approach to illustrating, while teaching and interacting with my students have informed my studies. Having taught first-year tertiary level students for ten years[10] has shown me that the primary and secondary schooling system has created young adults who are too afraid to play out of the fear of making a mistake. Therefore, my classes aim to encourage my students to play and explore because, as author and specialist in arts education, Ken Robinson says, “if you engage [students’] curiosity, if you nurture their imaginations” students become “fully involved and excited about learning and their achievement levels go up" (Magee 2016: Online).[11] I am interested in how this dimension of play can be encouraged to spur on creativity and imaginative thinking.

[9] I am a practising illustrator and produce illustrations under the brand name *Me and Norman,* supplying local boutique chains with illustrations and illustrated merchandise. I make use of social media to promote and sell my designs. My creative practice has influenced my academic investigation, and conversely, the reading and theorising that I have done for this study have influenced my creative processes.
[10] As of 2022.
[11] Ken Robinson’s (2011: 65) research into the schooling system’s effect on creativity found that “young children enter preschool alive with creative confidence; by the time they leave high school many have lost that confidence entirely”. The schooling system that Robinson criticises, that comes out of the industrial revolution, places emphasis on “imparting factual knowledge” over creative expression and exploration (Magee 2016: Online).

My tertiary studies in Illustration have always focussed on storytelling in the context of contemporary picture books and employing playful and imaginative approaches to crafting these stories.

Furthermore, my interest in creative play also stems from my personal upbringing and childhood experiences. I was an 'only child' for the first nine years of my life and was constantly searching for ways to entertain myself by inventing games, constructing imaginative worlds and drawing. I often had to problem-solve my way out of boredom and unknowingly developed imaginary friends and alter egos to keep me company. These games and friends allowed me easy access to a space of play and to inhabit a kind of self that is usually suppressed or moderated by the adult world.

Research purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the creative triggers found in children's picture books that encourage imaginative and playful thinking. These methods and techniques may be implemented for the creative individual, to stimulate their own imaginative and playful thinking for the purpose of creating picture books or to stimulate the imaginative and playful thinking of those who engage with the picture book. One can see that there is an interrelated cyclical process to this investigation where the creator influences the reader, who may, in turn, become a creator themselves and influence another reader. Overall, this study intends to point out the value of encouraging play and creative problem-solving, as well as the purpose of the imagination and its effect on the child who later draws on these skills as a creative adult.

Problem statement

This study investigates the methods and techniques, which this document refers to as creative triggers, found in children's picture books that stimulate creativity and playfulness in the child. Therefore, this document conducts a review of contemporary

children's picture books that make mention of imaginary friends, playful activities and games in order to establish the influence these elements have on children.

Research questions

In order to investigate the above, the following key questions need to be answered in this dissertation:

1) Primary research question: How do we measure playfulness and the use of one's imagination through the lens of narratology within the context of postmodern picture books?
2) How do children play and use their imagination from the perspective of narratology with a specific look at postmodern narrative devices?
3) How do children play and use their imagination from the perspective of psychology, looking specifically at Winnicott's theory of the 'transitional object' and 'true play'?
4) How do children play and use their imagination from the perspective of phenomenology with a specific focus on imaginary friends and playfulness being unmeasurable?[12]
5) What playful and imaginative narrative techniques have been applied in contemporary picture books?

Being a practice-based study, my creative process also explores the shared experiences of imaginative play with peers. Focus groups[13] were therefore held to document overlapping narratives from childhood. Largely, this part of the study attempted to capture a response to the question below:

6) How do the activities of imaginative playing in childhood influence the creative process of the adult?

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[12] It should be noted that playfulness and the imagination cannot be easily measured (as a caveat, this is from the perspective of cognitive sciences) and can rather be approached from the person's own experience phenomenologically hence this study approaches this topic through this particular lens.
[13] This research methodology of focus groups will be discussed in the following section of 1.3 below.

The following objectives guided the study:

- To investigate how narratives and images shape a child's understanding of the world and reality with a view to developing creative problem-solving systems.
- To identify creative triggers[14] that have been, and can be, employed by illustrators of contemporary picture books to stimulate imaginative thinking and playfulness.
- To propose a set of creative triggers an illustrator can implement when crafting a picture book that encourages children to use their imagination to problem-solve their way through a story which would furthermore promote their growth into adults who are able to apply creative problem-solving skills and playfulness to everyday problems.
- To contextualise and analyse the picture books I have created as part of this study.

Research approach

Malins and Gray (1995: 3) define practice-based research as research that is "initiated by practice" and practice-led research as research "carried out through practice". According to this definition, I have followed the process of practice-based[15] research, where the creative process was first embarked on and was the catalyst for this theoretical topic. I have produced a body of practical work and a dissertation, each component making up fifty percent of my submission. My art practice is the basis from

[14] There are certain actions that can be implemented to invite playfulness. This document refers to these elements as 'creative triggers'.

[15] It should be noted that there is much debate around these two terms of "practice-based research" and "practice-led research". In his book *Artist Scholar* (2012: 51), G. James Daichendt points out that there are many terms used to describe research that comes from an artistic practice, some of which include "arts-based research", "arts-informed research" and even "practice-led research". Daichendt (2012: 51) states that a practice-led approach to research is often used to describe studio art practices in higher education. Christopher Frayling (1993: 5), in his article "Research in art and design", classifies practice-led research into three categories where the process involves "research into art and design, research through art and design, and research for art and design." Daichendt (2012: 6) goes on to mention that programmes with studio-based and practice-based approaches "promote art products as research" where a theoretical document accompanies the art practice "to justify, explain, or document aspects of research or thought" (Daichendt 2012: 6). Considering the different terminology, this dissertation uses practice-based.

which my thoughts have developed, and these insights have shaped my dissertation. During my creative process, I reflected on both the theoretical and practical components and adjusted them accordingly. The one does not supersede the other. In his book *The reflective practitioner* (1983: 49), Donald Schön refers to this as a reflection-in-action approach, where the researcher is also the researched. My process is an auto-ethnographic one. My art practice is interspersed with analysing appropriate theory, which has influenced my practice. This cycle of making and then interpreting and reflecting through theory has resulted in obtaining increasing clarity through the act of making in dialogue with discursive thinking. My practical experience of making children's storybook illustrations has led to my interest in this investigation, and the discourses surrounding imagination have enabled my art practice to expand. My collection of stories from friends, children and myself, as gathered through focus group studies (also known as focused interviews or in-depth group interviews) has enriched the narrative of the stories and my questions have been resolved through my work.[16]

Theoretical and practical contribution

This study looks at the theoretical findings of methods and creative triggers that encourage a playful and imaginative approach to creating through the lenses of narratology, psychology and phenomenology. It is my hope that this document can be used by illustrators or creatives as a condensed collection of imaginative and playful methods and creative triggers that can be considered in their practice. The purpose behind this being to encourage themselves and their audience (children or adults) to play and use their imagination to navigate their way through the creative process and, ultimately, the finished product as well (in the reading process).

The above theory is then used to conduct a review of contemporary children's picture books that make mention of imaginary friends, playful activities and games in order to

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[16] A focus group can be defined as "a small group of six to ten people led through an open discussion by a skilled moderator. The group needs to be large enough to generate rich discussion but not so large that some participants are left out" (Eliot & Associates 2005:1).

establish the kind of influence these elements have on children. The practical output consists of a series of picture books that encourage the reader to play and make use of their imaginations to navigate their way through their content. These books have been crafted with the above creative triggers and methods in mind, and their stories have been collected from focus groups where the participants shared their childhood memories. As my creative process is a practice-based one, my theoretical research has been informed by the physical act of crafting and composing illustrations. Therefore, this dissertation theorises my practice, so as to help interpret the work I made. This research explores the interconnected relationship between the adult and child, where both are seen as creative participants. While adults are the makers of children's storybooks, both adults and children are the audience and are creative participants. This research aims to understand whether the childhood memories or stories that one shares become like messages from the past to their adult selves.

1.2. Literature review and theoretical framework

This study unpacks the dynamics of creative play[17] and imagination through the lens of narratology by observing the techniques found in contemporary children's picture books that are intended to encourage play and imaginative thinking. Furthermore, this study looks at the act of play and imagination through the lens of psychology and phenomenology. Paediatrician, psychoanalyst and theoretician of play and imagination, Donald Winnicott, is referenced due to his theoretical knowledge on this topic. This study then uses the findings from the practice-based research of case studies to create picture books that encourage the audience to exercise their imaginations and ability to play. The above theoretical research adds further knowledge to my art practice, which is applied to, and through, the crafting of my own picture books.

[17] It should be noted that the terms 'play' and 'imagination' will be used throughout this document as active verbs – for instance, playing and imagining. Winnicott (1971: 46-47) states that "playing is doing" and the act of 'play' should be studied as a verb.

I am also interested in the *act* of illustrating, and this informs the focus on a process-oriented approach to creative thinking and the purpose that active play performs during this process. In the field of contemporary illustration, the concept of creative play is noted as serving an essential role for both the illustrator and the viewer. This particular study explores the illustrator's role in crafting picture books that have the potential to stimulate creative play in the viewer. Ultimately, I am interested in how children are shaped by engaging in imaginative play and how the picture-book artist or illustrator communicates with the child.

Using the framework of narratology, my investigation leads me to a review of postmodern narrative devices and features found in some contemporary picture books. Authors such as Martin Salisbury (2004 & 2012) and Deborah Stevenson (1994) are considered in order to explore these features. Additionally, I apply case study analyses to these picture books in order to note reoccurring features that encourage readers to play and imagine as they navigate their way through the book's content. I look closely at the study of narratology that focuses on the role of narration and images with reference to the research of Perry Nodelman (1988 & 2008) to understand how the above two elements can be applied to shape a child's understanding of the world to help stimulate creativity and develop creative problem-solving systems and skills. I am interested in the roles played by illustrators in stimulating play by encouraging the readers to use their imagination to problem solve their way through the picture book.

Through the lens of psychology, I investigate ideas of play and the imagination according to the theories on the importance of play by Donald Winnicott (1971), as well as those of Joan E. Cass (1971), children's book author and writer. Winnicott (1971: 62) argues for the importance of play by saying that "in playing, and perhaps only in playing, the child or adult is free to be creative". I also look to Susan Millar (1968) and her contemporary Marjorie Taylor (1999) for their research on the role of the imagination in playing. Cass states that "we use our imaginations to problem solve,

thinking ahead so as to envisage what may happen, to foresee possibilities and to imagine the kind of experiences that are needed (1971: 55).

One of the significant frameworks this study is based on is phenomenology. Being that the acts of playing and imagining are unquantifiable activities that each person experiences differently, one can view them as phenomena. I refer to Julia Jansen (2021) who reviews the contribution of Edmund Husserl, founder of phenomenology, to gain an understanding of the phenomenological approach to investigating the imagination. I also refer to Bertha Mook (1998) who looks to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's perspective on the phenomenon of imaginative play.

1.3. Research methodology

The research methodology employed in this study is qualitative in nature. Broadly, three approaches were used: 1) literature review of peer reviewed articles and books, 2) study of postmodern picture books, 3) practice-based research in which I created picture books. The table able below provides an overview of the research questions and their associated research methodology.

To answer research questions 1 – 5, literature review and picture books study were conducted. I reviewed literature that explores the study of narratology within the realm of contemporary picture books and how these display features that encourage readers to play and use their imaginations. This literature review also considered the themes of play and the imagination through the theoretical lens of phenomenology and psychology.

To answer research question 6, alongside the insights gleaned from answering research questions 1 - 5, practice-based research was conducted using Linda Candy's outline from *Practice based research: a guide* (Candy 2006: 1). While the two methods of practice-based and practice-led research are closely linked, it is important to note

that my arts research is purposefully founded on the output of my practice. In practice-based research, the process of knowledge building is iterative and circular. Here that means than the study of postmodern picture books informed the creation of my picture books, but also that the process of creating picture books informed my understanding of postmodern picture books. I have produced several picture books as "creative artefacts", which form part of my contribution to knowledge. As noted, the techniques identified through literature search and picture book study were used to develop my own picture books. In addition, focus groups were conducted to collect inspiration for the narratives of these picture books.

The focus groups were set up to share and capture stories from fellow practising illustrators as well as peers' childhood memories.[18] Focus groups were selected because they allow for input from a relevant audience into my creative process. It was my intention to allow these stories to inform my studies of the broader scope and nature of people's imaginary worlds which provided the inspiration for the stories I crafted for the creative output of my practical component. These stories essentially serve as artistic inspiration but cannot be used as empirical data. All participants provided informed consent for participating in the focus groups.

[18] I reached out to friends, colleagues and acquaintances who grew up across South Africa in the era of the 1980s and 1990s. I chose to focus on a specific age group of participants but keep their economic class, geographical location and racial and cultural backgrounds broad. Being that these participants were individuals that I already had an established relationship with, majority of them have a professional creative background or are in the field of education.

Research question	Research methodology
1. How do we measure playfulness and the use of one's imagination through the lens of narratology within the context of postmodern picture books?	• Reviewed literature on playfulness, imagination, narratology. • Studied postmodern picture books.
2. How do children play and use their imagination from the perspective of narratology with a specific look at postmodern narrative devices?	• Reviewed literature on play and imagination, psychology, phenomenology • Studied postmodern picture books.
3. How do children play and use their imagination from the perspective of psychology, looking specifically at Winnicott's theory of the 'transitional object' and 'true play'?	• Reviewed literature on play and imagination within psychology
4. How do children play and use their imagination from the perspective of phenomenology with a specific focus on imaginary friends and playfulness being unmeasurable?	• Reviewed literature on play and imagination within phenomenology
5. What playful and imaginative narrative techniques have been applied in contemporary picture books?	• Case studies of picture books • Practice-based research: development of picture books
6. How do the activities of imaginative playing in childhood influence the creative process of the adult?	• Practice-based research: development of picture books

1.4. Structure of the dissertation

Chapter Two and Chapter Three constitute the theoretical framework of the study and start with an introduction to narrative studies. These chapters examine how the narrative techniques found in postmodern children's picture books are employed to exercise creativity. From there, I move on to focus on the theory of play and imagination and how it encourages the child's creative development. These studies

point out the importance of creativity, imagination and play for the purpose of creative problem-solving. Chapter Four deals with the application of the above theories and assesses how play and imagination theory manifests in contemporary postmodern picture books and acts as a kind of case study of existing material. Chapter Five shows the applied theory and analyses in the practice-based processes of my work as an illustrator. This is a discussion of how I have applied these notions of play, imagination and creativity to my art practice. Lastly, Chapter Six concludes this study.

CHAPTER 2: PLAY AND IMAGINATION THEORY THROUGH THE LENS OF PSYCHOLOGY AND PHENOMENOLOGY

This chapter examines play and imagination through the lenses of psychology and phenomenology. It starts by defining play and imagination and moves on to investigate these areas according to what psychologists and phenomenologists view as being playful and imaginative. Furthermore, this section draws links between these two lenses with a view to establishing what encourages play and the use of one's imagination. The psychology and phenomenology of play and the imagination will be explored to determine how play and imagination manifest themselves within the picture book reader.

2.1. Definitions of play and imagination

This dissertation aims to define play and investigate the components found in picture books that can encourage the audience to play while unpacking its content. Cass (1971: 13) notes that ancient Greek philosophers knew that play had a function. Contrary to this, Friedrich Schiller, eighteenth-century philosopher and poet, proposed that play is merely an expression of extra energy (Rubin 1982: 5).[19] However, later, this concept was taken further by Karl Groos, nineteenth-century philosopher and psychologist, who made the connection between children and animals and why they play (Rubin 1982: 6). Groos suggested that children play to practice basic skills needed later in life. This is evident when looking at how lion cubs mimic their mothers and learn how to stalk prey, pretending that a feather (for example) is the prey (Cass 1971: 13). This gives the act of play a purpose. Other descriptions suggest that play has restorative qualities (Cass 1971: 13). Sigmund Freud was interested in the connection between "imaginative play and emotions", while Jean Piaget, a child development

[19] It is worth mentioning that Rubin (1982:5) points out that Groos writes in 1898 that Schiller is responsible for the notion that play is an expression of "surplus energy" but Herbert Spencer, British nineteenth century philosopher, made reference to play as a "superfluous activity". These two notions have often been misquoted.

psychologist, suggested that play is a way of assimilating new information (Cass 1971: 13).[20] Taken together, regardless of its purpose and effects, the act of playing has consistently been recognised as important.

Teacher, author and play scholar Gwen Gordan includes a “post-rational definition of play” in her article *What is play?* (2009: 1). She refers to several theorists’ unpacking of play, starting with Dutch anthropologist Johan Huizinga’s definition and paraphrasing it as an activity that is “fully absorbing”, involves an element of ambiguity and an “illusion or exaggeration” (Gordan 2009: 2). Gordan (2009: 11) also refers to Winnicott’s definition of play from his book *Playing and Reality* (1971), which states that play is a fundamental human activity that allows for a connection between the self and the world outside the self, and that it entails a full immersion of the imagination. In play, it is as if the veil between reality and the imaginary realm is lifted. However, certain factors must align to induce a sense of playfulness to be able to achieve true freedom in play (Gordon 2009: 7).

The term *play* is normally used as a verb to describe an activity. However, in *The Psychology of Play,* Susanna Millar (1968: 21) suggests that the term *play* should rather be used as an adverb to better describe how one performs the action of play. By this definition, play implies that one performs the activity *playfully*. It is not the action of play but *playfulness* that allows play to take place, and play requires “an attitude of throwing off constraint”, says Millar (1968: 21). Whether it be “physical, emotional, social or intellectual”, one can only play when one feels free to do so. Another consideration of the activity of play comes from Gordan (2009: 14) who states that “creativity produces artefacts” whereas “play produces possibilities.” Play is the act that allows for creativity whereas creativity exhibits itself in the act of playing. However, play is not necessarily creative, as the act of play does not need to have an endpoint.

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[20] Freud theorised about the baby’s “oral excitement” of exploring new objects by putting things in their mouths (Abram 2007: 207). This can be seen as a kind of play. Freud was concerned with how his patients act out unconscious states. Perhaps one can also relate “unguarded banter” known as a Freudian slip as an unconscious form of play practiced by adults (Kuschner 2009: 23).

Gordan (2009: 2) quotes Johan Huizinga who points out that play is an “activity that exists only for its own sake”. Cass states that ‘true play’ “has no end results” and is merely play for the sake of it (1971: 10). The importance of play for children is well described by Cass in her book *The significance of children’s play* where she proposes some reasons as to why children play. She notes the value of play to children as it plays a role in giving children specific tools to “cope with the problems and difficulties” of the real world (Cass 1971: 10).

In playing, the players experience sheer delight and are energised as they engage with “reality on its own terms” instead of attempting to sway play to their advantage (Gordon 2009: 11). Other characteristics of play entail exploring the quirks and aspects of the activity that may be easily dismissed, overall leading to the flexibility of the player who is able to adapt their process. Gordan (2009: 7) gives a detailed description of play:

> a lightness of heart, a glint of the eye, alertness, enthusiasm, and readiness for surprises. There is a sense of involvement and detachment, self-expression and self-transcendence, individuality and cooperation. Boundaries become fluid, defences dissolve, and physical, emotional, or mental movement becomes spontaneous, expanded, and well-coordinated.

Mark Wigan describes imagination as “the ability to form new ideas, concepts and images” that have not existed yet. He says that imagination is called upon when one needs to “visualise and solve communication problems” (2006: 161). Similarly, Robinson defines imagination as “the power to see beyond the present moment and our immediate environment”, as the imagination allows one to piece a scene together, combining that which exists (from memory and experience) and that which does not (imaginative) (Robinson 2011: 37-154). Cass (1971: 55) states that the imagination is used when problem-solving, as one plans ahead to envision a scenario and associate possible opportunities and practices.

As an active verb, “imagining” or “to imagine” can be unpacked to add to this definition. Winnicott (1971: 31), in a case study of a middle-aged woman, makes a distinction between dreaming, daydreaming and fantasying. The last-mentioned relates to indulging in a fantasy or, in our terms, imagining and “absorbing energy but not contributing” actively. Winnicott points out that this kind of fantasying could result in a more enriched life or could have a negative effect as the imaginer is always in a state dissociated from reality. Furthermore, Winnicott asserts that it is “without hallucinating [that] the child puts out a sample of dream potential” when playing (1971: 60). From this we can conclude that, while engaged in the act of playing, one must activate the imagination to fully immerse oneself in play.

2.2. Play and imagination: a perspective from psychology

2.2.1. What do psychologists say about play and imagination?

Winnicott’s theories on play provide a theoretical understanding of the act of play gained from observation. Winnicott practised as a paediatrician and child psychiatrist and is known for engaging with his clients through play (James 1991: 8). His approach was scientific, as he reported on observations without including his opinions (James 1991: 10). In his earlier writings, he would describe himself as a paediatrician and child psychiatrist. James (1991: 12) notes that Winnicott underwent psychoanalysis training to perform better as a paediatrician (James 1991: 12). Psychoanalysis was developed by Sigmund Freud as a way to treat a range of mental health problems. The basic tenet of psychoanalysis is the belief that people’s unconscious thoughts and feelings influence their behaviour and, by tapping into the unconscious, behaviour can be changed (Abram 2013: 1). Much of Freud’s work focussed on psychosexual development and the impact of childhood events on adulthood (Ward & Zarate 2011: 7). Winnicott drew on psychoanalysis to understand what he saw in his practice. Winnicott’s interest in play led to the development of several play-related theories diverging from and expanding psychoanalysis; many of these are described in his book *Play and Reality* (1971).

The basis of Winnicott's theory involves the following: through analysis, he saw the baby as a human being as opposed to a helpless creature. Furthermore, he noted that the baby is a part of the mother, like an extension of her (James 1991: 9). This led to a further theory of there being no such thing as the "baby" as it is not a separate entity that exists on its own (Abram 2013: 3). Winnicott's focus was on understanding the earliest stage of childhood development in relation to the mental context (Abram 2013: 2). Therefore, as the child is a product of their psychological environment, Winnicott's consultations with mother and child were to study both of them and their interactions with one another to understand the child's behaviour. Freud's theory of the ego being affected by its context led to Winnicott's extension of this theory with his own discoveries (Abram 2013: 3). Melanie Klein practised psychoanalysis at the same time as Winnicott and she is known for her interest in "the use of play", meaning "play" as a noun rather than "play" as verb as Winnicott saw it (James 1991: 10) (Winnicott 1971: 47). Furthermore, he saw play as a "form of communication in psychotherapy" that could be read and interpreted and connected to the child's behaviour (Winnicott 1971: 47). Madeline Davis, activist and historian, states that this is what makes "Winnicott a Winnicottian and not a Klenian", referring to Melanie Klein, because he placed a significant emphasis on the behaviour of the caregiver with its influence on the child (James 1991: 10). Winnicott stressed the importance of the arrangement of the environment that relates to the baby's complicated passage of evolving into an independent person, while studying babies at active play (Abram 2013: 3).

Susanna Millar was educated in psychology and philosophy with a particular interest in play (St Hugh's College 2022: Online). Her first book *Psychology of play* (1968) was published while she was lecturing at the Department of Experimental Psychology. Her approach is much like Winnicott's—she believes that much can be gleaned from watching children at play both naturalistically and experimentally (Millar 1968: 156). While Winnicott and Millar deal predominantly with the act of play, they also note the role of the imagination in this process. Marjorie Taylor, currently a professor of

psychology at the University of Oregon, is known for her research into the role of imaginary friends with her book *Imaginary Companions and the Children Who Create Them* (1999). Marjorie Taylor and Karen Majors' conversations with children regarding their imaginary friends and realms have added to our understanding of the role of the imagination. This section will unpack some of their findings of the imagination's role in the child's life.

Millar (1968: 136) refers to Piaget's observations of children at play and notes that pretend play is at its most intense between eighteen months and eight years of age. At this stage in their development, the child is learning to communicate and is able to refer to objects in their absence. The imagination is built on something that already exists. Millar (1968: 139) describes this as "actually experienced" instances that are taken out of context and combined with imaginary scenarios. She points to Piaget's research that shows that children before the age of three years are incapable of ordering ideas in a sequential format, as their world is centred around themselves (Millar 1968: 140). Millar (1968: 155) notes a study completed by Jerome L. Singer (1961) that showed that children with strong imaginations were able to wait out tedious moments more easily than those with comparably poorer imaginations.

2.2.2. Play: The 'transitional space' and 'true play'

Ward and Zarate (2011: 84) state that Winnicott viewed the "transitional space" as a place "for creative play and imagination". Winnicott (1971: 47) refers to play occurring within a space, that is to say, that one enters an active place to play. A person enters a state of 'true play' within the 'transitional space', where one is lost in play, where 'true playing' happens unintentionally in the unconscious state. Play is also situated within a place and time. This can be a place within or outside of the mind. But to remain in control of the elements outside of oneself, the player acts out what they are imagining. Physically acting out the imagination takes place within a timeframe (Winnicott 1971: 47). 'True play' can only exist outside of ordinary existence, where life with its mundane

tasks is set aside and temporarily forgotten. But even while playing, the player is always aware that the task is merely make-believe, and their playing will not affect the realm outside (Gordon 2009: 2). The player is able to "shift from reality to a new play-specific space/time with its own rules of procedure", and playfulness allows for this shift to occur (Gordan 2009: 6-7). Millar (1968: 136) recalls her two children preparing to set up the task of playing. When questioned on the process, her daughter referred to this setting up process as work to allow for play because "play is only when you pretend", according to her daughter (Millar 1968: 136). Winnicott talks about the importance of arranging the environment so that children are able to play freely and can therefore establish positive connotations with the idea of playing, setting the tone for play as an intentional and comfortable act (Winnicott 1971: 58). Playing involves a creative proficiency, creatively problem-solving one's way through play "taking up space and time" (Winnicott 1971: 59).

One can say that an individual reaches a state of pure play and enters the 'transitional space' when they have a "natural aptitude" or the necessary skills for the task at hand, as Ken Robinson (2011: 239) phrases it. The task comes effortlessly, and one forgets about time as it passes without one realising it (Robinson 2011: 239).

2.2.3. Imagination: The 'transitional object' and the 'True Self'

Winnicott (1971: 2) developed the notion of the 'transitional object', which are items (blankets, soft toys, etc.) with which young children often develop strong and persistent attachments. This attachment is thought to replace the intimate relationship between the child and mother as the child begins to differentiate between "self" and "non-self". This object is also known as the "not-me object" when the child realises that the item is not an extension of themselves but a separate entity.[21] Winnicott's

[21] This links back to my earlier writing regarding Winnicott's belief that there is no such thing as a baby, but rather the baby is merely an extension of the mother. As the baby develops, the child moves from this point to realise that they are their own person, that when the baby's hand moves, it is them making it move but when the baby uses its hand to pick up an object, that object is separate to the infant.

theory is interested not in the object itself but rather in the child's movement from one attachment (initially the mother) to the next (attachment items). The theory also describes how children move from an internal world (imagination and focus on self) to the external world (real life and differentiation from others). Ultimately, 'transitional objects' serve to comfort the child and counter anxiety as they grow (Winnicott 1971: 4).

Winnicott's theory of the 'transitional object' can be likened to the imaginary companion. Karen Majors, childhood educational psychologist, suggests that an imaginary friend is an example of a 'transitional object' (Elmhirst 2013: Online). Majors (2009: 17) notes that children often have special bonds with objects or toys and this relationship can be likened to the one a child might have with an imaginary friend. Taylor, Carson and Gerow (2001:186) describe the imaginary friend as being vividly real to its imaginer and manifesting in their minds or as a physical toy. The imaginary friend can even come in the form of an animal, a person or a character that the imaginer engages with and includes in daily activities. Majors also refers to the rare phenomena of paracosm where children might create an imaginary world where the imaginary companion lives or originates from (Majors 2009: 17). In their article *Imaginary Companions – Pretending they are real but knowing they are not* (2008*),* psychologists Marjorie Taylor and Candice M. Mottweiler interviewed children with imaginary friends and asked where the imaginary friend "lives". One five-year-old boy responded, "He goes into my head" and another replied and said "He goes in my mind" as if the homeplace of the imagination is somewhere in the mind's eye (Mottweiler & Taylor 2008: 52).

The imaginary friend has been seen as "temporary" as they serve a purpose at a certain time for the child (Elmhirst 2013: Online). Winnicott (1971: 62) insists that the 'transitional object', more specifically in this case the imaginary friend, must be "accepted, tolerated and not resolved" by the adult. One can look to one of Winnicott's case studies with a child, Diana, aged five years. On meeting her, Winnicott chose to

acknowledge her toy teddy bear before greeting Diana and her mother. He mentions that this allowed for a strong bond to form between him and the child (Winnicott 1971: 51). This shows Winnicott's (1971: 62) ability to accept, tolerate and push away the urge to resolve the imaginary realm. In listing the intimate features of the relationship between the child and 'transitional objects', Winnicott (1971: 5-6) mentions that the 'transitional object' naturally moves to a state of "limbo" but is not forgotten or mourned. This is the inevitable fate of the imaginary friend as it loses its original significance when the child slowly transitions from their inner reality to include an outer "external world". Added to that, Winnicott (1971: 6) points out that the 'transitional object', or in this case the imaginary friend, is not a hallucination just because it does not exist in the reality of the child's peers or parents. I would like to make the point that the imagined reality is not unreal simply because it is imagined, rather it is as real as any tangible thing but only exists in the mind of the *imaginer*. Therefore, the "transitional object and transitional phenomena belong to the realm of illusion" where it is very real (Winnicott 1971: 16).

Millar (1968: 136) insists that the act of imagining can move from fractured pockets of pretend play to all-consuming periods of whole imaginary worlds. Make-believe processes are spurred on by the intervention of inanimate objects that act as placeholders from the real world in the imaginary realm. These objects are repeatedly played with and become part of a ritualistic process for learning through imitation that is later replaced by real-world action (Millar 1968: 137). Furthermore, Millar's (1968: 140) studies show that children do not tolerate intrusions from outside of the imaginary world while involved in pretend-play but the adult is welcome if they are willing to play along, following the rules of the child. For example, if the child is pretending to take an order as a server at a restaurant from an adult who is willing to play along, the adult will be dismissed from the imaginary world if they order something that is not listed on the imaginary menu. Millar (1968: 140) remarks that this is not because the child is confusing reality and the imagination but rather that any imaginary realm has its own set of rules created by its imaginer. Therefore, when partaking in play in this realm, one

must play according to these rules.[22] There is much of a debate as to whether playing in a make-believe world is “good” or “bad” for children. Millar (1968: 154-155) gives a series of explanations for the function that the imagination serves: in some cases, it can be used to explore the unknown, work through an existing experience or build excitement in the player. Taylor (1999: 62) insists that imaginary companions have multiple functions, some being companionship, a scapegoat or a vehicle through which the child is able to express emotions indirectly. It should be stressed, however, that not all children with imaginary friends have “emotional problems”, as Taylor (1999:63-54) puts it, even though it happens to be that some children with “emotional problems” have imaginary friends to help them cope psychologically.

Much like the theory of ‘true play’ discussed earlier, there is the notion of the ‘True Self’[23] which is used to explain the authentic state that an individual enters where spontaneous playing occurs (Winnicott 1965: 148). It is interesting to note that Winnicott capitalises ‘True Self’, as if it is a stage name on its own. Even if the ‘True Self’ is a temporary fictional construction, this does not mean that the ‘True Self’ is not an important actor. Robinson (2011: 239-240) sees this ‘True Self’ as being in one’s element and unlocking a most “authentic self”. In this act of play, the player is in an “unintegrated state of the personality” where play overrides all (Winnicott 1971: 60). Winnicott (1971: 76) gives the commentary below after he replays a scenario of a session with an adult patient. He reflects on the act of play as it gives the individual the opportunity for:

> Formless experience, and for creative impulses, motor and sensory, which are the stuff of playing. And on the basis of playing is built the whole of man's experiential existence. No longer are we either introvert or extrovert. We experience life in the area of transitional

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[22] Here I think back to being eight years old, bored again at the dinner table at my aunt’s house so my mind wandered to planning an imaginary birthday party at this venue. I used the resources around me to plan the event and when I realised that there were not enough chairs to accommodate all my guests, I immediately dismissed the fantasy.

[23] I am aware of the many postmodernist theorists who have challenged the notion of the self as a unified entity. For example, Foucault and Judith Butler (as in Mansfield (2005) and Barker (2008)). I am more interested in the importance of the ‘True Self’ as one of the personas in the artist’s life and in how this enables him/her to access a creative space.

> phenomena, in the exciting interweave of subjectivity and objective observation, and in an area that is intermediate between the inner reality of the individual and the shared reality of the world that is external to individuals.

2.3. Play and imagination: A perspective from phenomenology

2.3.1. What do phenomenologists say about play and imagination?

The previous section laid the foundation for understanding play and imagination from the theoretical perspective of psychology, predominantly the work of Winnicott and Millar. This section draws on that foundation, as a phenomenological perspective on play and imagination overlaps with a psychological perspective. Because developmental psychologists have described the study of children's play as "enigmatic", as mentioned by Rubin, Fein and Vandenberg (1983: 694), it can be studied from a phenomenological perspective to grasp it from a different angle. The study of play as a phenomenon began in the mid-twentieth century (Bergen 2015: 104).

Winnicott (1971: 55) declares that there is an indescribable phenomenon around the concept of "playing that has not yet found a place in the psychoanalytic literature". Winnicott is described as seeing play as "emerging and unfolding in space in-between the child's inner world and outer reality" (Mook 1998: 233). Professor in psychology and researcher in phenomenological approaches to childhood, Bertha Mook (1998: 233) further notes that Winnicott is the first of his kind to acknowledge play as a creative outlet that has therapeutic purposes and is recorded as noting the vital importance of the therapist's involvement in the child at play. Mook (1998: 231) describes the therapist here as a "participant-observer". Phenomenologist Hans Scheuerl describes play as the movement between reality and the imaginary reality with little effort and with little external caution; where the play has "its own inner openness, tension, and ambiguities; distant from unusual reality" (Mook 1998: 234). This reminds one of the place one enters while at play when encountering Winnicott's 'true play'.

Mook draws from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's study on phenomenology and play. Mook (1998: 232, 233) is of the opinion that phenomenologists have overlooked play being that it is an elusive and inexhaustible phenomenon. She defines play, within the realm of phenomenology as "an embodied mode of being in the world and a body-world phenomenon". She goes on to add that imaginative play allows the child to "create and re-create [their] own meanings within [their] play world" (Mook 1998: 231). Researchers in this field look to interpret play for the child as a "symbolic expression" of their unconscious state (Mook 1998: 233). Play is an "expression of the child" and helps lead us (researchers) into the "child's inner world" (Mook 1998: 232).

Lecturer at the University of Leuven, Julia Jansen draws from Husserl's writing on the imagination (as he referred to it as "phantasy") that looks at understanding the nature of things imagined and deciphers whether they are "real" or "unreal" (Jansen 2021: 231). Jansen points out that the imagination in action does not necessarily involve seeing "mental images" in one's mind. Rather it has to do with a sensory experience of something—that is, considering how it looks, what it sounds like, smells like, tastes like or feels like. These senses bring the imagined thing to life. Jansen notes that the imagination can be seen as a phenomenological object, as it is not quantifiable and cannot be measured in the same way for all people. Jansen (2021: 242) writes that when an imagined object is described as "non-actual", it is implied that the object does not exist in the physical world and therefore cannot be experienced by others according to their senses. This is not to say that this object is not real—it exists in the mind of the imaginer. Further definitions of play within the realm of phenomenology consider the player's existential relationship to their playing (Mook 1998: 234). Phenomenologist Edith E.A. Vermeer considers the player specifically in relation to the play object. She contributes to this definition of play structure as "an ambiguous dialectical structure anchored in poles of fantasy and reality which serve at the same time as a background and the boundaries of the play world" (Mook 1998: 234). This emphasises the inner and outer world while at play (inner referring to the inner

imaginative world of the player and the outer referring to reality). Vermeer was concerned with how the playthings entice the player on a sensory level and so developed the term “sensopathy” to describe the player interacting with the plaything through “sensing, touching and feeling” (Mook 1998: 235). Merleau-Ponty (1968: 134) similarly speaks of the “visible in the tangible and the tangible in the visible” when referring to the player interacting through the phenomenon of touch with the plaything. Mook (1998: 238) comments on this and states that “the touched hand feels itself touching”. Play as an imaginative expression involves the physical body, or as Mook (1998: 238) phrases it, play is “rooted” in the physical body. Furthermore, the plaything is what “brings the play world to life” (Mook 1998: 238). To summarise, phenomenology is a philosophy of experience. For phenomenology, the ultimate source of all meaning and value is the lived experience of human beings.

2.3.2. Play and imagination - how it manifests phenomenologically

2.3.2.a. Who can play and imagine?

Play and imagination are interrelated. One needs to be able to imagine while playing. Moreover, everything about playing and imagining applies both to the child and the adult, as the adult is merely a grown-up child who is consumed by the tasks related to everyday responsibilities or has forgotten how to play. Winnicott (1971: 54) points out that play is evident in adults in how they choose to express themselves verbally, in their “choice of words, inflections of the voice and indeed in the sense of humour”. Brian Sutton-Smith’s studies are concerned with how the definition of play impacts both the adult and the child. In *The Ambiguity of Play*, Sutton-Smith assigns play as an activity of “higher animals” (Sutton-Smith 2001: 24). Adults who don’t play are described by Cass as “stiff and lonely”, as they are unable to let go and lose themselves in spontaneity (Cass 1971: 12).

Activities performed in the adult world are expected to result in a productive or profitable end. Adults exist in a world where they must be “commodity-producing and

commodity-exchanging being[s]" whereas children can be sheltered from this world at times (Cass 1971: 15). Play can only follow when the player feels free of pressures and so is able to take risks, accept the consequences that come with full participation and immersion into the process and a has willingness to accept failure, loss or being foolish (Gordon 2009: 16). When adults play, they must feel as if they are entertaining themselves without serious consequences, as the adult views play as a recreational task (Cass 1971: 14, 15). Cass (1971: 14) refers to this freedom in play as a "vacation from social and economic reality." Perhaps they view it in such a way because play is seen as a task that is separate from the other activities of everyday life. Adults will often reward themselves with play through hobbies. Whereas for the child, play occurs in every task they perform. Cass notes that children know no bounds of play, as they will turn anything available to them into an instrument of play (Cass 1971: 116).

Gordon is convinced that play does not have to vanish in adulthood. One can see that the act of play lessens when maturity is confused with the uptake of seriousness that comes with adulthood instead of the "increase in dimensions of play" (Gordon 2009: 16). It is as if the adult is unable to approach these adult tasks with a playfulness because they have convinced themselves that playing is associated with childishness and, to be a good adult, one must be rigid, dull and serious when there is, in fact, no official rule on how to be an adult. George Land, a general systems scientist, adds to this argument with the results of his research from 1968 when he proposed the theory that children are born naturally creative but seem to lose this creativity as they grow older (Tan 2013: 146). A simple test was given to children and the results were telling: young children proved to be 98% creative in comparison to adults who are 2% creative in their everyday lives (Land 2011: Online). Land, therefore, encourages adults to "turn that 5-year-old on" when problem-solving (Land 2011: Online). As mentioned above, 'true play' does not necessarily need to result in productivity. However, perhaps the creative process itself is productive in that it teaches one to let go and find new solutions to a problem. Gopnik and Griffith (2017: Online) start their article with the following scenario: a child and their grandfather are playing when the grandfather,

admiring the child's ability to play freely, expressed the desire to be a child again. The child proposed a simple solution: "It's easy grandpa, eat less vegetables!" (Gopnik & Griffiths 2017). One can interpret the child's thought process as connecting the eating of vegetables with all adult-related tasks and responsibilities. Therefore, the child reasons that when one abstains from performing these adult-like tasks, one will revert to childhood. What one can take from this reasoning is that, when the adult plays, they need to unplug themselves from the adult world with its responsibilities to enter a playful world without adult-world consequences.

Cass (1971: 118) writes that when hearing someone reflect on times of play as a child, the listener's own imagination can be stimulated as they think back to their own moments at play in childhood. When reflecting on their childhood play, adults' memories might not be exactly as events occurred. Rather what is valuable is the feeling that they are able to conjure while reflecting on these memories (Cass 1971: 111). Adults have more emotional language, allowing them a deeper understanding of their childhood play memories. Vladimir Nabokov recalls his play alone in childhood and talks about climbing behind dusty old furniture and making secret tunnels. Although he does not share with us the significance of this game, he recalls a "feeling of excitement and pleasure" while at play (Cass 1971: 112). Gwen Raverat reflects on her time at play as a child saying that she would exhaust herself by "investigating games to play". She recalls drawing on the wall with lipstick and receiving a beating for this act. What is significant is that she remembers that the trauma of the beating did not outweigh the joy of the act of wall-painting (Cass 1971: 116).

2.3.2.b. How do we play?

The player experiences play phenomenologically when the imagination is activated while at play with the plaything. Mook (1998: 235) gives the example of a table being used by the player while at play. The table is a table in reality and still remains a table but within the realm of the child's imagination, it can be a hospital bed or a house. This

object is transformed within the player's mind for their purpose of play. The play object has a "double-meaning" and is placed in the form of a "dualism between an inner and outer world" (Mook 1998: 235). Later in her article, Mook (1998: 40) talks about how the playing child "reversibly interweaves the visible, sensible world in which [they] are immersed with the invisible, nonsensible world of imagination" and this best describes the inner and outer world and shows how they interact.

Cass (1971: 43) states that "children's jokes often show their mixed feelings" on a topic. Children might express a complicated issue through humour and laughter because they are not yet capable of fully expressing their opinion or feelings. One can liken this to a trait of postmodern humour that regularly employs irony, sarcasm and satire.[24] Even the use of taboo words shows a child's way of playing as they have a limited vocabulary that one must decode to grasp the intended meaning (Cass 1971: 101). Taboo topics in the adult world, like bodily excretions and toilet humour, are met by children with giggles. Their fascination with these topics can be seen as a way in which they are exploring boundaries set up in the adult world. For a child who is learning in practice, they might purposefully "press the buttons" of social etiquette as part of exploring what is right or wrong.

Children are said to learn through play by imitating what they experience. A child will use their imagination to recreate scenes from adult life that they have witnessed (Cass 1971: 74). One sees children act out a version of real life by playing in "home corner play" where they interact with child-size adult objects in adult scenarios. Cass (1971: 78) mentions that this kind of play offers them many opportunities to learn from the adult world through imitation with overheard and "half-remembered scraps of conversation". Cass (1971: 76) observed a scenario with a small boy named Adrien who was playing at a kitchen play area. He put away a kettle and teapot and called out loud "I won't be long" to no one in particular in the room, most likely imitating his

[24] We see this in the humour of memes and social media platforms like TikTok as practiced by Millennials and Generation Z who are able to laugh at themselves.

mother. Vermeer insists that the most primary form of play occurs while at "sensopathic play", when the child's senses are activated while playing with water, sand or clay (Mook 1998: 235). Cass' many observations of children playing with water also show this— "often a long time can be spent filling and emptying, squeezing and pouring as if a child is trying fully to understand the behaviours of this exciting material called water" (Cass 1971: 103). Play can inspire learning as children absorb information without realising it through play.

Play can also teach the player to persevere as they make repeated attempts to get the task right. Playing like a child comprises problem-solving activities and decision-making moments as one physically and practically works through a problem. The player might also discuss the problem or talk through the problem aloud to themselves (Cass 1971: 70). Playing also helps the player to work through things – the act of physically doing something with one's hands helps to work out things in the mind, although not intentionally. Disguising an activity as fun releases the player from the urgency of completing the task and from the notion that it has to get done now. This is important because it allows for 'true play' which is, sometimes unintentionally problem-solving. Cass (1971: 88) proves this as she recalls one of her case studies with a child, Raymond who "put his fears and anxieties into his paintings, and although when he was actually doing his picture, he did not say anything, it must have had a releasing effect. Weeks later he became able to talk…". The way children play is fascinating as they are most interested in the actual act of playing and not so much the end product. While observing children at play with clay and dough, it was noted that most were merely interested in the feel of the substance rather than in constructing something. Cass (1971: 87) noted that "they wanted to squeeze and roll it, and pummel and pound it". Sometimes they get distracted during play and continue playing with a new imaginative game – unlike adults, it does not seem to set them off that they have an uncompleted game. Children are able to extend play time, not being too precious with it and they are able to take up the task and continue playing the next day, starting from scratch or with a new idea (Cass 1971: 97). Children have the unusual ability "of sliding

one incident into another” (Cass 1971: 74). Unlike adults, most small children step away from a game they have completed (up until a point where they have decided it is finished, according to their own standards) and are pleased with what they have done or don’t even reflect on what they’ve done. Whereas adults, functioning in a commodity-producing world, would need to step away from the finished product, compare it to the other finished products around them and then assess their work and respond to it with a critique.

Overall, Schiller sees the player as “perfectly human” and essentially whole when they play, being that the player is at peace with their flaw-like nature, as quoted in Cass (1971: 14). Play can also encourage “understanding, warmth, and sympathy towards others” as through playing, one is able to exercise the imagination by imagining themselves in others’ situations. When children play, they might act out “past experiences and present problems” and this process allows them to climb outside of themselves and see the situation from an objective perspective and learn a lesson from the scenario (Cass 1971: 43). Cass (1971: 69) is convinced that through playing one is able to defuse anxieties as one is able to approach a problem with a different attitude, perhaps looking the problem in the eye and tackling it head-on. In so doing the player becomes more relaxed and able to learn from the problem.

Gordan’s (2009: 11) definition of play as referenced from The American Heritage Dictionary refers to the ability “to move or operate freely in a bounded space”. She expands on this by saying that one must first cross these boundaries to enter a state of play and she refers to this act of crossing over as the “play leap”. This act is not simply about escaping “bondage” but rather involves the freedom to become completely involved in the task and to allow oneself “to transform and be transformed” through the act of playing (Gordon 2009: 11). Gordan (2009: 8) summarises Spolin’s characteristics of playfulness as being “spontaneity, participation, intimacy, delight, flexibility, freedom, risk, and harmonious relationship of the parts with the whole”. And from this spontaneity, manifest the willingness to do away with the restrictions that suppress the

player (Gordon 2009: 8). Furthermore, play doesn't merely affect the actions of the player, as it also causes the body itself to react as if all the parts of the player function as a unit to become perfectly co-ordinated and to sync up to form one "spontaneous action" (Gordon 2009: 7) (Spolin 1963: 6). Therefore, as Gordan puts it, playfulness involves "spontaneous free harmonious movement" (2009: 7). When engaging in play, one can enter a "near withdrawal state" that cannot easily be climbed out of and does not willingly accept external intrusions (Winnicott 1971: 60). Winnicott (1971: 60) asserts that playing requires the entire body to be active as it reacts with excitement to things of "intense interest" for example, by shaking, smiling, drooling or even air punching or exclaiming. This kind of involuntary reaction still occurs in adults when they are at play. Actor, director and theatre innovator Viola Spolin encouraged her students to be present in the moment while acting as she states that it is through spontaneity and personal freedom that one is able to be "released and the total person, physically, intellectually, and intuitively, is awake." By this, the player is able to transcend themselves and feel liberated enough to explore unafraid, even to fail if necessary (Spolin 1963: 6).

2.3.2.c. Why do we play?

Cass (1971: 11) states that play is crucial and valuable to the child, much like "the very breath of life" to them and Gordan (2009: 14) insists that "play is central to real life". Rubin (1982: 5) refers to a familiar explanation of play as being a cathartic expression, a way in which the player releases tension and frustration. Play can be the purpose of the child's existence and their declaration thereof because in playing one is able to imagine a way through life (Cass 1971: 11). Winnicott refers back to a previous article he wrote called *Ego integration in child development* (1962) where he makes the point that it is only under the perfect conditions for play that the player can then "come together and exist as a unit, not as a defence against anxiety but as an expression of I AM, I am alive, I am myself" (1971: 66). Winnicott (1971: 61) states that "playing is essentially satisfying". In his book *Child Development*, Arnold Gesell (1949: 359) states

that children are able to bear themselves most obviously through play as they possess an "inner necessity" to play.

While play can be seen as a way to pass time and as the expression of pleasure, Winnicott (1971: 58) declares that "playing is itself a therapy. It can be a way to gain control over anxiety as he is quoted as saying "whereas it is easy to see that children play for pleasure, it is much more difficult to see that children play to master anxiety... or to master ideas and impulses that lead to anxiety if they are not in control" (Ward & Zarate 2011: 106). Winnicott's case studies with children demonstrate some of this. For instance, while in consultation with a child, Edmund, Winnicott describes Edmund's play as "self-healing" (Winnicott 1971: 54). Edmund is observed intentionally engaging in play, not just fiddling around but actively being deeply involved in play (Winnicott 1971: 48-50). In another case study with a baby who used to experience crying fits, it became evident to Winnicott that she was inconsolable until she was able to engage in play enjoyably (Winnicott 1971: 557-58). Winnicott notes that she played with her toes as if she had discovered them and realised that "spatulas can be put to the mouth, thrown away and lost, [but] toes cannot be pulled off" (Winnicott 1971: 58).

2.3.2.d. What keeps us from playing?

Play can evolve out of a state of frustration while problem-solving, but there is a certain point in the process where the player hits a blank wall and cannot move further, which "destroys playing" (Winnicott 1971: 70). Play cannot occur when there is a major "focus on accomplishing immediate instrumental objectives" or when the task is goal driven or could be affected by life-altering consequences (Gordon 2009: 16).[25] It's not an act of play when the activity becomes "rigid, unconscious, habitual, or compulsive", even if it started as an act of play (Gordon 2009: 15). When the player does not feel like

[25] Much like this study that started by playing with illustration and exploring concepts around play but which has now evolved into a never-ending process which, if left incomplete, will result in dire consequences.

they have the freedom to play,[26] play ends. A state of play can also be interrupted when the player becomes aware that they are being observed[27] or when they become the object within a game of play (Gordon 2009: 15).[28] Winnicott (1971: 64) established through his research that not being able to play is a symptom of deeper problems that must be investigated. Cass suggests that "to deny [the child] the right to play is to deny [them] the right to live and grow" and to eventually evolve into the adult (Cass 1971: 11).

2.3.2.e. How do we exercise our imaginations?

The imagination can manifest in many forms but takes on the expression of creativity through playing. Taylor (1999: 41) states that a child's imagination is the best example of the manifestation of creativity. But it is not possible to say that children who exercise their imagination in this way are more creative than those without imaginary companions and worlds (Taylor 1999: 41). I have made this point before in a previous section, as Land (2011: Online) insists that no one is born more creative than the next person. As the imagination, in itself, is a phenomenon, it is difficult to measure creativity; therefore, the tests that exist to quantify it do not result in absolute truths. These tests are, however, effective in some way in that they measure the participant's quality of ideas, originality of concepts in relation to their peers and fluency in communicating those ideas, being that they are able to come to them quicker and easier than most.

[26] For example, when children are sent to their rooms as punishment.
[27] For example, when the child is being observed for the purpose of a study or when a child is asked to re-enact an activity they performed in play earlier. In this case, it is as if the imaginary realm has been broken into.
[28] For example, when children play pretend games like doctor-doctor and the one child needs to lie still and be the patient. If they are not actively involved in the playing process, they lose interest.

Taylor's (1999: 41) description of children exercising their imaginations shows the ability to invent "pretend beings" with "curious names, odd details and strange characteristics". This description is referring to imaginary companions which Margaret Svendsen (1934: 988) describes as:

> an invisible character, named and referred to in conversation with other persons or played with directly for a period of time, at least several months, having an air of reality for the child but no apparent objective basis.

The closest thing an adult might have as an imaginary friend is the characters of fictional stories, as suggested by Elmhirst (2013) in reference to Taylor's article *Imagination, Cognition and Personality* (2003). The adult writer is fully aware that the characters they have invented are fictitious, much like the child with an imaginary friend. They know that these characters are "born of their own minds" but even so, they may use their imagination to bring them to life in a most autonomous way (Elmhirst 2013). Taylor proposes that the adult writer and child with an imaginary friend have developed, as she says, a certain "'expertise in the domain of fantasy'" (Elmhirst 2013). Elmhirst (2013) describes this process of full creative immersion as becoming experts at imagining this character, so much so that they are no longer aware that they even created it, and so the imaginary friend "seems to arrive automatically, fully formed". Similarly, Jennifer Barnes, psychologist and novelist, discusses parasocial relationships in a Ted talk. She mentions the research of J.L Derick and colleagues which states that "parasocial relationships can buffer against losses of self-esteem and feelings of social rejection". She also mentions the notion of "alief", which is the subconscious belief-like idea that something is real (TEDx 2015: Online).

Psycholinguist Evan Kidd (2009: Online) is concerned with the imaginary character and argues that 65% of children between the ages of three and nine have had imaginary friends, proving the popularity of this phenomenon. As discussed in Kidd's Technology, *Entertainment and Design Talk* (Ted talk), in a study of 44 children, half of

them had imaginary friends and were able to communicate more clearly than children of the same age who did not have imaginary friends (TEDx 2012). Whereas Taylor, Carson and Gerow (2001: 1182-3) present research that shows that four is the age that a child will most likely have an imaginary companion and by age six, that companion would have been "given up".

In conversations that I have been a part of thus far, participants often demand an explanation for why a child would have an imaginary friend. As I have researched this topic, I have discovered that there are various reasons why a child would invent an imaginary friend. Karen Majors' research in this area was conducted in the form of interviews with children and adults who have or have had imaginary friends. Her 2009 document *Children's imaginary companions and the purposes they serve* is a quantitative study that collects statistics on children with imaginary friends. Through research, she has found that many factors that may influence a child's ability or need to climb into their imagination. Majors (2009: 18-19) summarises Taylor, Carson and Gerow's (2001) research on the misconceptions regarding imaginary companions; that they are uncommon, that the children who create them have a special kind of intellect and are very introverted and not interested in socialising. This has led to a misunderstanding of children with imaginary companions, thinking that they have "social or psychological problems", as Majors refers to it (2009: 19).

Kidd mentions in an interview with Matt Smith at La Trobe University (2009: Online) that children with imaginary friends tend to be children without siblings or firstborn children, as in my case. He goes on to say that these children have occasions for what he calls "lone play" as they spend more time alone and might invent imaginary companions to play with instead of playing with siblings. But it is, of course, not always the case that eldest or only-child children exclusively experience this kind of play.[29] Majors notes that even "children with speech and learning difficulties, Down syndrome and autism"

[29] There are various other factors that determine this kind of imaginary play, for instance, the style of parenting or a lack of toys. This document is focused on how the imagination affects play.

(those who have been assumed to have a limited ability to imagine) too have imaginary friends (Elmhirst 2013: Online). Overall, Majors states that there is no real common denominator in children who have imaginary friends, except for a rich imagination (Elmhirst 2013: Online).

Out of the many tests that attempt to measure creativity, Taylor (1999: 41-42) mentions two particular tests that exist. One test, the *Gross Geometric Forms Test* by Gross, Green and Gleser (1977), involved instructing seven-year-old children to craft a picture with 48 geometric shapes and a descriptive narrative. The other test, conducted by Charles Schaefer, involved drawing comparisons between adolescents who were categorised as being creative[30] to those who were less creative, in which the results showed that 90 out of 146 adolescents who had imaginary friends fell within the more creative group. The *Torrance Test of Creative Thinking* conducted by Ellis Paul Torrance (published in 1966) presented multiple activities to test how creativity works in the child's mind, as opposed to calculating creativity in children. Some of these activities involved using random shapes and patterns for the participants to draw into to create new, imagined images or encouraging participants to think of multiple uses of an everyday object (Taylor 1999: 41) (see the screenshot of a sample of the test labelled Fig. 1). The results of the majority of these tests show that children with imaginary friends were more comfortable and able to describe what they had created because they were accustomed to exercising their imaginations through playing. Kidd notes in the TED Talk titled *Imaginary Friends* (2012), that children with imaginary friends tend to have the ability to conjure up in-depth narratives and tell detailed stories. Therefore, it can be said that having an imaginary friend as a child[31] exercises one's imagination which leads to being more creative, but this is not the only form of creative manifestation. Therefore, the lack of an imaginary friend, is not proof of the

[30] This categorisation was made by the teacher evaluations and basic creative thinking tests so again, this is not something that can be measured with an absolute answer.
[31] It should be noted that I am aware of the studies that show that children are known to be more imaginative than adults as they have not yet been exposed to the experiences that come with adulthood that can lead to creative confinement.

lack of imagination. This is being mentioned to prove the point that creativity and imagination cannot be weighed up and compared to the absence of creativity and imagination.

Many existing stories touch on this notion of the relationship between the imaginary character and its human (to be unpacked in Chapter Four). These stories help children (and adults) understand that the process of having and losing imaginary friends unfolds naturally as the child grows up. Researchers agree on one thing, that play is fundamentally linked to "space" and can only occur in a certain environment that is separate from reality (Gordon 2009: 2). This space can be seen as referring to the space of the imagination. In his book *The ambiguity of play* (1997), Sutton-Smith discusses play as a series of rhetorics, one of which relates to the imagination. In chapter 8, he defines the imaginary as that which is "not real", referring to the activities that occur in spaces outside of reality (Sutton-Smith 1997: 127). Certain environmental factors must be set in place to encourage play. The right environment can open a window through which one can climb to enter a state of perfect play. One's environment, being a large part of motivation, is one of the three components of creativity (Naiman 2014: Online). In Winnicott's chapter *The place where we live* (1971: 122), he explains that the space where one lives is the metaphysical space that one spends most of their time in and that is separate from the external world. For instance, the imagination can function in this way or, as Winnicott so playful and vividly describes, the space where one "may be having an inner or mystical experience, while squatting on the ground, contemplating [their] navel". All along, Winnicott makes a clear distinction between the inner and outer world. In Winnicott's view, 'inner' refers to the space where the individual contemplates in the imaginative realm while 'outer' refers to the space in which their actions occur in the external realm.

Cass agrees that a specific corner in the home that is set up to allow for play can encourage imaginative play in conjunction with the player's own imaginative abilities that will amplify the experience (Cass 1971: 78). The kind of workspaces provided at

big advertising agencies like *TWBA* and *Google*, for example, allow for creative freedom and exploration with their rotating work desks and interactive brainstorming corners. These spaces can encourage creative thinking as they counter the ordinary workspace and can therefore trick the mind into thinking it is having fun while problem-solving, distracting it from the actual mundanity of the task at hand (see *16 super-cool design offices to stir the sense*, Creative Bloq 2017: Online). Furthermore, it is said that the skills associated with creativity can be developed, “not from sitting in a lecture, but by learning and applying creative thinking processes” and putting them into practice (Naiman 2014: Online).

2.3.2.f. Why do we imagine?

As mentioned before, in play, the player is able to be empathic towards their peers as they are able to connect emotionally by envisioning themselves in similar circumstances. This kind of play requires the imagination to be engaged. Robinson (2011: 124) links the imagination to the ability to transform the present, arguing that our imaginations release us from our immediate surroundings and their consequences. In fact, our imaginations present the possibility of altering our current circumstances. The imagination allows one to take up another individual’s perspective as they “try to see with their eyes and feel with their hearts” (Robinson 2011: 68). This is so valuable in the instance of interpersonal problem-solving as it exercises the ability to contextualise oneself in a world of others. Daniel Goleman coined the term “emotional intelligence” (also known as EQ). The EQ comprises a series of personal and interpersonal characteristics, such as the ability to comprehend and communicate one’s personal emotions with clarity and empathy and responding to new information with optimism and compassion. It also entails exercising a sense of tolerance and patience combined with listening skills. These basic abilities are known as ‘soft skills’ and are seen as even more valuable than ‘intellectual intelligence’ (Robinson 2011: 192).

In his 2011 TEDx talk *The failure of success*, George Land, general systems scientist, points out that there are two kinds of thinking: divergent and convergent thinking. Divergent thinking employs the imagination and one would use it to think something into being, whereas convergent thinking entails analytical thinking that requires a logical approach as one would systematically dissect a problem in order to solve it. The everyday life of the grown-up demands that they use the analytical side of their brain more, resulting in fewer new discoveries and exploration. Using an automobile metaphor, Land explains that divergent thinking acts like an accelerator while convergent thinking performs like a brake (Land 2011: Online).

2.3.2.g. What keeps us from using our imaginations?

In his chapter, “Nature feeds imagination”, Salisbury (2004: 38) writes about illustrator Alexis Deacon’s creative process that involves drawing from life which breathes life into his imaginative monsters. One’s “brain cannot create in isolation. It has to be fed.” (Salisbury 2004: 38). Furthermore, it can be quite a challenge to decipher where one’s “observation ends and imagination begins” while in the creative process (Salisbury 2004: 39). Land is adamant when he says that anxieties may cause one to underperform, as one works “under fear”, using only a partial portion of the brain but with creative thinking, one can activate more areas in the brain (Land 2011: Online).

Looking back, I cannot say that I have lost the creative ability to play or apply my imagination, but rather that I am finding it harder to remain in a state of play. George Land, in his 2011 TEDxTuscon talk entitled “The failure of Success”, shows that one unlearns playfulness the older one gets. He believes everyone is born with the same amount of creativity and one person is not more or less creative than another (Land 2011: Online). Ken Robinson, researcher in the area of creativity, is of the opinion that “we don’t grow *into* creativity, we grow *out* of it”. He sees the current educational model as not only playing a role in shaping the child’s creative development, but also in educating the child out of creativity (2011: 65). As an adult, I am conscious of the

contribution of role-playing in relation to creative problem-solving and how this kind of imaginative dimension can be encouraged in children's picture books.

2.3.3. Imaginative play leads to creativity

When one plays freely and is able to apply one's imagination in the process, one is allowed the opportunity to explore without the fear of failure. Winnicott (1971: 63) emphasises this notion saying that the act of playing is so essential because it stimulates creativity that allows the player to problem solve, which leads to more opportunities for play. Winnicott defines creativity as “a colouring of the whole attitude to external reality” (Winnicott 1971: 77). A creation is the product of a creative act or creativity. It can be a physical product, like one produced by an artist, or it can be a creative impulse that is present at the earliest of ages like in the case of a baby who postpones crying, and the sounds that come with that, to instead “enjoy a musical sound” (Winnicott 1971: 80-81). Winnicott (1971: 79) makes the distinction between “creations” and “works of art” as he specifies that a creation can be anything or many things but, most importantly to note, that a creation “belongs to being alive” and relates to the creator of the creation in relation to their “external reality”. Winnicott (1971: 79) goes on to state that one's creativity cannot be destroyed (except in the cases where an individual has experienced extreme suffering and that individual merely exists for the sake of staying alive). Most studies on creativity involve analysing creative geniuses so that it can be established what components from childhood caused them to be greatly creative later in life. Winnicott, however, asserts that this kind of study focuses on the creative output and sidesteps the most valuable feature, which is that creativity is the product of a creative impulse and, therefore, the urge to create should be studied (Winnicott 1971: 81). It can be said that in ‘true playing’ and active imagining, the act of the task at hand is the focal point and not the product of playing and imagining.

Creativity occurs when the individual is relaxing in a nondeliberate state, where they are situated in a trust-based environment, feeling safe enough to play without a need for a successful result (Winnicott 1971: 64). Winnicott uses the example of the artist who attempts an exercise of self-discovery and convinces themselves that, after the task has been neatly completed, they now have reached some state of enlightenment about themselves. It is not the consolidation of the task that leads them to this state because “the finished creation never heals the underlying lack of sense of self”, nor is it the ability to make sense of the final product because “organised nonsense is already a defence” (Winnicott 1971: 64, 65). Play can be completely aimless but still completely useful as it is “in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and use the whole personality”, furthermore this creativity leads to self-discovery (Winnicott 1971: 63).

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter looked to unpack the notions of playfulness and the imagination through the perspective of psychology and phenomenology. It starts with a historical contextualisation of play with explanations from Schiller, Groos, Freud, Huizinga and Piaget who all comment on play as a purposeful act. The more recent theories of Gordan and Millar’s research on play reveal that play affects the whole being of the player. The chapter then follows on with an unpacking of the definition of imagination. Wigan’s definition of imagination as the ability to foresee new ideas is considered, while also keeping in mind Robinson and Cass’ comment that imagination helps one to plan ahead with foresight. Looking at play through the lens of psychology involved an unpacking from the perspective of Winnicott and Miller who saw play as a verb and an activity. The theories of Taylor and Majors are added to study the subject through the lens of their contemporary perspectives. Winnicott’s theory involved stepping into the ‘transitional space’ when playing, to unlock a state of ‘true play’, where the player is heavily engaged in the act. With regard to the imagination, Winnicott’s theory of the ‘True Self’ could be observed while at play. The player could also encounter the

‘transitional object’ which could be likened to an imaginary friend, according to Taylor and Majors. The chapter then follows on with an examination of play and imagination from the perspective of phenomenology, being that the act of play and imagining are unquantifiable. This section is followed by a perspective on play and imagination from phenomenologists Mook and Jansen. Mook looked to Winnicott’s ideas on play, noting that he was of the first psychologists to see play as a therapeutic act. While Jansen’s depicted the imagination as a sensory experience. This section then addressed a series of questions: who can play and imagine, how does one play and imagine, why does one feel the need to play and imagine and, lastly, what factors keep one from playing and imagining? The concluding thought centres on how imaginative play leads to a creative output.

CHAPTER 3: PLAY AND IMAGINATION THEORY THROUGH THE LENS OF NARRATOLOGY

In this chapter, I unpack play and imagination through the theoretical lens of narratology. This chapter will explore these areas and draw connections between them to determine which features encourage play and the use of one's imagination. Narratology deals with the strategic placement of the image and story to best convey a narrative. I will investigate the visual elements that make up a narrative, in general, to determine how play and imagination manifest themselves and are used to navigate one's way through a postmodern picture book.

3.1. Narratology through a postmodern lens

3.1.1. Narratology

Humankind has embraced storytelling since the beginning of time, and ancient societies' storytelling traditions played a central role in shaping their cultures through oral history. Literary critic, essayist and semiotician Roland Barthes (1977: 79) writes that "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". He goes on to argue that all human groups have their own narratives and when they share their stories, they can enjoy them together despite their differences as "narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself" (Barthes 1977: 79).

According to Joseph Campbell's notion of the monomyth, one of the conventional features of a narrative is that it follows a specific order. Furthermore, a narrative follows a series of events in a structured format that represents some form of a beginning (*introduction*), middle (*climax*) and ending (*conclusion*). Campbell wrote *The hero with a thousand faces* (1949), which can be summarised to say that all narratives ever created follow a similar format and take up the ultimate archetypical form known as a

monomyth. The monomyth is made up of twelve stages known as *The hero's journey* (see the diagram labelled Fig. 2). These stages show the main character at various points in their journey. To explain these stages, I would summarise Campbell's book as starting with the main character (who Campbell calls the 'hero'), who is introduced to the audience within their usual found environment before setting off on a journey (*departure*). The character must overcome several challenges while on this journey that tests them and at the peak of the story, they battle their greatest challenge (*initiation*). This event is then followed by a sudden realisation by the hero who subsequently returns home victorious with a resolution which Campbell refers to as an "elixir" (*return*) (Campbell 1949: 140).

In the introduction to the book *Narratology*, Susana Onega and José Angel García Landa (1996: 3-4),[32] define a narrative according to two criteria. The one involves a broader definition where "narrative is the semiotic representation of a series of events meaningfully connected in a temporal and causal way". The other definition is a narrowed-down version where narrative is defined as a "linguistic phenomenon", being written or spoken, with the presence of the narrator. Onega and Landa (1996: 5) deliberately build on Campbell's theory by stating that a narrative is also concerned with the representation of a series of events.

Barthes (1977: 89) insists that a narrative is made up of prompts that function to navigate the reader through a text. A narrative might consist of little hints that point towards something that is only revealed at the end of the story (Barthes 1977: 89). One cannot simply follow a narrative, page by page in order to understand it, but rather, as Barthes mentions, the process of grasping a narrative's meaning involves recognizing that a narrative consists of a series of levels that "project the horizontal concatenations of the narrative 'thread' on to an implicitly vertical axis; to read (to listen to) a narrative is not merely to move from one word to the next, it is also to move from one level to

[32] English literature lecturers of the University of Zaragoza in Spain.

the next" (1977: 88). The above descriptions of the format of a narrative by Campbell, Onega and Landa, and Barthes show that a narrative moves forward on a horizontal plane and does so in a sequential manner, where the next aspect of the story is built on the results of the previous section.

Narratologists are also concerned with *how* the structure of a narrative can be analysed. They assess the narrative in relation to other events that constitute it and also analyse those as contributing factors. These events are defined as signs that point towards the meaning of the narrative (Onega & Landa 1996: 5). If a horizontal analysis looks at the structure of the events that follow in a narrative, a vertical analysis goes deeper and looks at levels of analysis. There is therefore a shift from stories being studied for their underlying structure, to stories being studied for their role within a context.

Narratologist Mieke Bal[33] investigates a narrative according to three levels of analysis, these being "fabula, story and text" (Onega & Landa 1996: 6). In her book, *The point of narratology* (1990: 731), Bal discusses ethnography and anthropology in relation to narratology and writes that "narrative is the stuff of anthropological knowledge" as it involves the storytelling of humankind. Ethnographic studies also involve narrative features but from a third-person perspective. This results in distortion as it is not possible to maintain "objective narration" because the genre of ethnography dictates how the story unfolds, and the conventions of ethnography mean that the narrator will "focalise" the subject's experience and speak on behalf of a subject in a way that may not be accurate (Bal 1990: 731-732). Narrative theory, maintains Bal, also involves "the literary aspects of visual art" using language (1990: 744). Rather than focusing on how the image tells a "predetermined story", Bal argues it is best to ask: "what story the visual representation produces" (1990: 744). Narratology has something to offer visual arts. Contemporary art theorists often unpack art through literary theory, including

[33] Mieke Bal originally studied French and Structuralism (Bal 1990: 727).

narratology. One can use the technique of narratology to unpack an image. However, it is also important to recognise that visual images and written or spoken text do have differences, and visual art brings its own set of criteria. One cannot rely on the narrative theory alone. Bal is aware that a story will be received differently by participating parties depending on their stance in the scenario. However, as Bal reiterates "perception depends on so many factors", it is almost impossible to strive for pure objectivity, as cited in Onega and Landa (1996: 116).

At first glance, an image reads in a non-sequential order as all its content is taken in by the eye all at once, unlike a body of text that unfolds one word after another.[34] But rather, an image is a specific moment within a greater narrative that can be interpreted as a symbol of its time. Gillian Rose, philosopher and author of *Visual Methodologies*, writes on how these visual cues are interpreted. She refers to Martin Jay's term "ocularcentric" to describe how the visual world is experienced as "we act more and more with totally constructed visual experiences" (Rose 2001: 8).[35] Therefore, it can be seen that the tools used to analyse literature might not entirely suit the analysis of the image alone. This study will use tools from both narratology and a visual analysis method developed by theorists such as Gillian Rose and John Berger who drew from an art theory perspective to unpack the visuals.

3.1.2. Narrative within image and text

An image exists in two parts, one being a natural kind that visually describes what it is (for example, the image of a flower is meant to "capture" the flower rather than describe it) and the other that has more of a non-natural interpretation where it is reliant on the unpacking of the word itself for meaning (Mitchell 1986: 43-44). Similarly,

[34] Although it can be argued that an image draws the viewer in to the focal point first and then the eye is led around the composition based on certain visual cues intentionally placed by the artist. Perhaps it is better to emphasise that an image requires a first glance look and then a deeper look in order to truly read and analyse its contents.
[35] It should be noted that this perspective privileges vision above all other senses.

Mitchell notes that text is also split into the natural, being words that seem like images (for example words that use onomatopoeia and sound like the thing it represents) and the other, where words are simply random indicators of their meaning (Mitchell 1986: 43-44).[36] I understand the alphabet as a kind of coded text as each letter represents a phoneme from spoken language. When written out, it shows the symbolic values of spoken language. Text can be defined as a language that exists on a two-dimensional surface and depending on how it manifests in design, its meaning can be altered. One must understand how to unpack images and texts so that one can read the text like an image, allowing the image to be decoded like a visual alphabet.

Bal describes a narrative according to three components: text, story and fabula. In her book *Narratology – introduction to the theory of narrative* (2009), she refers to text as the words that convey the narrative, like the material thing that the audience engages with. In Onega and Landa (1996: 6), Bal further defines this as a collection of "linguistic signs". The story refers to the aspects of a narrative and how they are arranged, like the characters within the story or the setting in which the story takes place. Fabula can be described as the raw material, the core of the narrative, like the basic synopsis of the narrative. The story (and its aspects) is arranged with the text (and its words) around its core, the fabula. Fabula specifically refers to a narrative's chronological following whereas syuzhet is the nonlinear features of the narrative that are reintroduced as the story unravels (Pantaleo 2004:1). Bal uses the term "focalization" to refer to the perspective of the audience who sees and interprets the narrative. While written text is an object that is perceivable and narrative is the way in which the object is perceived, an intermediary step is necessary to make the connection between object and narrative content (or 'fabula'; Onega and Landa 1996: 6). For example, both a picture and text are objects that can be perceived, while 'fabula' is the contents of the

[36] For example, the word "breathe" sound like it is full of breath when it is said aloud and can appear to hold more breath depending on how the designer chooses to display the word. I am fascinated by the overlap of meaning in South African languages where we see Afrikaans and Nguni words relating more in sound and visuals to an object than the English term does.

picture and text. However, Bal emphasises that how the object relates to the content depends on who is perceiving or understanding the object, that is, the focaliser.

Similarly, Nodelman (1998: 2) posits that every picture book tells three stories: the verbal, the visual, and the third one that relates to ‘‘ironies” that are pointed out by the differences between the verbal and the visual, or in Bal’s terms, the focalization. This system allows for text and image to cooperate together with the same end goal. But Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott (2000: 225-226) devised a further organization of symmetrical, enhancing, complementary, counterpointing and contradictory interaction between text and image, which causes words and pictures to repeat each other. These two methods are relevant to note when analysing the text and images of picture books for this study.

Professor of Education and Literature, Laurence Sipe (1998: 99) presents Nodelman’s explanation taken from philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s theory on how images and text are taken in differently. Text exists within time and therefore requires a set period in order to follow it from one point to the next, whereas an image is taken in all at once as the viewer observes it. Furthermore, text is found on a surface and requires structure in order to follow each sentence, each word and each letter and, when intentionally arranged, these form ideas. Without this structure, the letters are simply received as symbols and are not interpretable. Added to that, how the symbols are depicted also gives further information about how to read its meaning. For example, a certain font or script tells the viewer how to read the text and the readable letters take on a visual form. Whereas an image exists within a space and this space often gives context to the image, adding to its interpretation. It might be that the space is an art gallery or, in the context of this document, a picture book, and this context tells the reader how to decipher its content. It can therefore be said that the viewer/reader experiences text and image differently based on how these communicative devices exist (Sipe 1998: 99). The viewer or reader is being challenged to jump between these two different cognitive systems when engaging with the picture book, stimulating the

ability to problem solve. Another difference in how individuals experience image and text is that text encourages one to keep reading, to move forward, to make sense of it, whereas an image asks for a pause to contemplate and gain a greater understanding (Sipe 1998: 100-101). Barthes' interpretation of the relationship between image and text is explained in three parts known as *The three messages*. *Anchorage* refers to how text allows the reader to interpret the image, and this is mostly seen in advertisements and images for journalistic purposes (Barthes 1977: 40-41). Whereas *illustration* does the inverse where the images give meaning to the text (Barthes 1977: 38). Lastly, *relay* shows image and text to be of equal function and is found in cartoons and comic strips (Barthes 1977: 41). Barthes' last two methods of *illustration* and *relay* can be used to analyse images and text for the sake of this study, to understand how the imagery gives meaning to the narrative and how the two are of equal importance.

3.1.3. Postmodernity and new literacy

The rules and boundaries of how one reads and interprets text and images shifted along with the societal changes at the start of the twentieth century (Anstey 2002: 445). The wars in the first half of the century brought about political instability that seemed to spark a distrust of all rational systems within the artistic avant-garde in Europe and America.[37] Political powers used illustrations in propaganda posters to communicate their own agendas. Added to that, the collapse and rebuilding of the financial world brought about a change in the power of the image. This is particularly evident at the turn of the century when the advertising industry entered its heyday and started using images for the purpose of selling a product. Artists at the time of the mid-twentieth century, such as Andy Warhol, used the power of the mass-produced image to deliver commentary on society and its obsession with consumerism. Richard Appignanesi and Chris Garrat (1999: 41) argue that the anti-art creations of Dadaist Marcel Duchamp opened doors to postmodernity as he challenged the rationalists of modernism with his

[37] It is important to note here that I am aware that modernism and postmodernism are concepts affecting mostly Western and European art theory and artistic development. This has relevance to a South African creator and audience because of how strongly the art world here has been influenced by Western theory.

absurd creations. One can look to these above-mentioned events as contributing catalysts to the shift from modernity to the postmodern era.[38]

One sees the first mention of the adjective "postmodern" used by the painter, John Watkins Chapman to describe the progressive painting style of the French Impressionists (Welsch & Sandbothe 1997: 76). But the first time that "postmodernism" is referred to as an era is noted in Bernard Iddings Bell's writing *Postmodernism: And other Essays* of 1926. Malpas (2005: 5) notes that the term was used by the media on a daily basis in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s to describe any "new work, event and innovation". It is worth mentioning that this era is now moving towards posthuman ideas[39] with "the death of postmodernism [which] has been announced more than once" (Malpas 2005: 105). I have chosen to focus on the era of postmodernity as this is the era in which I am writing, and that the world has been experiencing for the past seventy years. Being so, there are many writings and documented reflections of the postmodern influence on the realm of the picture book.

Bette Goldstone (2002: 363) refers to postmodernity as showing "attitudes, styles and changes" to the culture of the Western World post World War II. In the glossary of *Thinking visually for illustrators*, author and visual artist Mark Wigan (2006: 162) lists a series of characteristics of postmodernity: "the self-conscious pastiche of historical styles, the mixing of conventions and media, a critical distrust of theories, the questioning of originality, the convergence of disciplines" involving "ambiguity, games, play, decoration, symbolism, humour and irony". Goldstone's (2002: 363) article adds to this list as she summarises postmodernity as exhibiting features that look mockingly

[38] It should be noted that this study does not intend to put forward the idea that all things postmodern are "better".

[39] Posthuman concepts involve a critique of a Eurocentric view of identity. Aligned with postmodernity, posthumanism sees identity as in a fluid state with multiple versions of itself. Posthumanism comments on postmodern identities that can be reasoned according to the definition of the self and the other. In this case, the self is defined as being in a conscious state, is rational and navigates itself in relation to certain universal moral codes whereas otherness can refer to a more complicated and open-ended being, such as any humans and creatures of vast species, and even includes cyborg beings with artificial intelligence and human-hybrids (Braidotti 2013: 15).

at traditional art forms that were once glorified. Further features involve focusing on the creative process, encouraging the audience members to add to the narrative with their own interpretation and showing juxtaposing elements that are unrelated.

One is able to make sense of images within the context of culture alone. Therefore Rose (2001: 6) suggests that the viewers form their perspectives of the world around them through the various forms of media such as "photography, film, video, digital graphics, television, […] TV programs, advertisements, snap shots, public sculptures, movies, surveillance video footage, newspaper pictures, paintings".[40] Furthermore, Goldstone's (2002: 363) above definition of postmodernity notes its effects on literature, fine arts, the media and popular culture. Added to that, Deborah Stevenson (1994: 32), with her research into children's literature and contemporary culture, writes that we grow our understanding of postmodern culture through new media such as television, film, and music videos, not just books. Stevenson refers to the above-mentioned media form as "postliterate" media (1994: 32). Researcher of children's literature Shuxuan Wu (2014: 806) points out how postmodern culture bleeds into children's literature. As picture books are made up of the integration of image and text, it is valuable to note the shift caused by postmodernity, forming what can now be referred to as "new literacy"[41] (Anstey 2002: 445).

3.1.4. Postmodern narrative devices

Since postmodern picture books are written in the postmodern epoch, they mirror postmodern values. Although, not all picture books written in this era can be classified

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[40] Stevenson and Rose refer to this form of media as if they are at the forefront of technology, but considering that Stevenson's article was written in 1994 and Rose's reference is from 2001, I am aware that there are newer forms of media now.

[41] Anstey (2002: 445-446) refers to 'new literacy' as a product of the "new times" that came with our move into the twenty-first century which brought about "multiliteracies", involving many and new modes of text, not just traditional print media. New literacy can be seen as a product of the new era, brought on by globalisation, capitalism and new technological developments. With that came "new goals for literacy education", for example a more active form of reading where the reader must engage with the text as a participator rather than just as an audience member.

as postmodern picture books. One must carefully observe their contents for postmodern narrative devices that reflect these postmodern values. Postmodern narrative devices[42] are an extension in literacy and can be found in contemporary children's picture books, visible between the text and image. These devices act as a set of visual codes from which the reader/viewer can learn, teaching them to independently interpret and read between the image and text. By implementing these devices, the picture book creator can encourage the reader to play and use their imaginations and actively problem solve their way through the book by exercising their creative potential. Anstey (2002: 448) declares that a "postmodern picture book is consciously constructed to challenge and engage the reader in new and different way." These attributes can be employed to encourage the child to engage with the book more creatively and imaginatively, compared to conventional linear narratives and didactic morals found in traditional storybooks that predate the mid-twentieth century. Furthermore, the readers of a postmodern picture book are required to problem-solve their way through the narrative. Physician, psychologist and philosopher Edward de Bono who works with young children, states that "if you give a child a problem, he may come up with a highly original solution, because he doesn't have the established route to it" (Pop 2014: 66). I propose that a creative brain is a brain that is able to solve problems.

Robert Escarpit, Lucien Febvre, and the other scholars of *histoire du livre* believe that "a book is not just a text"; rather, it is a living, breathing entity that comes to life when the pages are turned (Stevenson 1994: 34). By this statement, it is implied that while

[42] Although this document in no way intends to declare postmodernity as the "best" possible way of thinking and postmodern picture books as superior in relation to all other books that came before, I would like to point out that its features (as mentioned above), when applied to picture books, can encourage the audience to be more playful and to make use of their imagination. It is the lens best suited to one viewing the contemporary world right now. The future will bring another lens/ theory that will be better (said like a true postmodernist where everything is justifiable with the appropriate explanation and context).

the reader[43] engages with the book, they build visual interpretations in the mind's eye[44] to envision the story, much like one does when listening to a story told in conversation, on the radio or from a podcast. One can do this with any story; however, with a postmodern picture book, one is encouraged even further, by way of the cues given with the postmodern narrative devices, to build the reader's visual dimension. For example, picture books that are situated outside of this categorisation might show images that simply describe the text and dictate the visual scenario, leaving little left for the reader to interpret on their own. Whereas, in books that implement postmodern narrative devices, these devices aim to "interrupt reader expectation and produce multiple meanings and readings" (Anstey 2002: 447). Wu (2014: 807) asserts that one does not simply 'read' a postmodern picture book, looking between the images and text to build the story but rather one 'experiences' the picture book. By experiencing the book as a whole, the reader becomes a participator and allows the narrative to come alive as each page is turned. A postmodern picture book puts power into the hands of the reader as they decide how to navigate their own way through the book (Wu 2014: 806). Or rather, the author would like the reader to believe that they are in control of this process.

3.1.5. Postmodern narrative devices: Some examples

While there are innumerable narrative devices, they fall within several broad categories that can be seen in the subheadings below (namely image and text, design elements, space, themes, anthropomorphism and the audience). Bette Goldstone (2002: 363) lists some of these characteristics of a postmodern picture book[45] and its narrative

[43] I have referred to the individual who holds the picture book as the *reader*, the *viewer*, the *participator*, the *engager* and the *audience* as these are all relevant in describing their role in relation to the picture book.

[44] The ability to form mental pictures in one's mind when recalling something or taking in information is a natural phenomenon. I do this involuntarily and was surprised to learn about a condition known as aphantasia, where individuals cannot visually picture a scenario in the mind's eye, a discovery made by Francis Galton in his article *Statistics of mental imagery* (1880).

[45] It should be noted that a postmodern picture book might not be written exactly within the postmodern era but rather exhibits postmodern narrative devices or postmodern features. I use the term "postmodern picture book" here with the above in mind.

devices, being that they show features of a non-linear narrative format, themes that are self-referential, a sarcastic or cynical tone in addition to drawing the reader in to build on the narrative themselves. Some of these devices include "playfulness, rule-breaking, indeterminacy, ambiguity, fragmentation [and] incompleteness" (Salisbury & Styles 2012: 189). This section will not cover all possible narrative devices, focusing instead on those that can be implemented in picture books as creative triggers that stimulate playfulness and the imagination.

3.1.5.a. Image and text

Nineteenth-century illustrator and children's picture book author, Randolph Caldecott, is celebrated for his unique application of image and text, applying features that point toward a postmodern picture book (Salisbury 2004: 11). Caldecott's picture books show illustrations that accompany the text for more than just storytelling purposes. These illustrations allow the reader to steer the visual interpretation (Salisbury & Styles 2012: 16). The exciting interplay between text and image in Caldecott's books is a postmodern narrative device. One can see an example of this in his book *Elegy on the death of a mad dog* (1879) (see illustration in Fig. 3 in the addendum) where the text is arranged out around the illustrations, forcing the reader to take in the word and visual all at once. In a postmodern picture book, text is read like an image and is subject to the reader's personal context to interpret it — there is no longer a universal truth of interpretation that is prescribed and that applies to every reader (Anstey 2002: 444-447). Illustrator Maurice Sendak describes Caldecott's approach as a "rhythmic syncopation of words and pictures" (Salisbury 2004: 11). Sendak goes on to comment on the power of the interdependency of image and text by saying that "words are left out—but the picture says it. Pictures are left out—but the word says it" (Salisbury & Styles 2012: 16). These various ways of viewing text and image can be implemented in a postmodern picture book. Here they work together as a visual analogy in the viewer's mind to describe an intangible feeling or an abstract concept that is more emotive than a factual description.

Art historian W.J.T Mitchell (1986: 43)[46] asserts that there has always been a power struggle between word and image, which he considers to be unwarranted as both hold their own presence and are closely interwoven. Lawrence Sipe (1998: 97), points out that the way in which pictures and text interact with each other in contemporary picture books reflects postmodern narrative structures. In an interview with Bucknell and Wiesenthal (2000: 1), Mitchell discusses his fascination with image and text and how they work together "in a collaborative form". He writes about the "imagetext" as a term for this collaboration where image is the icon and text is the symbol. One can see an example of this in everyday media forms like a newspaper and a magazine cover (Bucknell and Wiesenthal 2000: 16-17). The inter-reliant nature of image and text is especially a postmodern narrative feature. Nodelman, on the other hand, sees the relationship between image and text as ironic, where the image might comment on text with sarcasm to its original meaning (1998: 98). Malpas (2005: 7) agrees with Nodelman and suggests that irony, playfulness and parody are all features of a postmodern work. There is also an inter reversible play of image and text where the words alter the images they accompany and vice versa (Nodelman 1988: 220). Moebius (1990: 135) refers to the relationship between image and text as a kind of "semic slippage", where these components seem to make inconsistent messages about the narrative. Moebius (1990: 135) goes on to refer to this slippage as "plate tectonics"—meaning that, as one's fundamental understanding of text and image shifts, so does its meaning. For literary theorist Wolfgang Iser, the picture book is given meaning when the reader actively participates in the "production of textual meaning" (Sipe 1998: 99). Once again, postmodernity (also in picture books) relies on the context of the audiences' personal experiences to add meaning to the narrative, this also being a postmodern narrative feature of contemporary picture books. Taken together, I would describe the

[46] Mitchell is known for his two books *Iconolgy* (1986) and *Picture theory* (1994). In this interview with Bucknell and Wiesenthal (2000: 2), he points out that "language pre-empts the picture" and commentary made about the picture replaces it entirely. Simply put, in *Iconology*, Mitchell asserts that he wanted to point out how people talk about pictures whereas *Picture theory* looks at allowing pictures to communicate for themselves as a kind of "metapicture" (Bucknell & Wiesenthal 2000: 2).

relationship between text and image in picture books as a kind of symbiotic coexistence.

Moebius wrote the article 'Introduction to picturebook codes' in Peter Hunt's (1990) C*hildren's literature: the development of criticism*. Within picture books, visual features are found to exist as a kind of code that one can learn to read. Moebius points out that picture books contain text and images that are read as a unit "as the mutually complementary story of a consciousness" (1990: 132). Once this code is in place, one is able to make use of the imagination to play through the visuals and unravel the meaning behind the story. This code brings further enjoyment to reading the book and challenges the reader to engage with the book on a deeper level. Moebius (1990: 134) points out the importance of "verbal" as well as "pictorial" elements. For instance, for a character to be recognisable, the reader only needs a simple visual cue. There is a certain series of elements that make up what Moebius refers to as a "semiotic code", and that Roland Barthes calls the "reference code", that point out the character at different states (Moebius 1990: 135). The reader makes use of their imaginations to fill in the visual gaps. They might use these gaps as visual cues as that which is not present in the scene might imply its own meaning.

In this way, picture books encourage readers to use their imaginations to fill in the gaps of meaning. Moebius proposes that readers show a "pattern of cognitive development" in which they learn to identify deeper meanings through repetitive visual symbols. This means that the reader learns to decode the message, as they learn to understand the unseen in repetition (Moebius 1990: 137). For example, he suggests that images of doors, windows or passageways imply a deeper meaning, referring to symbolic thresholds that the character might climb through. This indicates a shift in the narrative or a glimpse into another perspective. This becomes a metanarrative. The untold aspects of a story can also be seen as stimulating the reader to creatively participate (Iser 1972: 280). Iser (1972: 282) mentions that the correlating features found in text, like the design elements, require the reader's imagination for the story to make sense.

The structure can dictate certain expectations, referred to as “pre-intentions” by philosopher Edmund Husserl (Iser 1972: 282). Iser (1972: 283) insists that expectations are intentionally left unmet to encourage the reader’s imagination. Nodelman (1998: 221) comments on the relationship between image and text having an ironic meaning as “each speaks about matters on which the other is silent’’. Sometimes, that which is not being said in the image or text, can also be decoded. In a postmodern picture book, one learns to read between the lines in search of the narrative’s meaning. The negative space within a composition, or the “undrawn” as David Macaulay (1991: 342) refers to it, is a space which can be assessed much like the space that is occupied. The variety of ways that postmodern picture books elicit interpretation shows that picture books can be read and reread to deepen our understanding. With each rereading session, the picture book unveils a new meaning showing “many possible pathways through the textworld” as quoted by semiotician Jay Lemke in Sipe (1998: 101).

When unpacking a picture book, one can also consider the text and image as separate entities; furthermore, one can consider the picture book as a separate entity to the reader with their own responses that bring meaning (Iser 1972: 279). Iser’s writing looks at the activity of reading the picture book. He speaks of the active participation of engaging with the book which allows for unlocking of the meaning between image and text which is unpacked in his article *The reading process* (1972). This idea of the reader being an active participant in the unfolding of the narrative is another postmodern narrative device and can be likened back to Bal’s theory on focalization. The reader[47] is not a stagnant spectator to the story but is actively involved in the reading which brings the story to life. Iser refers to the two poles of a literary work, one being *artistic*, that which is created by the author, and the other being *aesthetic*, the interpretive response realised by the reader (Iser 1972: 279). If the participant of the

[47] The “reader” is more than just the person who “reads” the words on the page. In a contemporary picture book with these postmodern narrative devices, the individual who chooses to engage with the book can be seen as the “participant” or the “interpreter” who is involved in unravelling the book’s content but can also be seen as an “audience member” who watches the narrative of the book unravel in front of them.

picture book was given the story literally, there would be “nothing left for [them] to do”. In this case, “when everything is laid out cut and dried before us”, Iser (1972: 280) says that it is inevitable that the readers will become bored as their imaginations would not be given the opportunity to explore. By this theory, the picture book creator cannot simply create a picture book for the purpose of reading but must aim for the readers to access their imaginations in order to respond to the text and, in so doing, the reader has the “task of working things out for himself” (Iser 1972: 280). As such, the readers might have additional knowledge about the text that informs the illustrations and vice versa, thus filling in the gaps and creating meaning (Sipe 1998: 99). Sipe (1998: 99) comments on Iser’s theory saying that the readers are co-creators, as they fill in the gaps of the missing meaning and give the picture books their own meaning. Every new participant of the picture book comes forward with their personal perspective and experiences which means that the meaning of the picture book changes with every new participant. In this way, the text is “inexhaustible”, says Sipe (1998: 99). This is also a postmodern feature, knowing that there are multiple realities in life and that each one is valid. The picture book becomes a malleable thing that grows with each interaction. The creator of the picture book simply lets it into the wild, so to speak, and it evolves without the creator’s involvement. The picture book is open to interpretation with its viewer bringing their own context to create meaning which “allows the invention of a set of stories rather than a single story” argues Margaret Meek, educator and literature specialist in Sipe (1998: 101). This feature allows the reader to challenge the all-knowing authoritarian voice of the narrator. No longer is it their story, told from only their perspective but rather, it becomes the reader’s story that changes with every new reader who engages with the book. Postmodern picture books might also comment on the fact that originality no longer exists in a postmodern world.

3.1.5.b. Design elements

The visual features collectively can be termed design elements. Wood engraver Edmund Evans speaks of how the entire design of the picture book is considered when

applying image and text. A children's book is no longer "an album of pictures or a text with some 'tipped-in' illustrations". The purpose of the design elements is to add to the communication of the message (Moebius 1990: 133). While medium and design are vital in determining the viewer's experience of the story, Moebius believes that the actual *depiction* of these elements is what gives the story its meaning (Moebius 1990: 134). The details and effort put into the design of the cover page, endpapers and the title page are meant to make the book feel like an "experienced wrapped [...] as a gift" (Moebius 1990: 133). The picture book is meant to be an "object of beauty", as Moebius quotes Susan Meyers, author of *The treasury of the great children's book illustrators* (1983), as it is "designed from cover to cover with attention to every detail, including endpapers, frontis, title page, typography and illustrations" (Moebius 1990: 133). Bader (1976: 1) insists that the picture book is "an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historic document; and foremost, an experience for a [reader / beholder]." She essentially describes the picture book as more than just a book as it is an "art form [that] hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning page" (Bader 1976: 1). Bader (1976: 225) terms all these features "expressive intangibles".

Referring to the whole of postmodernism as a "carnivalised literature", literary theorist Brian McHale points out how the design within a picture book is arranged purely for the purpose of entertainment, attempting to keep the reader engaged (Stevenson 1994: 33). Stevenson (1994: 33), on the other hand, refers to the coordination of text, image and design in a postmodern picture book as a "tossed salad", a kind of miscellaneous combination of components that seem like chaos but work well together.

Barthes (1977: 89) poses a series of rhetorical questions: "Is everything in a narrative functional? Does everything, down to the slightest detail, have a meaning?" When considering the postmodern narrative devices in children's picture books in relation to

these questions, I propose that every element placed by the discerning author, illustrator and designer has a function and is not simply a decoration or a space-filler.[48] It should be noted that every detail has been intentionally included to give certain visual cues and serves the overall purpose of challenging the reader. The picture book maker uses the format, style and medium to convey meaning to the narrative.

The design of various elements such as the typeface style and size, illustration style and medium, the colour palette, the layout of the overall composition, the balance between all these features, and the choice of paper that these elements are rendered or printed on must be considered to bring meaning to the narrative in a contemporary picture book. How these features are laid out might be to create a scene that feels cohesive or calm, to match the narrative that is being told. Alternatively, the designer[49] might juxtapose these features in relation to each other and with the right combination, a feeling of unease can be relayed to the viewer (Salisbury 2004: 18). Overall, it should be noted that there is a hierarchy to these elements and how they are co-ordinated to express intention behind the narrative. There is also a hierarchy or system to how one unpacks visuals in Western culture—the Western reader reads from top to bottom, left to right and first perceives elements that are larger, bolder and more in focus as the focal point. Moebius (1990: 140) touches on this reading of visual elements within a double-page spread, saying that the verso page will often "complete a thought" from the previous spread, which then coaxes us to keep reading on to the next page. Furthermore, in postmodern picture books, text is read as an image rather than exclusively as script (Moebius 1990: 133). The way in which text is laid out on a page in its style, size or format will add meaning and draw the reader in. The designer might also play with how that text reads on the page by adapting its spelling, thereby applying poetic licence to the writing. The spelling of a word might visually indicate its

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[48] As I like to point out to my students, "one 'decorates' a Christmas tree, but one 'designs' an illustration".
[49] In some cases, the designer is the illustrator and the writer, having full control over all the elements that convey the narrative. In other cases, these roles might be fulfilled by different individuals, allowing a fresh take at each stage of the production of the picture book. One must not forget the publisher, whose job it is to make this picture book marketable. The publisher has extra insight regarding the target audience and, therefore might bring in an additional step in the production of the book, playing the role of editor.

meaning or be misspelt intentionally. In doing the latter, the designer might be pointing out the fallibility of the author or narrator or might be implying another meaning through a pun. The order in which the picture book is organised can also be altered to challenge the reader and encourage them to actively engage with the book's contents imaginatively. Author Philip Pullman is quoted by Sipe (1998: 101) speaking of the way in which contemporary picture books seem to have the ability to loosen "the tyranny of the one-way flow" when it comes to reading and interpreting them. This speaks to the postmodern narrative device of breaking linearity and structure. This device encourages the reader to engage their imagination to decode the story.

Visual intertextuality also encourages the reader to have more knowledge of worldly things. Moebius describes intertextuality as a "plethora of signs borrowed from other places" (Moebius 1990: 138). Wu (2014: 806) asserts that intertextuality occurs when a picture book references two or more familiar narratives and combines them to create a new story to "juxtapose two disparate stories to meld them into a new narrative". The illustrator or designer can create intertextual references by visually denoting to existing narratives. The reader must consider these visual formal elements within a picture book not just as adding to the beauty of the object but also as iconographic features that relay a hidden message. Moebius refers to these as "graphic codes" (Moebius 1990: 139).

3.1.5.c. Space

The space or physical context in which a picture book is read affects its meaning and narrative. As discussed in the *Notes on Terminology* section of this dissertation, Moebius explains how the interactivity of picture books sets them apart from fine art. While fine art is stagnant and restricts the viewer in space, the picture book can be moved to any space and engaged with in any posture, for instance, comfortably lying down (Hamer, Nodelman & Reimer 2017: 30). The reader's experience of the book changes depending on how they choose to engage with it in the physical space

(Hamer, Nodelman & Reimer 2017: 31). This notion relates to Griswold's themes of the picture book. One of these is *Snugness,* which refers to a physical setting that the child creates when engaging with the book. It can also be an imaginative realm within the book in which the child sees the story take place (in the illustrations, in the narrative or their imaginative mind). Griswold's chapter on *Snugness* describes this space as enclosed, tight, small, simple, well-designed, remote, safe, guarded, self-sufficient, owned and hidden (Griswold 2006: 9-14). A snug world with all of the above features creates the perfect conditions for play and allows the child to access an imaginative realm where anything is possible (like closing one's eyes when one is asked to imagine something or reading a book in the dark with a flashlight). In this snug world, the child is safe and is able to access a dream-like state (Griswold 2006: 20 & 25). This desire to be enclosed and safely tucked away in a snug place can be likened to the snugness of the womb (Griswold 2006: 14).

3.1.5.d. Themes

Postmodernity in picture books addresses contemporary issues (Wu 2014: 806). These issues might become the topic or theme of a story with which the main character is wrestling and that the reader then indirectly learns from. Such themes might touch on feminism, body or gender politics, postcolonialism or otherness. Wu (2014: 806) starts her article *Negotiations of narratives in postmodern picture book* with the statement "our world is made of many peoples, cultures, and stories that happen simultaneously". Although this statement is broad, it reminds us of the various voices and perspectives that exist in our world.[50] Postmodernity breaks down social hierarchy and allows for reasoning that can be informed by people's lived experiences (Malpas 2005: 111).[51] Wu (2014: 806) looks to postmodern books that encourage inclusivity with

[50] The theme of otherness, for example, is one that a postmodern dweller is familiar with – individuals who don't fit society's description of ordinary and are 'othered', be this because of their physical appearance or quirks.
[51] To further justify this point, Malpas (2005: 11) gives the example of how the perception of the self in relation to the society of a medieval peasant versus that of a contemporary stockbroker would differ drastically based on the context that each person finds themselves in.

multiple narratives or show multiculturalism. A contemporary picture book might encourage the reader to look deeper by pointing out the perspective of a character who lives on the fringes of society. Moebius (1990: 134-135) mentions that “othered” characters in picture books can guide the reader around the spread, pointing out the deeper meaning. “Othered” characters and contemporary themes serve to both present alternative views and to be relatable to viewers who have been othered. In addition to representing experiences that people are unfamiliar with.

2.1.5.e. Anthropomorphism

There are countless examples of picture books with animals that possess human-like qualities who find themselves in human-like situations and respond in a human-like way. In her dissertation titled *Anthropomorphic Sociality Theory*, Erica Beall (2005: 6) states that anthropomorphic qualities can be given to anything, such as animals, inanimate objects and even abstract shapes, with the character reminding us of “our pre-existing cognitive templates for humanness”. A picture book will use animal characters for several reasons, one being that the anthropomorphised characters help convey a moral lesson.[52] Picture books that present a narrative through characters as creatures or inanimate objects (as opposed to humans) allow the child to engage with the moral on an objective basis. Often, picture books will use this feature to teach epic morals to children as “animals can be used to represent most of the extreme of human characteristics and behaviour” (Salisbury 2004: 63). Children are more likely to learn morals through playfully engaging with the picture book as opposed to listening when they are "told" the moral by an adult. Cass (1971: 53) insists that it is “through their fantasy and imaginative play” that children are able to “learn about the real world[53] as

[52] It should be noted that delivering a moral would not be the main aim of a postmodern picture book. Rather, if the book has a moral or message to share, it would be relayed in an interpretive and nonliteral manner.

[53] I enjoy how Cass refers to the realm that exists outside of play as the “real world”. In this document, I often refer to the adult world as the “real world”. When teaching, I often refer to the real world as the world that my students will encounter after their studies, being the advertising industry. In both cases, I am indirectly implying that the “real world” is challenging and that one needs to brace themselves before entering it.

well as about their own inner one". William Hazlitt, English writer and philosopher, asserts that "man is a make belief animal – he is never so truly himself as when he is acting a part", as quoted by Cass (1971: 55). When the child engages with the picture book, they are allowing themselves to climb into a world where they play a role in the narrative. In the case of the picture book with a narrative told through creatures or inanimate objects, the child is the all-seeing and all-knowing narrator watching the story play out.

The other reason why a picture book might convey its message through anthropomorphised characters is so that the story may be conveyed without the boundaries of race, gender, class or age, making it more inclusive (Salisbury 2004: 63). Nodelman points out the connection between small domesticated animals that play characters in picture books and how they can represent the small vulnerable child in a big adult world (Salisbury 2004: 63). These picture books probe the child to point out the flaws of this creature and question its silly actions as they turn the pages and watch the story unravel. Griswold (2006: 2) points to the feature of *aliveness*, being one of the themes of a picture book, which implores the child to engage with their imagination, to think that animals can talk and that their toys come alive at night when they sleep. The personification or anthropomorphising of creatures in picture books is found as far back as myths and classic fairy tales. Picture books that imaginatively approach moral teaching compel the reader to use their imagination to problem-solve and understand the moral of the story. One of the many roles of the picture book should be to encourage imagining that which has never been experienced in "real life".

3.1.5.f. The audience

Another notable feature of a postmodern picture book regards the audience of the book. It is said that a good piece of children's literature is something that can be enjoyed both by the adult and the child, according to children's book author, Francelia

Butler, (Nodelman 2008: 206-27). Michèle Anstey (2002: 44)[54] states that traditional story books are meant for the "young, inexperienced reader" but the postmodern picture book is far more inclusive, to be enjoyed by individuals of any age group, diverse literacy abilities and at any stage of life. While children might not be able to understand the complex depths of a story immediately, a postmodern picture book is accessible on multiple levels. The meaning of a narrative unravels with the reader's experience of life, as a postmodern narrative mirrors life.[55] According to Nodelman there is a misconception that "child readers understand only the simple surface, adults the complex depths" (2008: 207). Contemporary picture books also exist for the adult who is reading and crafting the book and, therefore, may only come into full view for the child when they become an adult themselves and later review the book again. In this way, the postmodern picture book is recycled back into use throughout generations. These picture books become diverse in their purpose as they "wink past the child reader to the adult beyond, or wink past the adult to the child" (Stevenson 1994: 33). The adult referred to could be the one who reads the book to the child and who purchases the book for the child, who lives vicariously through the child and thinks back to their own childhood. It could also be the adult who the child eventually becomes, the one who thinks back to the picture book that informed their childhood (Stevenson 1994: 33). Alternatively, it could be the adult illustrator and author who crafts the picture book or the adult whose job it is to edit and publish the picture book to sell it back to the adult who purchases it for the child. In this way, the postmodern picture book serves a greater audience.

There is some conflict regarding how to write for children, however. Sara Fanelli's books have received criticism that they are too complex for children to unpack (Salisbury 2004: 18). I would like to make the point that children do not need to be spoken down to by the picture book creator. It is the aim of the postmodern author and

[54] Researcher and writer in the realm of children's education.
[55] This mirroring might come in the form of a metaphor or parable of some kind, to be discussed later in the case studies in Chapter four.

illustrator to challenge the reader through the application of postmodern narrative devices (Anstey 2002: 447). Salisbury writes that one should take care not to make "pronouncements on what children want" and that there are too many preconceived ideas about what appeals to children (2004: 124). Children's sections in stores are filled with bright colours and bold shapes, reflecting the public's assumption about what children enjoy. Salisbury (2004: 21) further wearily states that "drawing down" to children is patronising.

There are many opinions on the topic of children's literature created for children only and Nodelman includes a few in his chapter to make his point. British children's writer, John Rowe Townsend believes that "there is no such thing as children's literature, there is just literature" as children are not "a different form of life from people; no more than children's books are a separate form of literature from just books" (Nodelman 2008: 139). Nodelman is not a fan of the term "kiddy lit"[56] as it undermines the genre and talks down at children, much like baby talk does (Nodelman 2008: 140). Author of *Mary Poppins*, Pamela Trevers, comments that her stories are just simply "literature in general" and no classification of the genre is needed (Nodelman 2008: 140). Lucy M. Boston is known for writing for both adults and children and believes there is "no difference of approach, style, vocabulary or standard" when writing for either group (Nodelman 2008: 140). C.S. Lewis, author of *Chronicles of Narnia*, is of the opinion that a children's story that is only enjoyed by the child should be considered to be "bad" (Nodelman 2008: 140). He insists that picture book makers should craft picture books for children from our imaginations "which we share with children'' (Nodelman 2008: 191). Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown insist that children's books are concerned with "the experiences of childhood'', be it from the perspective of the child or the maker of the picture book (Nodelman 2008: 190). Writer Michael Steig suggests that all "imaginative literature" encompasses the features of children's literature and one can experience

[56] I have encountered the hashtag #kiddylit on social media to be helpful in that illustrators of children's picture books use it to categorise their images.

childhood through this literature. Here “language [may function] as play, invention, and discovery, and life represented as a series of internal and external conflicts” (Nodelman 2008: 141). I suggest that the postmodern narrative devices implemented in a picture book broaden the target audience, message and moral, making it a versatile device. Nodelman moves between the terms “childlike” and “childlikeness” to describe the kind of adult reader who engages with children’s literature (Nodelman 2008: 141). Any definition that is devised for children’s literature or “childlike thinking”, as Nodelman (2008: 85) terms it, is based on assumptions about children. Nodelman (2008: 84) challenges the reader with this idea: “How can I say anything useful about children’s literature if I read it in ways child readers don’t?” Nodelman (2008: 206) believes that our classification of concepts being “nonchildlike” or beyond a child’s understanding is the reason why these concepts remain under this classification and out of reach for children. Furthermore, it is the parent and their understanding of what is “nonchildlike” that limits the child’s understanding.[57]

The field of children’s literature is dominated by the adult who brings their own perceptions of what children are capable of understanding. The adult creates the picture book, and the publisher, also an adult, approves it and the next adult purchases the book for the child and reads it to them. The entire process is curated and guarded by the adult. It can be said that the children’s picture book creator has a better understanding of the child, but the creator has to submit to the preferences of the adult who dictates the specifications of this system (Nodelman 2008: 208). Griswold (2006: 4) argues that ‘‘the great writers for children know—and their stories speak of and reveal—what it feels like to be a kid” as they are still in touch with their memories of childhood, like a muscle that is being exercised daily. This points to the conflict between the creator and the publisher who seem to want the same thing but

[57] Nodelman points to PABBIS (Parents Against Bad Books in Schools) and how parents are expected to supervise every inch of what their child takes in to protect them. Nodelman (2008: 134) quotes eighteenth century writer of children’s literature, Sarah Trimmer, to point out this absurdity even further: ‘‘children should not be permitted to make their own choice, or to read any books that may accidentally be thrown in their way, or offered for their perusal; but should be taught to consider it as a duty, to consult their parents in this momentous concern.”

exist in two separate realms. Where the creator has done extensive research into understanding the audience and writing and illustrating for them, the publisher knows the market and understands what will sell best. One can pose the question: does the creator and publisher of the picture book dictate what the child wants and needs from children's literature or does the child inform the picture book creator and publisher of their needs and wants?

This implies gatekeeping within the picture book industry, which can come from the publishers, editors and reviewers of children's books, as well as the librarians, teachers, and parents who decide what children read and have access to. In her dissertation, Judith Weedman (1989: 2), refers to this this group as the "influencers" of children's book which can involve those who influence "both which books reach children and the literary standards by which they are evaluated." This industry, like most, is governed by the adults' personal preferences. These preferences even go as far as the format of a book, whether it comes in the format of traditional print or a digital ebook. Joel Waldfogel and Imke Reimers (2015: 48) write that the digital distribution of ebooks has dropped the price of these books, allowing the author to "circumvent the traditional publishing gatekeepers" by making their books directly available to the audience.

In Chapter Two of *The hidden adult*, Nodelman asserts that no matter the route one takes in making children's picture books, it is not possible to know exactly what children want. As educators, researchers and illustrators, one can only make assumptions and offer informed opinions. One can gather information through investigative case studies and by holding focus groups or one-on-one interviews with children. Even so, information about the child's experience may still be missed as they are not as able to communicate their thoughts. This does not mean that they do not have experiences or feelings (Nodelman 2008: 84). One can also think back to one's own childhood days, pretend to be a child and think like a child but even that is redundant as one cannot pretend to unlearn everything that is known. When

composing stories for children, I tend to write for myself as a child thinking about what I would have found enchanting at that age. William Mayne, children's author, says that he writes for a long-ago version of himself and Ivan Southall, children's novelist, proclaims ''I am wholly with the child, I become a child, in the pages of a book my heart beats with the pulse of a child, I become a child…" (Nodelman 2008: 191). However, even that can be contrived. Nodelman (2008: 85) points out that when picture books are made like this, perhaps the creator of the picture book is trying to reach other adults to make them feel nostalgic and remind them of their childhood and this is not necessarily of interest to the child. In this case, for example, creating children's literature seems to serve the creator more than the child (Nodelman 2008: 85). The way in which one writes about childhood as adults tapping into our imaginations and memories of childhood could "be the means by which actual children learn how to be suitably childlike" and so this might become like a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Nodelman 2008: 190). Griswold (2006: 3-4) insists that the authors of children's literature are able to write for children because they are sympathetic towards their audience members and are able to tap into that realm. As adults who are creating picture books for children or writing about picture books for other adults to help them understand children so that they can create picture books for them, one can see the child's world being in direct contrast to the adult's world. One must activate the imagination but, in order to imagine, one must exercise the imagination regularly by playing. Perhaps it is the act of researching, writing and creating for children that brings one closer to the idea of childhood and opens a little door within the adult creative to the childlike state that can be recalled.

3.2. Conclusion

This chapter unpacks narratology by considering a couple of theories such as Campbell's theory of the hero's journey which explains that all narratives originate from an archetypical narrative known as the monomyth and all stories follow a twelve-step formula. There are further theories within narratology that point out the relationship

between image and text. One such idea is Bal's assertion that all narratives deal with the story of humankind and can be analysed according to 'fabula', story and text. Mitchell notes that images can be unpacked according to their natural and non-natural meanings and words follow a similar process. Nodelman mentions that every picture tells three stories being the visual, verbal and the ironies that exist between the two. Sipe comments on Lessing's theory that investigates how the viewer takes in an image or text differently. Barthes applies his theory of *The three messages* to interpret the relationship between image and text. This chapter then defines postmodernity as a movement in art and literature. Lastly, this study uncovered various postmodern narrative devices found in contemporary picture books that can be applied to encourage the reader to play and use their imagination more. These devices include the relationship between image and text within a spread and the design features that make up the spread and include compositional placement, typographic design, colour choices (to name a few). One can also consider the physical state and place of the book, how it has been produced and where it is put on display. These devices also encompass the audience member who can be both the adult and the child to which the story is being read, the relationship between the reader and the narrator as well as the theme of the book, which tackles contemporary issues and includes creatures with anthropomorphic features in addition to imaginary friends. Overall, these devices can act as creative triggers that stimulate playfulness and imaginative thinking in the reader of a picture book.

CHAPTER 4: PLAY AND IMAGINATION AS FOUND IN POSTMODERN PICTURE BOOKS: REVIEW AND CASE STUDIES

This chapter explores examples of picture books that encourage the viewers to play and use their imaginations to navigate their way through the story. The theory about play, imagination and narratology presented in Chapter Two and Chapter Three will assist in the analyses of these postmodern picture books. I have examined postmodern children's picture books that I have had access to[58] where I have identified features that may encourage the readers to play and use their imaginations.

4.1. Case study of existing picture books

Picture books are studied in this below section under eleven headings that have been identified as creative triggers implemented in picture books to encourage the reader to engage with the content playfully and imaginatively. These eleven creative triggers include 1) the relationship between image and text, 2) the role of language, 3) design, 4) medium, 5) the state of an open-ended narrative, 6) the narrator (or the lack thereof) and their role in telling the story, 7) the audience, 8) the themes of the stories, 9) taboo topics, 10) imaginary friends and 11) anthropomorphic creatures.

4.1.a. Image and text

As explained in Chapter Three, text can do more than relay the words of a story. Text and image may be interwoven or have an inter-reliant relationship to convey the narrative. An example of such a connected relationship is seen in Jon Klassen's *I want my hat back* (2011; see Figs. 4-8, 24-26, 42). In this picture book text and image are interconnected ironically to tell the story of a bear who has lost their hat. The format of this book is seemingly ordinary as it shows the text on the recto page and the

[58] Books for this study were selected based on my familiarity with these books, while taking time constraints into consideration.

illustration on the verso page. The mundanity of the scene is further communicated in the bland serif typeface which complements the stance of the main character, a bear, who makes direct eye contact with the audience and stands with a slumped posture in a barren scene, monotonously repeating the same lines as if reading a script (Fig. 4). Each character that the bear interacts with is asked the same question in the same monotone serif type. The carefully considered use of punctuation marks and the rigid serif typeface, along with the stance of the bear in the barren scene, add to the monotony of the conversation. What makes this scene ironic is how mundane it appears in the layout of the text, the speech the text reads as, and the illustration itself, which can be compared to the chaos on the later spreads. The reader might only pick up on this once they have read the entire book and have seen all the pages to come, or they might be suspicious of the calm, and expect a sudden change.

The bear later comes across the rabbit who is wearing the hat, but the bear does not notice it right away (Fig. 5). This encourages a parasocial relationship with the bear where the viewer is aware of the solution while the bear appears dim-witted, like a parody trope of a stupid character. When, as usual, the bear questions the character he encounters, the rabbit attempts to defend himself. The irony in the rabbit's response shows that they are, in fact, guilty. This can be read in how the rabbit responds to the bear with short, blunt answers and how type is designed to communicate this. The red of this type relates to the hat the rabbit is wearing and also alerts the reader as the colour stands out in relation to the natural tone of the scene. The rabbit's facial expression also makes them appear guilty as they make direct eye contact with the viewer. The audience can sense the tension of the scene and the scene evokes conflicting feelings: joy at the irony as well as embarrassment on behalf of the bear. Here, text and image come together symbiotically to create an ironic scene. As shown in Chapter Two, Nodelman sees the relationship between image and text as ironic, where the image might comment on text sarcastically (1998: 98). This relationship between image and text is emphasised in Klassen's book where the text and tone highlight the visual storyline.

A scene might be reliant on the text to bring about meaning when there is no image. The inverse is possible too. An example of this is seen in Klassen's spread (Fig. 6) where the bear and rabbit, the latter wearing the bear's hat, lock eyes in a staredown across the double-page spread. The scene is followed by turning the page to reveal the bear now wearing the hat and sitting on crushed shrubbery, smugly declaring "I love my hat" (Fig. 7). By filling in the gaps, the reader might assume that the bear has sat on the rabbit to steal their hat back. But in a later spread (Fig. 8), the dialogue between the bear and a squirrel suggests that the bear might have eaten the rabbit as he responds in the same guilty manner as the rabbit did earlier, declaring "I would not eat a rabbit". One sees a repeat of the same guilty response given by the rabbit earlier in the story. The reader is also given the option, in the visuals and narrative, to imagine that the dim-witted bear could never harm the rabbit and perhaps he managed to escape. This way the reader's imagination has the task of seeing what cannot be seen, reading between the blank spaces to find meaning in the story. It is up to the reader to conclude the story based on information gained from the presence and absence and tensions between visuals and text. This is also a suitable example of a story that concludes with an open-ended ending, leaving the reader to imagine their own version of a "happily ever after" ending.[59]

W.J.T. Mitchell's theory of "imagetext" allows for an understanding of symbols and icons found in a story scene to give visual cues that subtly suggest, rather than literally describe. This is done to elicit the reader's imagination. *Duck, Death and the Tulip* by Wolf Erlbrugh (2008; Figs. 9, 14-15, 39) offers another example of the connected relationship between image and text, where the image may suggest a message that is in contrast to the text. An example of this can be seen in the visual personification of death as a concept who is shown as a skeleton, often associated with the Grim

[59] An ending trope found in traditional picture books, for example, "and they all lived happily ever after".

Reaper.[60] However, in this particular book, Death, is described in the text as patient, friendly and kind which contrasts with the commonly held view of the Grim Reaper. Death, the character, also wears a robe and observes Duck curiously, answering all her questions with great care. One can also note how death as an event is written in the lower case but Death as a character is written as a proper noun and referred to as male, bringing him to life as a relatable humanoid character. Duck is also referred to as a female and is given characteristics that make her appear cautious and concerned. These features show the marriage between image and text where meaning is conveyed in the image of the illustrations and text is conveyed in the design and narrative.

Furthermore, the visuals in this picture book answer questions asked in the text. One sees this in the dialogue between the two main characters, when Duck interrogates Death on what happens after life, but Death does not answer her directly. Instead, the visuals fill in the gaps for the reader. For example, the last page of the book, which acts as an endpaper design, shows a fox chasing a rabbit around the feet of Death who is simply strolling along going about his day. These illustrations hint towards the inevitability of death as part of the circle of life. This also shows that the character Death is all-knowing and, although he withholds information from Duck, he does in fact know what happens after life. These features of the illustrations and the dialogue expressed in the text add to the message of the narrative and show the relationship between image and text.

The picture book *Imaginary Fred* (2015; Fig. 10) illustrated by Oliver Jeffers and written by Eoin Colfer shows visuals that are not accompanied by an exact description of the text. An example of this is seen in the spread where the two imaginary friends are playing violin and flute in Carnegie Hall (Fig. 10). To make meaning from this spread, the reader only has the subtle visual clues and little written description. They are

[60] The Grim Reaper, a mythological character, is often depicted as a skeleton beggar in a black cloak, carrying a sickle. This visual representation of death dates back to the 1300s at the height of the Black Plague (McKenna 2016: Online).

therefore prompted to use their imagination to fill in the gaps. One might have an idea of what a duet with those two instruments sounds like, but it is up to the reader to imagine whether the music is slow or fast, loud or soft, melodic or atonal, or even full of complicated harmonies or simple. One could easily see two audience members reacting with contrasting responses. The book closes with an indefinite ending as the reader must piece together elements of the image and text to give the narrative meaning. Therefore, the reader must create meaning somewhere between that which is shown by the illustrations and said in the words of the story. Furthermore, image and text here work together not just to invoke imagination, but also to amuse the reader's senses of hearing, as this story is an entire sensory experience that the reader must imagine by means of image and text.

BJ Novak's *The book with no pictures* (2016; Figs. 11-12, 19-22, 41, 46) does not include traditional 'illustrations', but rather uses typographic design, colour, type size and language to set the scene in the readers' imagination. This points towards another kind of interconnected relationship between image and text, where text acts like an image as it can be visually descriptive. For example, the words of the spread (see Fig. 12) appear in a tiny, thin sans serif typeface which sits on a large open, white spread. The text creates a feeling of being small and insecure against the much larger white backdrop of the page. Novak does not tell the reader how to feel but rather hints at discomfort in this spread by means of how he chooses to display the text visually. The negative space around the text here is then activated. Here, blank paper within the context of the typography (which has figure meaning), is given a face (known as sign value). Novak's creative decision here allows for the text to read like an image and for white space to "suddenly [have] a face" (Perrée 2002:14). In this case, it is not as important what the text says, as much as the look and feel of the text that has meaning through how it has been displayed. This points out the relationship between figure (that which is meant) and ground (that which is not meant), according to Gestalt

psychology.[61] This spread, where text is intentionally placed and styled, also creates the anticipation of a big change seen when turning the page (as seen in Fig. 12). This builds anticipation in the reader, keeping them on the edge of their seat.

Another way in which text and image interact can be seen in how they work together to describe an intangible feeling. An example of this is the feeling of fear in the double-page spread in *The dark* illustrated by Jon Klassen and written by Lemony Snicket (2014; Figs. 13, 57-58) where blackness fills the entire spread, except for one tiny illustration with minimal text (Fig. 13). The darkness is metaphorically described to the reader in the black visuals that creep in from the corners and fill each spread. The reader can imagine how the dark must feel to Laszlo, the main character, like an all-encompassing, suffocating fear. The compositional placement and scale of the type and image on the spread are very significant here as they work together to add to this feeling. The reader has no access to this feeling apart from the interplay between image and text.

Another example of text and image working together can be found in Eva Eland's picture book *When sadness comes to call* (2020; Figs. 38, 50) which portrays an indescribable feeling like depression. The illustrations might be relatable to the reader on a deeper level as they visually describe actions that one might perform while living with depression, but the text adds to this message as it puts these intangible feelings into words. In his essay, "Between the folds: The struggle between images and texts with reference to selected artists' books", Professor Emeritus of Visual Art, Keith Dietrich (2017: 63), writes that "images are a means of ordering and cementing what we imagine with a view to communicate this to others". It can be said that the illustrations in Eland's book help share her mental picture of depression, making communication of this complex feeling possible. If, having experienced depression,

[61] The figure-ground hypothesis discusses a viewer's perception of a scene where the object comes forward and is received in the foreground while the background recedes (Hamlyn 1957: 56). In the case of a book, text is read as the foreground and the paper the text is printed on is the background.

one reads *When sadness comes to call*, the pages come alive in how relatable they are. Thus, the reader of this picture book brings their own meaning to the image and text that brings the narrative to life as their state of mind and context feeds into how a story unravels. Even if the reader has never been given the words to describe the feeling of depression,[62] especially a young reader, the story might help them find the words to rationalise this feeling. Hence, image and text cannot exist in isolation to the context they perform in.

4.1.b. Language

A picture book might play with language to encourage the reader to play along. This can be seen in the words' spelling, repetition, rhyming, or the use of a pun or an oxymoron to point out irony for comedic use. The aim of this could be to hint at a hidden message, or it could simply be playful and silly, using language freely like a child would. This can also point out the fallibility of language to show how language alone is insufficient in describing something. *Duck, Death and the Tulip* repeatedly points out the bittersweet irony of the circle of life in both its choice of words and visuals. In this book (Fig. 14), the narrator writes how Duck experienced cold shivers as "goosebumps" when she thought about death. This shows the absurdity of a *duck*, closely related to a goose, getting *goose*bumps; the reader might find this ironic and furthermore, humorous. Later in the book the narrator writes: "But that's life, thought Death" (Fig. 15), juxtaposing two words "life" and "death" harmoniously in a single sentence.

The title of *Imaginary Fred* is a good example of wordplay. "Fred" sounds like "friend" which acts like the condensed title of a story that describes Imaginary Fred, the imaginary friend. Here language is playfully used to encourage wordplay in the reader.

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[62] This kind of sadness should not be confused with clinical depression.

The repetition of the questions asked by the bear in Jon Klassen's *I want my hat back* emphasises the urgency of the main character but also adds to the monotony of the story. Later, this monotony is interrupted with great exaggeration when the format of the book changed, as described above in section 4.1.a.

If I had a dinosaur, written by Gabby Dawnay and illustrated by Alex Barrow (2018; Figs. 16-17, 23, 49), tells the story of the main character who imagines owning a dinosaur as a pet. This picture book uses language that rhymes, allowing the reader to follow easily, anticipating the next rhyming word based on the rhythm. In a particular spread (seen in Fig. 16), the narrator leaves the sentence hanging mid-air, but when the page is turned, the reader sees a large dinosaur dropping and is able to complete the rhyme of the previous page (Fig. 17). The reader is once again prompted to fill in the missing gaps in the text and conclude the rhyming line.

4.1.c. Design

As pointed out through theoretical narratology in Chapter Two, design plays a functional role and is not a decorative space-filler. The design of a picture book is intentionally composed to challenge the reader. Design consists of any elements that shape the visuals of a spread, such as typeface style and size (as mentioned in the section labelled 4.1a.), illustration style and medium, colour palette, layout of the overall composition and the balance between all these features. These elements are arranged according to a hierarchical system where that which is large and bold is read as the focal point and assists in leading the reader's eye around the composition. The illustrator sets up the composition of each double page spread as they consider the placement of the illustrations and the text, often working like a designer when placing these elements. In some cases, the illustrator has the opportunity to influence the format of the picture book (whether it is printed in a landscape, portrait or square format) and may even give input regarding the binding of the book.

Never tickle a tiger (2015; Figs. 18a, 18b, 45), written by Pamela Butchart and illustrated by Marc Boutavant, shows examples of specific binding and folding techniques where the double page spread folds out into an oversized spread (Fig. 18a & b). Izzy, the main character, cannot sit still at the zoo and this leads to the disruption of all the animals in the gatefold page[63] of this spread which is the climax of the picture book that reveals the chaos that unfolds (literally and figuratively) when Izzy tickles a tiger. Dietrich (2017: 68), writes about the viewing process in relation to text and image in artists' books and comments on how such a spread may influence the reading process: "Linear reading is destabilised by the action of unfolding and refolding the gatefold pages" and this slows down the reading process. This allows for the reader to engage with the spread's contents, bringing each element to life as they interact with it. Even the choice of paper that these elements are rendered or printed on can form part of the communication of the narrative. Salisbury (2004: 123) comments that illustrators are encouraged to be involved in the choice of the book's paper, weight and type, as this has an effect on the "feel" of the illustrations and these elements all carry sign value and as such are read as "visual texts".

Novak's *The book with no pictures* relies on design principles to convey the story's meaning. One such design feature can be seen in how Novak has used the size and compositional placement of text to indicate the volume and level of enthusiasm each word should be read with. The text of the first six spreads is laid out like an instructional introduction in an ordinary black and bold serif (Fig. 19). One can see how the last words of that line have been italicised for emphasis. The seventh spread suddenly breaks this format with a large red capitalised serif front that reads "BLORK", as if the word was involuntarily blurted out by the reader (Fig. 20). This is then followed underneath by a thin serif typeface that shows the reader's reaction. It can be seen that Novak uses a simple serif typeface for the reader's ordinary reading voice and switches to a thin sans serif to show the reader talking under their breath to

[63] A gatefold page is the kind of folding of a spread where the spread folds in the middle, as usual, and again on the edges of the spread making two parallel folds creating six panels.

themselves. Here, three different design choices were employed to get the reader to act out the picture book. Another example shows how text is displayed with an arching effect across the spread, to read like a banner (Fig. 21). The design of this spread suggests that the reader should act this out as an announcement being given to the child. Another example is the style of the typeface of the words “robot monkey” which reminds one of the fonts used in the design of a 1980s console game (Fig. 22).[64] This font might encourage the reader to act out the text with a robotic voice. But the reader must really engage their imagination to think what a robot monkey would sound like. A single phrase (as seen in Fig. 11) is situated alone in a spread in a thin sans serif typeface. It seems small and anxious as it anticipates the chaos that fills the next claustrophobic spread (Fig. 12). Therefore, it can be noted that the book’s design choices become like a script for the reader, with cues on what to act out and how to act it out. Furthermore, it forces the reader to engage with the story actively to navigate their way through the reading. The reader and audience have to experience the book with its design features and not just read it word for word.

The design features of a spread can allow for image and text to dictate the reading of a story. An example of this can be seen in the wavy text that follows the form of the illustration in *If I had a dinosaur* (Fig. 23). Here the text is designed, in its placement, to complement the illustrations by echoing the outer contours of the illustration, and in so doing, to relay a playful way of reading. Although the typeface in *If I had a dinosaur* also shows a serif font choice, as in *I want my hat back*, its communication contrasts and it therefore reads playfully because of its placement. Furthermore, this design feature encourages the reader to pick up the book and move it around in order to read the text that follows the curves of the dinosaur. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the postmodern picture book is not a precious thing like an artwork that can only be viewed hanging in a gallery or handled with gloves. Rather it allows and even urges the reader to pick it up to engage with its contents.

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[64] If the reader is not familiar with 1980s game consoles, their imaginations might be activated to read the text aloud according to the sharp block-like shapes of the typeface.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, a postmodern narrative device may intentionally break the traditional linear format of the story that is read from left to right, verso to recto pages. This break with tradition challenges the reader to use their imagination and play their way through a spread. One sees an example of this in *I want my hat back* (Fig. 24) where the story breaks from the monotonous rhythm of an image on the verso page and text on the recto page. This break in design is implemented in such a way to coincide with the break in the narrative when the bear gives up on the search for their hat. Here, the image of the bear lying across the spread is mirrored by the text directly above, creating a harmonious design between text and image. There is a sudden change in the story when the bear realises that they have already come across the rabbit who stole their hat. There are several features in the design that indicate this realisation to the reader: the bear is sitting up straight with a wide-eyed expression facing in the opposite direction, towards the left outer edge of the book; the verso page is now filled with red and the words on the recto page are capitalised (Fig. 25). The linear format of the narrative is further broken when the bear sprints from the recto to the verso page, past all the characters encountered earlier, as if running back into the previous pages of the book towards the rabbit wearing their hat (Fig. 26). This design choice further urges the reader to page back in the book as if to follow the bear. This spread "challenges the linearity of conventional sequential reading" (Dietrich 2017: 70).

4.1.d. Medium

The medium in which a picture book's illustrations were applied can also add to the communication of the story. An example of this can be seen in Sara Fanelli's book *Mythological monsters* (2002; Fig. 27) that shows a combination of mixed media methods with collage and mark-making. Elements for her illustrations have been sourced from found paper materials and hand-rendered type laid across the page of a vintage ledger book to create illustrations of collaged Harpies. Separately these

features may seem haphazard but when curated by Fanelli, they come together to form a cohesive whole showing sophisticated illustrations. This juxtaposition between media challenges the reader to engage with these contrasting visuals and unpack each feature. Here, medium adds to communication where the paper used in the assembling of a collage directly references its origin document. Another example of this can be seen in Jeffers' *The incredible book eating boy* (2009; Fig. 28) which includes illustrations made up of found papers from encyclopaedias, maps and notebooks. This choice in medium is especially suitable for *The incredible book eating boy* as the book tells the story of a boy who gains knowledge through consuming books. Therefore, the writing within the original collaged material is transferred to the narrative of the picture book, thereby making an intertextual reference. One can refer to this as a metanarrative, as the story (seen within the collaged pages) is within the story (told by the book).

In *The day the crayons quit* (2013; Fig. 29), illustrated by Oliver Jeffers, one can see another example of a metanarrative conveyed through media. The narrative is displayed as handwritten type written by the wax crayons of the story. The reader can imagine how these characters, who are crayons, found scraps of paper and wrote the letters with their crayon bodies (Fig. 29). The text which resembles a child's handwriting brings these inanimate objects to life and relays the story to the child reader in a relatable manner.

Klassen's illustrations in *The dark* give the appearance of being printed on black paper, which makes the dark feel primordial. Here, the substrate acts as a medium applied to the illustrations which can signify the deep depths of the dark. The background scenes and objects in each spread which are rendered using a darker colour palette contrast with the main character who is wearing blue (Fig. 13). This contrast creates a juxtaposition between the focal point (the main character) and the background (the black paper). It can therefore be argued that media can assist in building the story, allowing the reader to imagine it further.

The illustration style of a picture book can also add to how readers apply their imaginations to interpret the message. The medium can show a sophisticated rendering of a technique where the illustrations can be likened to real-life scenarios. *The sea of tranquillity* (2008; Fig. 30), written by novelist Mark Haddon and illustrated by Christian Birmingham, shows illustrations that are rendered in chalk pastel that feel like a hazy, distant dream that the author describes (Fig. 30). In this way, the illustrations might help the reader build a clearer picture in their mind's eye. Alternatively, illustrations that show a more childlike drawing technique or medium can allow the child reader to relate easily to the story, whereas such illustrations might encourage the adult reader to think back to when they were a child. An example of this can be seen in Anna Llenas' *The Colour Monster* (2016; Figs. 31-32, 36-37, 43-44, 51) where the illustrations resemble children's scribble drawings. Llenas uses expressive mark-making techniques to convey complex emotions like anger, represented in red (Fig. 31), or fear, represented in black (Fig. 32). *Egg and bird* by Alex Higlett (2007), shows simple digital illustrations with bold black outlines and flat colours that remind one of a child's colouring-in book (Fig. 33). The illustrations in *Little Blue and Little Yellow* by Leo Leonni (1959; Figs. 34, 56) show abstract shapes and colours torn out of paper and arranged to form sophisticated compositions (Fig. 34). This style might remind the informed adult reader of the Henri Matisse collage *The Snail* (1953; Fig. 34) but, to a child, they simply appear as abstract shapes and colours. This illustration technique is versatile and communicates two different messages to two audiences: the child who the story is being shared with and the adult who reads the book to the child.

The endpapers of a picture book are also a design feature. The beginning of the book may start with the visuals of the endpapers suggesting something that the reader can expect to see in the book. For example, in *The Colour Monster*, the endpapers at the front of the book show a variety of different coloured circular cut-outs, while the endpapers at the back of the book show that these circles have been grouped together

according to their colours implying that the narrative is resolved in the end (Figs. 36 & 37).

4.1.e. Open-ended endings

A postmodern picture book that encourages the reader to play and use their imagination will allow the reader to come to their own conclusions. *When sadness comes to call* does not attempt to solve the reader's problems by proposing a way out of depression. Instead, the narrative points to the activities of the main character as a way of coping with complex emotions. It shows the reader that being sad may be normal and that accepting it is healthier than avoiding it. The book ends with a positive line that implies that sad days are possibly self-resolved with time. This also suggests to the reader that there is no prescribed "happy ending" to such a complex emotion (Fig. 38). In *Duck, Death and the Tulip*, neither Death nor the narrator prescribes a definite answer to what comes after life when Duck tries to guess what will happen to her when she dies. When Duck dies, Death places a tulip on her chest and floats her down a river (Fig. 39). The reader does not get a glimpse of the afterlife when Duck dies and is left asking the same questions she posed earlier in the story. In the picture book *Triangle* by Mac Barnett and Jon Klassen (2017; Figs. 40, 47), the narrator leaves the story open-ended by asking the audience a rhetorical question (Fig. 40). However, some picture books want the reader to realise that there is no single solution and no single right or wrong answer or perspective. With each rereading of *The book with no pictures*, the words gain new meaning in relation to how they are displayed and vice versa. The reading of the story changes each time it is read aloud by a different reader. There are multiple outcomes for the story based on the performative efforts of the reader and the atmosphere set by the audience. The book changes in the hands of a new reader, much like sheet music is left up to the interpretation of the musician or conductor. Novak dedicates this book "to the reader and the future reader" on the dedications page as a way of hinting toward all the ways in which the book will change its meaning in readings to come (Fig. 41).

4.1.f. The narrator

In traditional picture books, the narrator leads the reader around the spread and fills them in on every detail necessary to understand the story. In a postmodern picture book, this power is instead handed over to the reader, as stated by Wu (2014: 806) in Chapter Two. Some picture books include a narrator's voice that navigates the reader through each spread. The narrator might be a voice of reason who points out things, talking directly to the reader. This allows the narrator to share their power to drive the narrative with the reader. An example of this is when the narrator of *Duck, Death and the Tulip* points out Duck's[65] inner thoughts in the line "Duck tried not to think about that. It gave her goosebumps" (see Fig. 14). One can liken this to a behind-the-scenes look at her internal monologue. However, the narrator also shares Death's internal thoughts making the reader all-knowing. Instead, the reader learns that Death is all-knowing, as pointed out earlier. In contrast, some picture books do not include a narrator, like in Jon Klassen's *I want my hat back*. The book starts with no introduction to the character and the reader has no background knowledge of his story. The bear breaks the fourth wall[66] and talks directly to the reader who is flung straight into the narrative as if entering mid-journey. This is a more common feature of a postmodern narrative. If one were to assess this narrative according to Joseph Campbell's monomyth theory of *The hero's journey*, one would be entering the story at the point in which the hero is about to embark on a journey to locate the magical elixir. The bear addresses the reader and then sets off to interrogate every creature that they come across. The lack of quotation marks in the dialogue diminishes the role of the narrator even more. Instead, the reader notes the change in colour of the typeface that relates to each creature to indicate when another character is speaking (Fig. 42). In this story, the reader may notice the main character's missing hat before he notices it himself.

[65] Note how Duck and Death are written as pronouns but the dark from *The Dark* picture book is not.
[66] "breaking the fourth wall" is a term that refers to a narrative device that dismantles the imaginary barrier between the performer and its audience (Najera 2020: Online).

This, coupled with the fact that there is no narrator in this book, allows the reader to problem-solve for themselves. All throughout *Triangle* by Mac Barnett and Jon Klassen (2017), the narrator describes the actions of the characters Triangle and Square but this changes on the last page, shifting as the narrator talks directly to the audience by asking a rhetorical question. This leaves the story hanging in mid-air and hands the responsibility of ending the narrative over to the reader. Another example is seen in *The Colour Monster*, which starts with the narrator introducing their friend, the Colour Monster (Fig. 43). When the page is turned, one learns that the narrator is a little girl and not the disembodied voice of the narrator. She then goes from addressing the reader to turning to the Colour Monster, to talk to him directly (Fig. 44). BJ Novak's *The book with no pictures*, gives the power to the child who has chosen the book for the adult to read. The adult then reads the book to the child, who watches the reader fumble over their words as they are forced to make strange sounds prompted by what is written. The reader becomes a performer on a stage who is at the mercy of their audience, the child. In *Never tickle a tiger,* Izzy, the main character, takes control of the chaos at the zoo that she, in fact, instigated. After her outbreak, once all the animals and people are settled, she informs her teacher that she has learnt her lesson by admitting "I'll never ever tickle a tiger again" (Fig. 45). In turn this admission allows the child reader to learn by observing Izzy's mistakes. Of course, in true postmodern fashion, Izzy does not learn her lesson and runs to the bear enclosure with a twig, getting ready for her next victim (Fig. 45).

4.1.g. The audience

In BJ Novak's *The book with no pictures*, there is a clear distinction between the role of the adult and child. As noted above, the story implies that the adult is reading the book to the child who, in essence, forces the adult to act out the ridiculous instructions as if they were given by the child. For example, one sees the thin sans serif typeface on each page as muttering by the adult reader, done under their breath and indicating their disdain towards engaging with the book's content. However, this is all much to

the delight of the child reader. No longer can the adult reader sit back and simply read the words on a page while nodding off to sleep. Instead, they are encouraged to get involved. Here, the power lies in the hands of the child who chose the book for the adult to read and watches them say silly, childish words like "BOO BOO BUT" (Fig. 46). In this way, the picture book becomes a performative art form with the adult on stage for the child's amusement. This shows how a postmodern narrative is intended for both the adult and the child.

Stevenson (1994: 32) describes Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith's picture book *The Stinky Cheese man and other fairly stupid tales* (1992) as showing authentic innovation in the literary realm while managing to connect and communicate with its younger child audience. David Macaulay's picture book *Black and White* (1991) has many features that require the reader to look carefully to be able to interpret its meaning. An older reader might understand the inside jokes. While the younger reader might not, the visuals are still exciting enough to keep them captivated. *Black and White* is described by Wu (2014: 808) as having "wildly noisy and playful illustrations" that allow the readers to "play along and not worry much about interpretations". Postmodern picture books point out familiar concepts to children for which they do not yet have the vocabulary. As Stevenson (1994: 33) writes, this is a kind of "convention by subverting it". She gives the example that "children who have never uttered the word 'endpapers' know that one does not usually encounter them several pages before the end of the book. Adolescent children are suggested to be of the age that most enjoy postmodern picture books, as they are able to grasp an "inside joke" (Mackey & McClay 2000: 196). When reflecting on the audience of *The Stinky Cheese man and other fairly stupid tales* (1992), Jon Scieszka states that adolescents tend to be more sophisticated than adults when it comes to interpreting his books' visual cues (Mackey & McClay 2000: 196). Kornei Chukovsky, a children's poet who is often referred to as the Russian Dr Seuss, believes that a child's sense of humour exists as an "inversion of the known". He developed this term after observing his daughter at age two attempting her first joke that involved a story of a dog that meows. This inversion is the basis of humour for

children and later adults, playing with the familiar and linking it to an obscure source (Stevenson 1994: 33). An example of this can be seen in *Triangle* by Mac Barnett and Jon Klassen where Square gets stuck in the triangle-shaped doorway of Triangle's home (Fig. 47).

4.1.h. Themes

While a traditional story like *Hansel and Gretel*, collected and published in 1812 by the Grimm brothers, was written with the intention of teaching the child reader a lesson,[67] a postmodern narrative can simply relay a narrative without a literal moral. One can see examples of this in the unresolved ending of the picture books mentioned above. But in some cases, a postmodern picture book might have a didactic purpose where the illustrator or author shares a story with the reader to help them deal with a situation. This is done in a nonliteral way, hinting at the problem. Local children's publisher *Imagnary*[68] *House* (2022: Online) supports this point in their call to submissions on their website, as they instruct the public to not "try to teach us a lesson for the sake of it". A contemporary picture book might choose to tackle topics of contemporary life like identity politics to do with race or gender. An example of this is *Julian is a mermaid* (2018; Fig. 48) by Jessica Love. The main character, a little boy named Julian, grows up in a strong matriarchal community and takes on attributes of his maternal caregivers that are seen to be typically feminine. He is othered by his peers for this. However, instead of changing himself to fit in by their standards, like a character from a traditional storybook would do, he embraces this feature of his otherness and takes on a new identity as a mermaid. The story teaches children not to shy away from what makes them othered and furthermore implies that gender may be fluid and does not have one singular definition. The most telling scene in the book is also shown on its cover (Fig. 48). This image encourages the reader to stand proudly in their own identity.

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[67] It should be noted that these tales are, of course, far more complex, as they examine inter alia issues such as marriage, family life, coming of age, adulthood, etc.
[68] Just to note, *Imagnary House*, the name of the publishing company, is spelled without an "i", unlike the usual spelling of the word "imaginary".

The main character in *If I had a dinosaur* can be identified as a gender-neutral-looking character with darker skin and parents of Asian and African heritage, as shown in the illustrations (Fig. 49). Such picture books appeal to a broader audience as they allow more children to see themselves represented. The othered individual can reclaim their agency to imagine themselves as the main character. This also encourages the reader to put their imagination into practice as they actively imagine themselves in alternative circumstances and to practice empathy for those who feel othered. As Cass (1971:12) states, playing allows for "understanding, warmth and sympathy for others."

Another contemporary theme that is dealt with is the issue of mental health. A book might deal with a heavy topic indirectly through the use of a visual metaphor. An example of such a picture book is *The day no one was angry* written by Toon Tellegen and illustrated by Marc Boutavant (2014). This book discusses complex states of being such as rage, dementia and depression, conveyed through cute animals going about their daily tasks. There is a clear juxtaposition between the serious theme and the innocent illustrations, which causes the reader to pause. On the surface, *Never tickle a tiger* tells the story of a fidgety little girl but can be read as commenting on children with Attention Deficit Disorder. *When sadness comes to call* metaphorically describes depression as a large green blob that follows the main character around, wearing them down (Fig. 50). *The Colour Monster* suggests a working out of emotions as the narrator helps the Colour Monster come to terms with his feelings. One can see the Colour Monster expressing joyfulness in the yellow illustrations that fill the spread (Fig. 51) and rage in the violent red marks of the illustrations (Fig. 31). *Duck, Death and the Tulip* presents the event of death as an inevitable part of life. The story of mourning is told through the metaphor of a wound in the book *The scar* written by Charlotte Moundlic and illustrated by Oliver Tallec (2011). *Iris and Isaac* by Catherine Rayner (2010) tells the story of the complex nature of relationships as represented in the relationship of two bears who fight and sulk. These examples might encourage the reader to imagine the experience being described, perhaps allowing them to develop empathy. Furthermore, these examples also allow the reader to make sense of things they have

already experienced, teaching them that their feelings are valid and should not simply be dismissed.

4.1.i. Taboo topics and words

As mentioned in Chapter Three, children are known to enjoy taboo topics that challenge social norms. In the rhyming story of *If I had a dinosaur*, one sees the thrill that comes with sounding out the word “poo” (Fig. 17) that rhymes with “do” on the previous spread (Fig. 16). This shows that even the child who is narrating the story is aware that the topic of “poo” is off-limits, leaving it to the pictures and the readers of the story to sound out. *The story of the little mole who knew it was none of his business*,[69] (1989) written by Werner Holtzworth and illustrated Wolf Erlbruch, includes the topic of faeces. The story follows the journey of a little mole who sets off to discover who dropped faeces on their head. The book graphically describes the kind of faeces each animal makes in the illustrations and the written onomatopoeic text (Fig. 52). This shows children’s love for the gross details as described in this book. *Poo Bum* by Stephanie Blake (2002; Figs. 53-55) relates the story of a mischievous little rabbit who is obsessed with saying forbidden words like “poo bum” which he repeats to his mother’s exhaustion (Fig. 53). When the rabbit is eaten by a wolf, the wolf starts to repeat the phrase “poo bum” (Fig. 54). This must be humorous to the child reader as they watch the revenge plot unfold. When the rabbit is rescued, he begins to speak normally, as if he learnt his lesson. But in true postmodern style, the story ends with a twist as the rabbit discovers a new word “fart” to repeat ad nauseum (Fig. 55). The child reader has the opportunity to point out the rabbit’s childishness for using such silly language but can also laugh at the use of the taboo words being read by the adult. This is very similar to BJ Novak’s *The book without pictures* where the author prompts

[69] The original story is written in German and is titled *Vom kleinen Maulwurf, der wissen wollte, wer ihm auf den Kopf gemacht hat*, translating literally as About the little mole, that wanted to know, who 'did' poo-poo on his head. I am most familiar with the Afrikaans version of the book titled *Die Molletjie wat wou weet wie op sy kop gedinges het* which translates slightly differently to the English – *The little mole who wanted to know who made a thingy on his head*, more closely related to the German version.

the adult reader to say the ridiculous words like “BOO BOO BUTT” (Fig. 46),” BLORK” and “BLuuRF” (Fig. 20). The ridiculousness escalates on the double-page spread of nonsensical content (Fig. 12) and the child watches the adult fumble over their words as they read through the content.

4.1.j. Imaginary friends

Taylor’s (1999: 41) research on children’s imaginary friends, presented in Chapter Three, reveals that children who exercise their imaginations are easily able to come up with “pretend beings” known as imaginary friends. It seems to be that when the ability to imagine is practiced, a person grows in their ability to imagine. A book that reveals the role of the imaginary friend is Jeffers and Colfer’s *Imaginary Fred*. This book starts with an introduction to Fred, the imaginary friend, from his perspective and tells the reader how he came about. Fred starts to fade when the children who conjured him up no longer need him. This book explores the reasons why many children's imaginary friends disappear. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Taylor and Mottweiler’s (2008: 52) interview with children on their imaginary friends reveals that children acknowledge that their imaginary friends disappear after a time when they are no longer useful. The place where they go, according to children, is in their heads or in their minds (Mottweiler & Taylor 2008: 52). *Imaginary Fred* then goes on to encourage the reader by teaching them that letting go of their imaginary friend is acceptable as the imaginary friend has a life of their own.

The little monster in *The Colour Monster* can also be viewed as a child’s imaginary friend, one that helps the child work through their feelings. The green blob-like character in *When sadness comes to call* may seem to be an imaginary friend when one looks at the illustrations alone but on investigating the narrative further, one realises that this character is a burden and not a friend. One can compare the dinosaur in *If I had a dinosaur* to an imaginary friend. All of these characters seem to possess

super-human powers that function beyond reality and assist children, directly or indirectly, to process an experience.

Walter Battiss, a South African artist, created an imaginary world that he invited all people to participate in as a form of protest against the harsh reality created by the apartheid government at the time. His world, known as *Fook Island,* comprised all the same ingredients as this current world. Similarly, to the real world, it had a political leader named King Ferd the Third (who was mad), it also had its own indigenous species of flora and fauna, its own currency, postage stamps and more. It is said that Battiss once travelled to another country where he presented his Fookian passport and driver's license, and they were accepted. Similarly, he posted a letter using a Fookian stamp and it arrived as its destination (Leiman 2013). I mention this to point out the following: although *Fook Island* was not real, the fact that society participated in this unreal, imaginary world, made it real. This suggests that the mere participation in believing in it is what made it real. Likewise, although dinosaurs do not exist, the child reading *If I had a dinosaur* is encouraged to participate in the story and so brings this imaginary creature to life.

4.1.k. Anthropomorphism

Salisbury (2004: 63) notes that books might include anthropomorphic characters to encourage inclusivity, where the story is communicated without the human-like boundaries of reality. An example of this is seen in *If I had a dinosaur* where the dinosaur does not exist according to the confines of reality and can fit on the couch in a house (as seen in Fig. 49). Challenging topics can be dealt with metaphorically when they are told from the perspective of an animal or creature character. One sees many examples in the above-mentioned analyses, like Llenas' book *The Colour Monster* where the reader can imagine having mixed feelings like the monster does. *Duck, Death and the Tulip* encourages the reader to imagine contemplating death through the eyes of Duck. The reader is also given the opportunity to make a positive connection

with the grim topic of death where Death[70] appears as a friendly personification with a skull head and a familiar humanoid body. The application of animal or creature-like characters also allows the reluctant reader to learn a lesson or receive a moral in an unconventional way. In *I want my hat back*, the parody of the large slow bear and the scheming rabbit shows the reader a lesson in justice.[71] Klassen's other books in the hat trilogy also implement this theme through animal characters. In *This is not my hat* (2012), a fish receives punishment for stealing a hat, while in *We found a hat* (2016), two turtle friends make the decision to abandon a hat after realising that the hat interferes with their friendship. *The day no one was angry* is told exclusively using anthropomorphised animals to express complex human states and the reader is able to relate to the creatures in crisis. *The Great Pape*r *Caper* by Oliver Jeffers (2008) shows the parody of a typical detective story as a forest community of critters who quarrel with each other in search of the great paper caper who is a lumberjack bear.

Furthermore, a story might include the presence of inanimate objects to convey its message indirectly. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Beall (2005: 6) reveals that humanoid characteristics can even be given to inanimate objects to remind the reader they fit into "pre-existing cognitive templates for humanness". An example of this is *The Day the Crayons Quit* which shows cartoon-like wax crayons with human features who go on a work strike, just like humans would do if they were unhappy at work (Fig. 29). These characters can also incite playfulness and imaginative thinking in the mind of the reader as they are brought to life. In *Little Blue and Little Yellow,* Leonni's illustrations of abstract shapes are accompanied by a written narrative. Here, one can use the text to drive the illustrations or the illustrations to drive the text to bring the narrative to life. The reader must apply their imagination to bring these abstract shapes and colours to life to imagine, for example, a tired character that is on its way home (as described in the spread shown in Fig. 56). *Triangle* shows how the characters chase

[70] Although Death is not an animal, he is a creature of some kind.
[71] Although the lesson in *I want my hat back* is not much of a traditional lesson as the story concludes with the rabbit stealing the bear's hat at the end. One does not so much 'learn' a lesson here but rather, one observes the consequences of the bear and the rabbit's actions.

and tease each other like children and the child reader is able to imagine themselves as one of the characters.

Although not an object, darkness is personified in *The dark* as a disembodied voice who calls out to Laszlo to lure him into the basement, like a monster. It is even referred to as hiding in the cupboards or sitting behind the shower curtain (Fig. 57) by the narrator. At one point, the adult reader might even assume the dark to be a predatory character with a sinister nature by the way it lures Laszlo into the darkest part of the house. But instead, the dark tells Laszlo where to find a lightbulb to plug into his nightlight (Fig. 4.8). This story allows the reader to observe their fear of the dark from afar through the perspective of the main character. They may learn that a fear of the dark is irrational as they observe Lazlo making friends with the dark.

4.2. Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the various creative triggers that have been implemented in contemporary picture books that encourage the reader to play and use their imagination. These triggers remain at the core of the research question of this dissertation. The relationship between image and text was examined as one of the triggers. It was discovered that these two features of a picture book can work together to relay the message. However, the text may also take a step back to allow the illustrations to communicate the majority of the narrative or vice versa, encouraging the reader to use their imagination to fill in the gaps. It became clear that each narrative demands its own ideal ratio of image-to-text combination to produce a book with a sense of irony, for example, or a book that conveys an intangible feeling. In the section on language another creative trigger was evident, and it was discovered that the rhyming, repetition or spelling of a word can be used to encourage the reader to play or to use their imagination. Additionally, a narrative can also include words that clash, creating a juxtaposition or a sense of absurdity that allows the reader to pause and consider the narrative's meaning. The picture books examined in this study also

exhibited a very careful curation of their design features (like type, colour and composition). When applied specifically, the design features can encourage the reader to work through the spreads of the book playfully. It also became clear that the illustrator can consider the style and the medium in which the illustrations are rendered to bring about the narrative of the book. The way in which a book reveals its ending was also found to be a creative trigger. Picture books with open-ended endings were found to allow the reader to resolve the ending, passing the power of driving the narrative on to the reader. Furthermore, this analysis revealed that not all contemporary picture books need narrators who are all-knowing. In some cases, books without an all-knowing narrator communicate that the reader, instead, is more informed than the narrator. It was also pointed out that these books can be read and enjoyed by the adult reader or the child reader. Additionally, it was ascertained that the theme of the picture book itself can also encourage the reader to imagine alternate scenarios. In the review of contemporary books, it was discovered that contemporary themes of identity are popular as they give the reader the opportunity to imagine themselves in the place of the main character. Lastly, it was established that picture books which include anthropomorphic creatures and imaginary friends encourage the reader to use their imagination to bring the characters to life.

This study has led me to imagine the contemporary picture book as a ‘cake’ where the creative triggers are the ‘ingredients’ of the ‘cake’ and are combined in a specific order and ratio to create a playful and imaginative ‘flavour’. When making a picture book, the illustrator can therefore implement some of the above features that act as triggers to incite playfulness or imaginative thinking. Overall, it was established that in playing through the pages of a picture book, the readers can be encouraged to use their imaginations as the task takes up all their energy to problem-solve their way to the narrative (Cass 1971: 12). In conclusion, it is valuable for the reader of the picture book to learn to play through the spreads, because “nothing can be more destructive than boredom” (Cass 1971: 15).

CHAPTER 5: A DISCUSSION OF ART PRACTICE

This chapter aims to review the practical component of this research project produced by methods of a practice-based creative process. The following section responds to the last research question, number six, that looks at how the activities of imaginative playing in childhood influence the creative process of the adult. It does so by looking to the theories of narratology, psychology and phenomenology which were unpacked in Chapters Two and Three to account for my practice-based approach to storytelling.

As part of the practical component of this study, I created twelve picture books inspired by childhood stories, collected during controlled focus groups sessions conducted with willing participants. This series of picture books have been reviewed according to the eleven creative triggers explored in the previous chapters that encourage the reader to engage with the books in a playful and imaginative manner. These examined triggers include 1) the relationship between image and text, 2) the role of language, 3) design, 4) medium, 5) the state of an open-ended narrative, 6) the narrator (or the lack thereof) and their role in telling the story, 7) the audience, 8) the themes of the stories, 9) taboo topics, 10) imaginary friends and 11) anthropomorphic creatures. This section intertwines the theoretical lenses of narratology, psychology and phenomenology into this review to point out how one may compose a picture book that encourages the reader to play and imagine.

5.1. Art practice

My art practice has formed the basis of the research in this dissertation. The findings from the practice are presented as a series of crafted picture books under the title *Cautionary tales for Grown Ups from Children/Cautionary tales for children from Grown Ups* (see the mock-up of a boxset in Fig. 59). These picture books capture stories from childhood while also acting as messages from the past to the readers' adult selves to remind them to play again. These stories could also be read by an audience of children

to remind them to keep playing. Additionally, the stories aim to encourage the reader to play and to use their imagination as a problem-solving tool. The process of creating the picture books happened in three steps: 1) development of story narratives through focus groups, 2) making of picture books, 3) investigation of picture books according to creative triggers identified in earlier chapters of this thesis. However, as noted previously, practice-based research is often cyclical and iterative. Here, the process of learning about creative triggers informed the way in which I created the picture books and the way in which I analysed the picture books. Moreover, the process of making picture books caused me to critically evaluate how picture books are made and how the process influences picture book makers and the audience of these books.

5.2. Development of story narratives: Focus group study

I chose to hold focus group sessions to gain inspiration for my picture books. The purpose was to develop narratives that were personal and relatable, but also connected to the experiences of other adults rather than insular and possibly self-indulgent. The focus groups took the form of orchestrated conversations with adults in a similar age bracket and with similar cultural experiences to me.

A particular demographic was chosen to draw these shared experiences from. Specifically, the participants were twenty to forty years old and they fall within the categorisation of millennials.[72] This group would have been young children in South

[72] Millennials are categorised as a generational group born between 1980 and 2000 (Bachman, Hull & Haecker 2020: 123). They have been referred to in a derogatory sense as the "look at me generation" but are known to be "more accepting of diversity than were past generations [and] have the ability to see problems and opportunities from fresh perspectives" (Myers & Sadaghiani 2010: 225, 226). However, as Bachman, Hull and Haecker's article title suggests, *Millennials are not all the same* (2020). They value individualism, authenticity and want to shape the world around them to accommodate their "individual quirks" (*Growth from Knowledge* 2017: Online). A 2016 study by data analysts *Growth from Knowledge* (2017: Online) shows that 84% of South African millennials completed a high school or tertiary education, being a much higher level of education in relation to previous generations, thereby making them more informed and worldlier. They are known to be able to digest large amounts of information being that they are the generation who experienced the rapid changes in the area of information technology and are comfortable with various forms of communication technologies (Myers & Sadaghiani 2010: 225). In everyday life, they get along with team members, are prompted by the fact that they can make a positive impact on the world

Africa during the 1980s and 1990s.[73] These participants also hail from a variety of economic, cultural and social backgrounds. They consisted of visual artists, educators and students. Furthermore, the participants that were asked to join this study were individuals I had a relationship with as friends, acquaintances, work colleagues or family members. Our existing relationships helped steer the conversations and allowed for a comfortable atmosphere in which we could share our stories and find similarities in our childhood memories regarding play. Some of our meetings consisted of larger groups of up to five participants, while others were smaller groups of three participants. Individual conversations via telephonic methods were held with a couple of participants who lived in other cities or countries.

Each participant of the focus group gave their informed consent to be interviewed by signing official consent forms following the University of South Africa's ethics procedure, preapproved with my proposal document. Each controlled focus group started with a brief introduction of the participants in the room, allowing everyone to meet and become more comfortable with each other. As the host, I shared my research topic with the group and clearly stated the objectives of our meeting. The participants were also reminded that our conversations would help me create picture books with a new perspective on play as I intended to use their narratives as inspiration for the stories.

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around them and appreciate open communication with their superiors (Myers & Sadaghiani 2010: 225). Specifically, in South Africa, millennials have experienced both sides of the political coin, some being young enough to remember the years of apartheid clearly and some who can recall the shift in the country to a democratic nation.

[73] Participants for the focus groups were recruited using convenience sampling. This non-probability sampling technique was chosen for its ease of implementation and because statistical rigour was not required (Turner, 2020). The purpose of the focus groups was to stimulate creativity and new ideas for my own art practice and, as such, I selected participants similar to me in personal background, age, and geographical location. These participants were also easier to sample during the COVID-19 pandemic, when substantial restrictions were in place limiting access to participants outside of my personal circle. However, I am aware that convenience sampling falls prey to problems with representativeness meaning that the findings of the focus groups cannot be generalized to other situations (Turner, 2020). While this is a limitation, the purpose of the focus groups was not to be able to say something about all adults in this age category and geographical location but, again, rather to spark ideas for my own creation of picture books.

During the focus groups, participants were asked to recall the imaginative games they played as children and how they played these games in the imaginary realm, whether they played with peers or imaginary friends. In these group sessions, I shared my own experiences from my childhood, which led the conversation to other themes in an informal manner. All physical meetings were held in my lounge at home.[74] Participants were provided with snacks and refreshments and were encouraged to make themselves comfortable, so as to encourage a casual atmosphere. The relaxed format of these sessions allowed participants to openly share their experiences rather than feel like they are being interviewed or interrogated. Through conversation, certain similarities from childhood play were noted and it was soon realised that there were overlapping approaches to creative play.

The following questions were posed to the participants to initiate and stimulate the conversation:

1. What was your favourite game to play as a child?
2. What was your favourite toy to play with?
3. What are the memories attached to these games and toys you just mentioned?
4. Did you have close friends or siblings that you played with?
5. How did you play with these close friends or siblings?
6. Did you play differently when alone in relation to playing in a group?
7. What games did you play when you were alone?
8. What sort of imaginative thoughts did you have about the world around you that helped you understand it?
9. Did you have imaginary friends/worlds or play imaginative games?
10. What did your imaginary friends/worlds look like?

[74] These focus groups were initially held in person but shifted to online platforms in 2020 and 2021 with the effects of the global pandemic. Applications such as Zoom, WhatsApp and audio recordings were used to relay information and share stories. This did not take away from the quality of the content produced as the conversations continued like usual.

These questions allowed the topic of discussion to drift between these points to purposefully keep a casual flow. This conversational approach allowed participants' memories to spark other participants' thoughts. The questions were purposefully formulated to guide the conversation relevant to the study. Questions 1 to 7 were constructed to establish how the participants set up play time, that is, whether they required external stimuli or could simply play with imaginary entities. I was most interested to hear the stories of alone play and how a child was able to conjure imaginary games while playing alone. Questions 8, 9 and 10 related to imagination. Curiosity was piqued when it was asked whether they experienced instances of Winnicott's 'True Self' while at play within the 'transitional space'. In these focus group sessions, stories about childhood games and moments were shared, to discover when the world felt magical and when playing felt driven by the imagination alone. Cass (1971: 118) states that sharing stories can assist one in relating to children, or in this case, assists us in writing and illustrating for children. Some of these focus group meetings allowed me to share some of my already existing stories and allowed me to regularly gauge listeners' responses.

5.3. Insights and findings

I have used a grounded theory approach to extract information from the recorded focus group sessions. Birks and Mills (2015: 16) describe this method as being "abstracted from, or grounded in, data generated and collected by the researcher". This method was suitable because of its structured but flexible approach which is said to be particularly helpful when dealing with a phenomenon, like the imagination in the case of this study (Tie, Birks & Francis 2019: 1-2). This research approach allowed me to transcribe the collected data from the recordings and code it by collating it into relating themes which inspired the basis of my stories.

While evaluating my findings from these focus groups, it was discovered that the participants recalled similar overlapping stories from childhood, despite the vast

differences in our personal backgrounds. These similar stories were grouped together according to themes that formed the basis of my stories. Childhood games, and imaginative play became a theme that demonstrated how we entertained ourselves. Thinking back to school days and school-related occurrences formed another theme, while similar folk tales or warnings shared by parental figures or older siblings brought about another theme. Through sharing stories and memories from childhood, the participants agreed that there is a sense of power in collective memory. In Focus Group 3, one participant posed the question: Were the stories we shared “collective and cultural superstitions or just childhood stories” and is there a difference between these? He also asked “how long can you believe something even if it isn’t right?”. In our discussion, we agreed that there seems to be this “collective belief” which becomes stronger the more people believe in it, much like Battiss’ concept of *Fook Island* mention in Chapter Four.

5.4. Stories’ synopses

Here follows an alphabetic list of the twelve stories developed:[75]

Afraid of the Draak tells the story of a character who is afraid of the dark and does everything to avoid interacting with it. A younger mentor steps in to show the main character that their fears are irrational (Fig. 60).

Chappies with the change, please is a story from my childhood that visually describes my experience of overindulging on sweet treats during the school holidays, something that I have still not managed to overcome as an adult (Fig. 61).

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[75] These stories can be found in the separate document of my practical work that accompanies this dissertation *Cautionary tales for Grown Ups from Children/ Cautionary tales for children from Grown Ups*.

Don't put things up your nose is a cautionary tale that tells of a day in the life of my sister at a petting zoo. It ends with an unexpected discovery when I found corn pips up my sister's nose (Fig. 62).

How Sandile got all the girls is a story taken from a focus group with Sandile who shares with us his imaginary friend named Sam. One day, Sandile used Sam to coerce all the girls in class to take pity on him and give him all their lunch (Fig. 63).

It is dark. was taken from a comprehension essay written by a focus group member, Gretchen, in Grade 1. The story is visually unpacked in two sentences accompanied by an abstract interpretation of Gretchen's essay that describes her imagining what it would feel like to hatch from an egg (Fig. 64).

Let's play archaeologist-archeologist talks about a childhood obsession with dinosaurs that grew with me into adulthood. The story has been illustrated from photographs and artefacts from childhood (Fig. 65).

My skeleton follows the thoughts of the narrator as they wonder about the existence of their skeleton inside their body. Normally a macabre thought, in this story, however, contemplating one's skeleton developed into an appreciation for the human body (Fig. 66).

Skinny Colour is a personal childhood story reflecting on the first year of school coinciding with South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994. Instead of being concerned with the political significance of the year, I was more interested in my stationery list (Fig. 67).

The Busy Bee is a creative writing sample taken from my sister's Grade 1 English book. It tells the story of a curious little bee and can be read as a cautionary tale, written by an eight-year-old child who herself was just as curious (Fig. 68).

The mouse who loved cheese has also been taken from my sister's creative writing task from Grade 1. The story introduces the reader to a clever mouse who has an identity crisis and tries to self-soothe with food (Fig. 69).

The Khebes is taken from a focus group study. Gretchen tells a childhood story from childhood about a misunderstanding between her and her parents that lasted for years (Fig. 70).

The story of *The thief* drew inspiration from a focus group held with Helé via an audio-recorded conversation on WhatsApp. Helé confesses to stealing a character from a collectable toy figurine series known as *Kitty in my pocket* (Fig. 71).[76]

5.5. Case study of my picture books:

This section uses the same eleven creative triggers used to unpack the existing picture books from section 4.1 in Chapter Four to study the books made in the boxset series *Cautionary tales for Grown Ups from Children/Cautionary tales for children from Grown Ups*. It identifies how these creative triggers have been implemented throughout my picture books to show how they could encourage the reader to engage with the content playfully and imaginatively. These triggers were developed from the above findings in Chapter Two and Three: of image and text, language, design, medium, open-ended endings, the narrator, the audience, themes, taboo, imaginary friends, anthropomorphism.[77]

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[76] *Kitty in My Pocket* was a collectable series of toy figurines popular in South Africa in the late 1990s. One could purchase a character from this series as an individually wrapped animal figurine, in this case a cat, accompanied by an identification card and back story. At the time, one could also collect the *Puppy in my pocket* and *Pony in my pocket* series. I was especially obsessed with horses and had a couple of the *Pony in my pocket* figurines.

[77] It is interesting to note that a lot of these stories involve nostalgic themes as they relate to the focus group participants thinking back to childhood.

5.5.a. Image and text

The way in which the picture book maker curates the text and image of a spread is purposeful as it allows for the story to be read in a particular way. In some cases, in my books, the text has been placed in such a way that it follows the image and one can see this in the first spread of *Afraid of the Draak* (Fig. 72). This creates a visual cohesion between text and image and the reader must read the text one line at a time as it follows the contours of the illustration. Text can also further add to the description of an image. This can be seen in *Afraid of the Draak* where the narrator describes a long passageway which has been illustrated to show this distance in perspective, and the text further emphasises this length as it mimics the distance down the passage and urges the reader to read it out as such (Fig. 73). Salisbury (2004: 121) states that this kind of placement complements illustrations as it “nicely reflects the elegance and economy of line”. In other cases, I have allowed the text to hover on the outer edge of the composition, allowing the image to fill up the space. An example of this is seen in the spread from *The thief* (Fig. 74). This creates a compositional tension between image and text which contributes to the spooky theme of the story. All of these factors add to the telling of the story and encourage the reader to playfully work through the spreads with their imagination.

Stories can consist of visual cues like intertextual references that point to other familiar narratives. Anstey (2002: 447) states that intertextuality “requires the reader to use background knowledge” in order to decode the narrative and find its meaning. Small details in the book *Afraid of the Draak* hint toward the adult horror movie *The Exorcist*. This is seen in the first spread which shows the main character watching this movie (Fig. 72) while the last spread shows a movie poster of *The Exorcist* on the wall (Fig. 75). The spread of fears shows what the main character assumes about the average person and their fears (Fig. 76). Even the slippers that the main character wears hint towards their obsession with ‘scary things’ (Fig. 77). All these visual cues work together

to contribute to the narrative and help the reader build a clear picture of the main character.

The descriptions of *It is dark.* allude to a feeling of existential dread that only an adult might understand. However, the simple words of the younger Gretchen, who was eight years old when composing this story, are an apt description that serve to form a sophisticated narration of a complex feeling. The illustrations show an abstract, expressive application of the medium meant to interpret the feelings of the narrative (Fig. 78). The text of the story has been traced from the original script written by Gretchen and includes the teacher's corrections in red pen. This allows for the story to exist in the authentic hand of its author and contributes to the profound message even further. With the description seen in *How Sandile got all the girls* (Fig. 79) of watered-down mix-a-drink and peanut butter sandwiches, the text is meant to conjure up a vivid feeling, or taste, of these childhood lunches. In this case, the text describes a feeling that accompanies the illustrations that show the main character's disgust with his lunch.

5.5.b. Language

As mentioned in Chapter Three, one way in which adults express their playfulness is through language and humour (Winnicott 1971:54). Several of the books created as part of this practical component play with language and lean into my bilingual nature where they make use of puns found in translations. One can see this in the story, *Afraid of the Draak*. The word "Draak" means "dragon" in Afrikaans. Much like the dark, a dragon too is something that is fear-inducing. The book also refers to "skelms", an Afrikaans colloquialism referring to a person who is a crook but can be translated as meaning "thief" in English and relates to the spread of fears in the narrative (Fig. 76). *Don't put things up your nose* also includes Afrikaans words like "mielie" and "bakkie" that most South Africans are familiar with. I have translated these words with the use of an asterisk at the bottom of the page of the book so as to not completely exclude the

reader (Fig. 80). Another playful use of language occurs in the story *The Khebes*. The surname Khebe is a familiar Nguni surname in South Africa but sounds like *The Care Bears* which is the name of a popular children's cartoon series that aired on television in the 1980s and 1990s. The entire story is based around the pun where the storytellers' parents misheard her. Another soundalike reference is the word "Draak", which sounds like "dark" which stirs the viewer to do a doubletake of the reading. In *How Sandile got all the girls*, the narrator refers to "mix-a-drink"[78] (Fig. 79) which was a staple of South African children's lunch boxes when I was a child.[79] The title of the picture book *Skinny colour* refers to how children used to point out colours, for instance the colours in a pencil box .[80] This term was seemingly acceptable in a classroom environment when all children shared more or less the same skin colour. But it was soon realised that not all children share the same "skinny colour" and this is what this story aims to point out. The intention with these above linguistic features was to touch on the commonalities encountered as South Africans where this kind of misunderstanding with language occurs often.

In this document's writing, terms like "former-child" are employed, referring to the adult who was once a child. This is done to urge the adult to think back to being a child, reaching for that child within. Whereas the term "grown-up" refers to the child's perspective of the adult, as a separate dimension, a space where the adult lives detached from the child. Terms like "big school" are used by the child to refer to a future more "grown-up" version of themselves when they enter the schooling system beyond grade one. An example of this can be seen in the story *Skinny colour* (Fig. 81).

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[78] This refers to an affordable concentrated cooldrink syrup that is mixed with water. Some of the participants in the focus group know it as "Jannie-verjaar-koeldrank" or "aanmaakkoeldrank" referring to the cheap dilatable cooldrink received at children's birthday parties.

[79] Surveys were conducted with my intended target audience to establish the correct spelling of this drink. Some participants reported that they were more familiar with the spelling being "mixidrink" and others "mixydrink" but overall "mix-a-drink" had majority votes, hence its use here.

[80] Speaking to children today, it was noted that they now refer to different skin colours through metaphorical descriptions, for example, "peach" refers to a Caucasian skin colour and "caramel" can refer to someone of mixed race decent. Overall, the more contemporary classification style has more of a variety of descriptions to cater for many different skin tones, allowing children to feel more included and seen.

"Play-play" is a term used by children to convey the idea of playing by way of make-believe. For example, when asked by an adult whether a scenario was real or imaginary, a child might respond "it was just play-play" to imply that the scenario existed in an imaginary realm. Urban Dictionary confirms that this is a South African term (Urban Dictionary 2011 Sv. "Play-play"). The book *Let's play archaeologist-archeologist* uses this repetition to refer to the "play-play" nature of the game. I cannot help but play around with language in this way even though it is not strictly academic.

The spelling of a word can also be manipulated to add to the meaning of the narrative. Once can see an example of this in *Afraid of the Draak* in the spelling of the word "run" which has been stretched out to enforce the reading of the word to be drawn out (Fig. 73). Phrases like "whole wide world" in *Afraid of the Draak* (Fig. 72) indicate a sense of hyperbole which emphasises the narrator's passion. The text on the spread is also stretched out to accentuate this message even further, where one can see a word per line which suspends the reading of this section. This can also be seen in the text in Fig. 82 to show the intricate steps the narrator takes to avoid the dark. The language used in *The Khebes* and *The thief* has been taken directly from the audio recordings of conversations with participants of the focus groups. I have chosen to remain true to the process by keeping the grammatical errors, strange pauses and overexplained concepts in these narratives. The narrator of *The thief* uses the phrase "like" a lot and this is highlighted in the book's design and layout allowing it to become a visual pause in the layout and forcing the reader to rest as they read along. Anstey (2002: 448) notes the purpose of the "unusual uses of the narrator's voice [which] position the reader to read the book in particular ways and through a particular character's eyes (this can be achieved by the written or visual text)."

5.5.c. Design

Composition is defined by Salisbury (2004: 23) as the balancing of "pictorial elements within a given space" and can only be achieved through experimenting with the visual

element. In some cases, a composition requires a sense of balance where the scene and all its elements fit together harmoniously. An example of this can be seen in Fig. 83 in the addendum from the book *Chappies with the change, please* where the text follows the illustrations in a diagonal shape. Here, the text and image of the verso page mirrors the recto page, creating a balanced composition. In other cases, a scene requires a sense of compositional tension and an example of this can be seen in *The mouse who loved cheese* where the illustration fills the recto page and the text sits on the bare verso page (Fig. 84). Each scene plays with the composition elements of a story so that the spread is not merely a combination of text and images but a combination of visual elements that add to the reading of the story. Anstey (2002: 448) insists that "new and unusual design and layout challenge the reader's perception of how to read a book".

As some of these stories have been captured directly from audio recordings from our focus group sessions, the text of the story is meant to mimic the reading of the storyteller. *The Thief* speaks with many irregular pauses and uses phrase fillers such as "like". These phrases show up in the design and placement of the text so that the reader is urged to pause and act out the story, much like the way in which the storyteller spoke it (Fig. 74). The same method has been applied in *The Khebes'* narrative. This was also done to avoid interfering with the storytellers' narration, to allow the story to remain authentically theirs. Punctuation adds to the phrasing of a sentence, with commas and line spacing used to force the reader to pause as they are reading along. Furthermore, the text has been placed in a way that copies colloquial speech so that the story reads like a conversation. An example of this can be seen in *Chappies with the change, please* in the text (Fig. 85) that reads one line at a time, where the reader must pause on every line. *Don't put things up your nose, Let's play archaeologist-archaeologist* and *Chappies with the change, please* start with the phrase "when I was a kid" to mimic how conversations about childhood start. This came up in the focus group sessions. This phrase was also used to replace the traditional storytelling mode of "once upon a time", setting the context surrounding the

story. A smaller typeface has been used in some stories to read like an afterthought or a disclaimer that the narrator makes as seen at the bottom of the recto page in *Afraid of the Draak* (Fig. 77). This smaller typeface is also used for the translated words mentioned with an asterisk at the bottom of a spread (Fig. 76). The colour of the text has, in some cases, been sampled directly from the illustrations (also seen in Fig. 86) to complement the scene.

The busy bee, *The mouse who loved cheese* and *It is dark.* are stories taken directly from creative writing projects from school and have been illustrated by tracing the original text in the respective authors' handwriting. This design feature makes direct reference to the authors and shows their penmanship that can be read as words or interpreted like an illustration. The tracing of the original handwriting also alludes to the younger author's presence in the story, even years after it was written. Expert in this field, Salisbury (2004: 123) mentions that many contemporary picture books have made use of "a hand-rendered text integrated into the pictorial design" and it can work well, bringing a "vitality to the page if the illustrator is sensitive to design and composition".[81]

In terms of design elements, I chose to work with three different kinds of typefaces for my stories. The rounded geometric sans serif, *Bryant*, signifies to the reader the typeface they saw in the books, known as readers, when learning to read. It has been described by designer Jeremiah Shoaf on his website *Typewolf* as having a "warm" aesthetic and is a contemporary revision of the older 1960s mechanical lettering kits used by sign writers (2014: Online). This font is used in its bold form with colour-sampled text on the white pages of *How Sandile got all the girls* (Fig. 86) and competes with the colour-filled background in *Afraid of the Draak* (Fig. 87). The thinner, light version was used for body copy details as seen in the stories *The thief* and *Skinny*

[81] While freelancing as an illustrator, I have experienced that publishers frown on a handwritten typeface as it makes translation of the book a challenge and can be difficult for a younger reader to read, especially if they are just learning how to read. In the case of my picture books, the language is part of the storytelling and the handwritten text adds to the illustration style.

colour. Serif typewriter fonts like *American Typewriter* and *Typeka* were used in *Chappies with the change, please*, *Let's play archaeologist-archeologist* and *My skeleton.* The font *American typewriter* is a simplified version of the original typeface that varies by typewriter brand. *Typeka* has been created to feel more authentic, with slight smudges of the overlays. This kind of typeface points to stories that were told from my perspective as an adult writer, and signify a nostalgic look back on childhood. Although these books all appear in the digital catalogue that accompanies this dissertation, the typewriter-inspired fonts signify a more tangible quality and add texture to the digital format. A thin sans serif *Lato* typeface (a widely used typeface designed by the Pole Łukasz Dziedzic) was used in *Don't put things up your nose* to complement the line-drawn pencil illustrations.

5.5.d. Medium

Although the illustrations have been rendered in different aesthetic idiolects, they have all been completed in the medium of gouache with accents of aquarelle pencils. The digital catalogue, however, displays these renditions as RGB[82] ratios. Salisbury (2004: 44) describes gouache as having a "milky-chalky feel". Gouache contains a higher amount of its binding ingredient gum arabic, than watercolour paints and that is what gives it its opaque quality and intense hues (Paschke 1992: Online). Contemporary illustrator, Agathe Singer (2018: 9) remarks that gouache dries quickly but can be reactivated later by adding more water, much like watercolour paints. An illustration painted in gouache can be layered with pigment, once the original layer is dry, until the desired effect of a flat, intense application of paint is achieved (Singer 2018: 21). Author of *The artist's handbook of material and techniques*, Ralph Mayer (1970: 293) states that gouache has become a popular medium "to the point where they [gouache and other aqueous paints on paper, like water colour] are now accepted as a major art medium". He mentions that oil painting dominated the art world at a time and gouache was viewed as a "minor technique" (Mayer 1970 125). He goes on to say that this

[82] RGB stands for red, green and blue which pixels on a screen.

medium has “a brilliant light-reflecting quality” and is most effective when the when wanting to achieve a sense of “spontaneity and an alia prima effect” (Mayer 1970: 305). It is a medium that can be applied as “smooth, flawless fields of color and with precise lines”, but is more well known for its ability to create “free, spontaneous flowing or robust, dashing brush strokes” (Mayer 1970: 305). Both kinds of applications of gouache can be seen in my books. *It is dark.* shows off the expressive use of the medium while *Skinny colour* shows a careful application in the stationery items illustrated in the story. Most of the other illustrations in this series show a combination of these two applications, like the books *Afraid of the Draak* and *My skeleton* which exhibit a controlled application in the foreground subjects but expressive application in the background. It is also a medium that offers vibrant colours with its “higher ratio of pigment to binder” and chalky surfaces (MoMA 2020). Gouache is seen to have a strong significance in the contemporary illustration world and Salisbury (2004: 44) is of the opinion that it is gaining rapid popularity in the illustration world. Most likely this is attributed to its fast-drying capabilities and smooth application. Colour pencils can be associated with children’s illustrations. I have therefore applied slight accents using aquarelle pencils to highlight features in my illustrations.

The picture books produced do not conform to a single style, but rather draw on postmodern narrative techniques to bring them together. Commercial illustrator Kyle Webster (2016: Online) reveals that artists have always been encouraged to work in “a singular style and with a consistent voice”. He opposes this notion by stating that an illustrator’s style needs to draw from a more eclectic pool as they need to be flexible entities who are able to convey stories that are not necessarily their own or of their opinion. However, Salisbury (2004: 20) insists that “style is a word that other people use when talking about your work”. He, therefore, employs the phrase “a way of drawing” when talking about style (Salisbury 2004: 34). He states that the illustrator’s creative voice, or “way of drawing”, comes about when they place emphasis on “integrity” and honesty and have a passion for a subject matter (Salisbury 2004: 21). He notes that doodling helps the illustrator establish their own visual language

(Salisbury 2006: 36). In my creative practice, I observed that it is only when I am fully engaged in what I am doing, that this so-called style develops automatically.

The illustrations of this series might be read as consisting of multiple styles. This has been done intentionally in an attempt to communicate each story with an applied style, or as Salisbury (2004: 34) terms it a "way of drawing", that best suits the narrative. Winnicott's (1965: 148) idea of the 'True Self' comes into play here. When illustrating, I have attempted to stay engaged with a version of my 'True Self' by moving freely between various styles. This idea can be rationalised in Webster's (2016: Online) description of working intuitively as he states that, "sometimes you want to be quick and messy, and sometimes you want to be slow and steady. Sometimes it's all about shapes, and other times, it's about line, or perhaps texture or colour. Or sometimes, and perhaps most importantly, you just get incredibly bored with the same old thing". I found that I was able to play between these different approaches as the story needed.

In some cases, illustrations were drawn using photographs as reference images and in other cases it was attempted to recreate them from my imagination. This resulted in two very different illustration approaches. For example, in *Don't put things up your nose*, the illustrations were based on reference images of photographs of my sister from childhood. These photographs did not relate to the exact day the petting zoo was visited. Through careful curation, it was intended that these illustrations speak of my sister's playful nature (Fig. 88). Whereas, in *How Sandile got all the girls*, the illustrations were not drawn from reference images but rather from imagination. The main character, Sandile, is based on the Sandile who shared his story in a focus group session. Sandile only has one photograph of himself as a child and I based the main character of the story on this image (as seen in the front cover in Fig. 63). I also mixed in references from my own school memories and experiences as seen in the caricatures of the girls (see in the recto page of Fig. 89) and the references made to the celebrities from the late 1990s (see in the verso page of Fig. 89). Salisbury (2004: 20) mentions that in the twenty-first century, one is bombarded with images through the

media, resulting in a challenge when it comes to filtering out irrelevant images while choosing to focus on particular images. He goes on to point out the significance of illustrating from life as he says that the act of looking is more powerful than striving towards achieving a particular illustration style. It is only through looking and drawing that one can fully understand what one is looking at (Salisbury 2004: 20).

Cartoonist, Ronald Searle spoke of his experience as a practising graphic artist and insists that looking and drawing should become a habit that is "as natural as breathing" (Salisbury 2004: 20). Salisbury (2004: 20) insists that when one draws from life, as opposed to drawing from reference images, this allows one to "process first-hand visual information in a uniquely personal way". But, with that said, drawing from memory has its own power. The illustrations in this series that were created from memory allowed me to be more imaginative, trying to recreate the picture in mind.[83] Sometimes they can result in what Salisbury (2004: 34) describes as "cruder and less confident" illustrations that can resemble childlike drawings. Instead, this is how I would critique my drawings that are drawn from photographs. Salisbury (2004: 34) insists that this process of drawing "requires a completely different approach to looking". One needs to envision the picture in one's mind before reaching for the drawing instrument.

As an expert in his fields of teaching and illustration, Salisbury (2004: 36) believes that there is no "inherent superiority" in drawing aesthetics but rather, these drawings can be classified as "tight" (detailed and realistic) or "loose" (gestural and expressive). The way in which the illustrations in this series have been rendered show a sense of stylisation of subjects and are not meant to read as naturalistic or realistic but rather warped-like memories, showing caricatures with relatable features. In the self-portraits, as seen in *My skeleton*, I have emphasised personal features of my face like my skew

[83] When I was a child under twelve years old, I found it so easy to tap into that space of drawing from my imagination. Attending tertiary studies, this was drilled out of me. After my studies, I had to relearn this skill and now I find I can play between these two worlds freely, although not perfectly but with ease.

teeth and dark circles under my eyes, as this is how I perceive myself in my mind (see Fig. 90 for a younger version of myself and Fig. 91 for an older self-portrait). Some characters are rendered with exaggerated features like big ears or knock-knees, as seen in *How Sandile got all the girls*. These are meant to express an awkwardness and insecurity that comes with being a child (Fig. 79 & 89). I intend for these features to make the subjects relatable and approachable. The colours that were applied in these stories are from life but are more vibrant and intense, and are meant to feel like a wild memory from childhood. Some parts are worked in colour and other spreads remain simple outlines, depending on what the story needs. This creates a variety in the spreads, keeping the viewer ever-present.

In some cases, mistakes form part of the illustration like in the story *Don't put things up your nose* that shows line drawings that have been crossed out. As the process involved drawing directly from photographs, it was intentional to include these 'wrong' illustrations to form part of the visual narrative (Fig. 92). I have allowed these mistakes to become the main features as I introduce the story in the endpapers (Fig. 92). Other illustrations in this book are deliberately left unfinished (Fig. 93) or cut off by the edge of the composition (Fig. 94) which creates visual tension and reads like fragments from memory. Other endpapers subtly hint towards the message or main aspect of the story. For example, in *How Sandile got all the girls*, the title implies that the main character, Sandile, a young schoolboy, got the attention of his female classmates but when one reads the story one realises that this title is misleading as Sandile, in fact, gets all the girls to give him all their lunch (Fig. 95). This is hinted in the endpapers where a pattern is created out of the lunches of the story (Fig. 96).

5.5.e. Open-ended endings

These stories do not end with the typical "happily ever after" endings as found in traditional storybooks. In some cases, they are 'matter-of-fact' stories that simply serve the purpose of being shared. For example, *The Khebes* points out a

misunderstanding as opposed to a moral teaching. In *The thief,* there is also no moral lesson to be learnt where the reader learns that stealing is wrong or where the narrator realizes that they feel a sense of remorse for stealing. Rather the story reads like an open-ended confession that creates an awareness within the adult reader about possession and desire. This separates the author's intended experience in contrast to the reader's interpretation. The second last spread of *Chappies with the change, please* tricks the reader into thinking that the story is about to end on a climax. However, when the reader pages over to the last spread, it is revealed to the reader that the storyteller has not learnt a lesson from overindulging during childhood and has made the same mistake again as an adult. Stories like *The Busy Bee* and *The mouse who loved cheese* end with the death of the main character, an unexpectant twist created by the writer who was eight years old at the time (Fig. 97 & 98).

5.5.f. The narrator

Most of the books that form part of this series are written in the first person. This includes those stories that are taken from audio recordings. As mentioned above, *The Khebes* and *The Thief*'s narratives, as seen in the text, remain exactly as they were told, without my intervention. This keeps the story authentically theirs, as told from their perspective. Stories like *The busy bee*, *The mouse who loved cheese* and *It is dark.* are similar as they are all written from the perspective of their eight-year-old authors. The reality of a child whose age is revealed in these narratives.

The only story in this series that is written with the use a narrator is *How Sandile got all the girls* which shows the narrator who guides the flow of the narrative and pre-empts certain actions. The narrator and Sandile are the only two individuals in this narrative who know what Sam, Sandile's imaginary friend, looks like. This is a special secret between them and creates the impression that they have a relationship outside of the story.

5.5.g. The audience

In *Afraid of the Draak*, the story hints to the main character being a child. The last spread (Fig. 75) reveals that the main character is an adult and is being comforted by a child. This contrasts the idea that adults are always in control and informs the child reader that adults can also have irrational fears. *It is dark.* expresses a feeling that only adults might be familiar with. The irony is that the story is written by a child who has managed to capture this complex feeling in the form of a metaphor. This story sits well under the title of this picture book series as it presents a cautionary tale for adults from the perspective of a child. *How Sandile got all the girls* takes place exclusively in the child's world, surrounded by the school world a child of that age will be consumed by, featuring things like homework, lunchtime, fleeting crushes and friend cliques. This is intended to make the child reader feel like they are in control of their own story, within their own world, where adults do not interfere. *Chappies with the change, please* reflects on a childhood memory but makes the point that the adult is not all-wise.

5.5.h. Themes

Collecting stories from a South African demographic naturally led to South African-themed stories. The overall result showed the experiences of children growing up in South Africa in the 1980s to 1990s who had very different perspectives despite sharing similar experiences.[84] This is a topic I did not even include in the questions formulated for the focus group, but after three focus group meetings, I realised that this topic came up spontaneously. The stories *The Khebes*, *Chappies with the change*, please, *The thief* and *How Sandile got all the girls* share the experience of a South African childhood:

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[84] It should be noted that it is not my intention to confront the political matters of South Africa through my studies as this is well outside the scope of my work, however, one cannot avoid this reality, as this was a very real aspect of our experiences at the time. As an illustrator telling stories from the 1980 to 1990s taking place in South Africa, one would be very ignorant to simply ignore the reality by avoiding the theme within the stories.

The title *Chappies with the change please,* is based on a phrase that children who grew up in South Africa would have repeated themselves. When sent to the corner store[85] on an errand, one might ask the cashier for “chappies with the change”. Sharing this experience with the focus group members proved that this was a relatable experience. A draft of this story that was shared at the *Open Book Comics Festival* in 2019 resulted in many exciting conversations with strangers about their nostalgic childhood memories. The book serves its purpose of reminding the adult to keep the memory of their inner child alive.

The story titled *The Khebes* comes from the perspective of a narrator growing up in Durban in the 1980s at the height of racial segregation in apartheid South Africa. Her story explains this context clearly and points out the humour of the misunderstanding between her and her parents.

Another similar perspective comes from the story titled *How Sandile got all the girls*. In a focus group session, Sandile informed us that he was sponsored to attend a private school. Although there were other children of colour in this school, Sandile describes himself as “socially different” and children were aware of this. When he brought up the topic of his imaginary friend, Sam,[86] to his peers, they grew curious and so Sam became a topic of interest. This is how Sandile managed to integrate into a space where he had felt like an outsider. With South Africa’s diverse population, this is a feeling that many citizens can relate to. The illustrations show nostalgic childhood South African snacks like “Melrose wedges”, “Niknaks” and “mix-a-drink cooldrink” (Fig. 99 & 100). The story serves as a relatable and nostalgic reminder of childhood to the South African reader.

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[85] Growing up in the Eastern Cape, I am familiar with the terms spaza shop or corner café to refer to a corner shop. I make reference to the term spaza shop in the picture book *The mouse who loved cheese*.

[86] When Sandile shared this story with us, I was fascinated by the fact that he subconsciously chose to invent an imaginary friend with a typically white, English name. I still wonder whether his classmates were aware of this and whether this is what drew them to him.

Although only slightly, *The mouse who loved cheese* also hints towards familiar South Africanisms in the illustrations. The illustrations reference a South African corner shop, known as a spaza shop and a popular South African brand of soap (Fig. 84). The illustrations push forward this agenda even though the text does not mention it. In South Africa, a corner shop that is situated in a residential area is very recognisable and is often covered in Coca-Cola branding, hence the illustrations showing this. The brand of soap is illustrated as a Sunlight bar which is known as an iconic South African brand, being part of the market for over one hundred years (Sunlight 2022: Online). Later, when the mouse takes the soap out of its wrapping, the South African reader recognises the green bar of soap as shown in the illustrations (Fig. 101). This is the only colour in the black line-drawn illustrations and is significant because this soap leads to the death of the mouse. These tiny details hint at familiar South Africanisms.

5.5.i. The taboo

Two picture books in this series end with the absurd death of their main character. *The mouse who loved cheese*, as mentioned above, dies when he mistakes soap for cheese. *The Busy Bee* dies when he disobeys his mother and eats a poisonous flower. None of these stories end with a significant moral, but because they were written by an eight-year-old, the theme of death is absurd. The European children's picture book market draws on the rich traditions of cultural storytelling and folklore. In Denmark, one sees provocative themes like death and even sex in their books, that really challenge what children are able to digest (Salisbury 2004: 19). "As creativity and cross-cultural influences grow, perceptions of what constitutes an appropriate visual diet for a child will continue to change" says Salisbury (2004: 19) on this matter.

Chappies with the change please includes a visual descriptive spread with bold paint strokes and expressive splotches that, along with the text, describes what happens when one eats too many sweets (Fig. 85). *Don't put things up your nose* is a story with

an instructional title but rather reads as a written account of a child's fascination with exploring boundaries. Death and bodily functions are taboo topics in the adult world, but for the child, these are topics that assist them with exploring appropriate social cues and behaviour.

5.5.j. Imaginary friends

How Sandile got all the girls features an imaginary character named Sam. When questioned by the members of the focus group about Sam,[87] Sandile said he never thought about what Sam looked like. The story that I developed imagines Sam as a pet tiger and Sandile as a mischievous and smart schoolboy (Fig. 95). This interpretation refers to children's love for language inversions, mentioned in Chapter Four, where a tiger is given a name typically associated with a human English boy.

5.5.k. Anthropomorphism

In some of the stories, one finds creatures with anthropomorphic features, like in *The busy bee* and *The mouse who loved cheese*. The narratives speak of creatures experiencing human emotions and participating in human events. *The mouse who loved cheese* tells the story of an intelligent creature who had an ordinary job but was unhappy and experienced an existential crisis. The illustrations show the mouse with glasses, a pen pocket and holding a sheet of paper containing equations to indicate a generalisation of how intelligence is perceived (Fig. 102). The mouse's personal crisis leads to questioning his skin colour and he comfort-eats to console himself. The reader must engage their imagination to link these human-like behaviours to an animal as small and insignificant as a mouse. *The busy bee* tells the story of a creature who is born into a loving home, celebrates ordinary life events and one day faces a moral

[87] In the focus group we discussed how amusing it was that Sandile, a black Zulu man who grew up in rural KwaZulu-Natal, had an imaginary friend with an English white name like Sam. Perhaps this speaks to how he felt socially excluded and Sam was a way for him to feel seen.

dilemma, one that the reader would be particularly familiar with.[88] The busy bee must choose between following the instruction of their mother or following their own curiosity. Both of these stories speak of an ordinary life and result in death by common human error. These stories are particularly fascinating as they were written by an eight-year-old, who clearly understood the complexities of human nature, even at this young age. In *Afraid of the Draak*, the dark is personified as a physical entity that is coming for the main character. The dark is described as having a "silent breath, black like ink" (Fig. 103). The dark can also imply a fear of the unknown.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter has applied a review of the picture book series crafted for the practical component of this study's practice-based research. It started with an explanation of the focus group study and introduced the reader to the ideal demographic of these books. The twelve stories produced for the art practice were then presented, followed by eleven creative triggers that were applied to the books. It was discovered that these triggers can be used to activate a playful and imaginative reading of the books. To summarise, these twelve triggers include an unpacking of the kind of link that exists between image and text. The link might involve a balance of the power dynamics, or it might be disproportionate in that text might be curated to enhance the reading of an image or vice versa. It became apparent that kind of language and wording used in a picture book can also influence its reading. In the case of the books discussed above, the ambiguous wordplay between English and Afrikaans has given rise to puns and a humorous interplay between words and images. Additionally, it was found that a picture book can use its arrangement of design and design elements of type, colour and composition, to activate the reading of the book. Furthermore, the medium in which a picture book has been rendered, and how this medium has been applied, also influences the reading of the book. The narrator, or even the lack thereof, is also

[88] This moment in the story can be likened to the temptation experienced in the origin story of the Garden of Eden.

significant in relaying the story. Equally so is the age of the reader, whether a child or adult. As mentioned previously in Chapter Two, the contemporary picture book does not prioritise one reader over the other as two stories can be read within one book, depending on the perspective of the reader. The study also explored how a picture book's theme influences the reader's reception of its narrative. In the books unpacked above, the South Africanisms picked up from the focus group sessions function as the basis for most of the narratives of the books that were made. They show taboo topics and phrases, such as death and bodily functions, resulting in a more challenging reading of these narratives. Stories that include imaginary friends and the anthropomorphism of animals have been unpacked along with the significance of encouraging the reader to play and use their imaginations. Overall, these creative triggers can be applied to picture books to encourage the reader to play and be more imaginative.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This dissertation examined playfulness and imagination in the context of children's picture books. The motive for this study came from my observations while teaching illustration where it was noted that creatives can find themselves in a rut, becoming less playful and less imaginative. Furthermore, I have also perceived a lack of confidence in creative problem-solving skills in my students. This led to my interest in how children access an imaginary world and playfulness while interacting with picture books.

The primary research question of this study considered playfulness and the use of one's imagination through the lens of narratology and within the context of postmodern picture books. This led to research question number two that investigated how children play and make use of their imaginations through the same lens of narratology with a specific focus on postmodern narrative devices. To respond the above research questions, Chapter Three uncovered several postmodern narrative devices that were identified as features that can stimulate playfulness and imaginative thinking. Some of these features include the relationship between image and text, the design and physical format of the book, the book's thematic features that deals with contemporary issues and might include creatures with anthropomorphic qualities. These picture books are aimed at a wider audience, beyond the child reader. Furthermore, the relationship between the reader and the narrator is also worth mentioning as a postmodern narrative device. While these features make up some of the innumerable postmodern narrative devices, they have specifically been identified in Chapter Three as catalysts for playfulness and imaginative thinking.

Research question number three used the perspective of psychology to understand how children play and make use of their imaginations. In the same breath, research question number four looked at how children play and use their imagination from the perspective of phenomenology, focusing on the unmeasurable state of imaginary

friends and playfulness. To respond to the above research questions, Chapter Two established that the player must feel free to play, unplugged from real-world consequences and responsibilities. This applies equally to both the child, and adult who functions in a commodity-producing realm. In order to achieve this, the player needs to enter a state of 'true play' where they lose themselves in the task of playing and imagining (Winnicott 1971: 47). Here, they might find what Winnicott (1965: 148) refers to as the 'True Self', a pure version of themselves as the player who is fully engaged with the task of playing and imagining. One's environment can also influence how one plays and makes use of the imagination. This is where a positive connection with the activity of playing is established (Winnicott 1971: 58). When this place is set up in such a way that the player feels safe and comfortable enough to play and engage the imagination freely, it is referred to as the 'transitional space' (Winnicott 1971: 47). The player may take imaginary friends with them when entering this place, or in some cases, they might find the imaginary friend here while playing. This imaginary friend can be likened to Winnicott's notion of the 'transitional object' (Elmhirst 2013: Online). Furthermore, this section responded to the research questions by identifying who can play, why and how one plays and uses one's imagination, as well as what keeps one from playing and fully engaging one's imagination.

With the information gleaned from Chapter Two, which defined and unpacked imagination and play from the perspective of psychology and phenomenology, and Chapter Three, which identified playfulness and imaginative features within narratology, the next research question could be addressed. Research question number four necessitated an exploration of postmodern picture books to identify features that can stimulate playfulness and imaginative thinking. The most valuable findings from the preceding chapters have been condensed and summarised into eleven creative triggers: 1) the relationship between image and text, 2) language, 3) design, 4) the medium, 5) the open-ended ending of the picture book, 6) the narrator and 7) the audience, 8) the theme of the book, 9) taboo topics, 10) imaginary friends and 11) characters that appear with anthropomorphic features.

Chapter Four delves into these eleven creative triggers through case studies of contemporary postmodern picture books, pointing out how these triggers can be employed to foster playfulness and stimulate the imagination. This section is structured with each of the eleven triggers forming headings. These eleven creative triggers have been identified within the picture books based on the following features:

1) The interplay between image and text, wherein text can be read as an image, in place of an image, or vice versa, depending on its positioning within a spread.

2) The linguistic elements and wording used in a picture book, including language devices such as alliteration, rhyme and puns which can evoke imaginative thinking and playfulness.

3) The design choices of a picture book, encompassing typeface, colour palettes, composition and other visual formal elements.

4) The medium and its application may also influence the playful and imaginative reading of the book.

5) The unconventional unresolved ending of a book can allow the audience to conjure up their own ending, promoting imaginative thinking and playfulness.

6) The role of narrator or the deliberate absence of one can encourage the reader to navigate through the book's content independently, necessitating playfulness and imaginative thinking.

7) Picture books designed to reach a broader audience, extending beyond children, can activate playfulness and the imagination.

8) Thematic exploration of contemporary social issues can inspire the reader to reflect on real-life experiences, activating their imagination.

9) Such themes consisting of taboo topics, traditionally perceived as vulgar or obscure, can cause the reader to playfully engage their imagination.

10) The inclusion of characters with anthropomorphic qualities can urge the audience to imagine these scenarios more playfully.

11) Lastly, the incorporation of imaginary friends as companions can aid the reader to unpack the picture book in an imaginative and playful manner.

The last research question, number six, looked at how the activities of imaginative playing in childhood influence the creative process of the adult. At this juncture in the study, it became evident that there was an overlap between the picture book maker[89] and the audience member[90] of the picture book. These eleven creative triggers to playing and using the imagination may be applied by the picture book maker during the creative process of making a picture book. Additionally, the creator of picture book may apply these creative triggers to encourage the book's audience member to navigate their way through the picture book's content playfully and imaginatively. Moreover, it could be said that these eleven creative triggers could then encourage the audience member of the picture book to engage with the act of play and imagining in daily life more intentionally.

Chapter Five started with an explanation of the information gathering techniques used to collect the stories for these picture books. Focus groups were conducted to gather insight into shared childhood memories of play which formed the basis of my stories that emerged with twelve picture books forming the boxset titled *Cautionary tales for Grown Ups from Children/Cautionary tales for children from Grown Ups*. These books are meant to read as a reminder to adults of their playful and imaginative childhood selves as well as inspiring children to stay playful and imaginative when they become adults. It was found that a participant's imagination can be sparked when listening to others who share their experiences that reflect a childhood at play (Cass 1971: 118). When responding to research question number six and writing up Chapter Five, it was necessary to unpack the pictures books I created as part of my practice-based study according to the above eleven creative triggers. It was then found that these eleven triggers could be applied to the creative process of making my picture books, where I

[89] This could be the illustrator, design and author of the book.
[90] This could be the parent who reads the book to the child, the child themselves or even a fellow picture book maker or publisher.

went about playing and using my imagination intentionally, so that the reader might be stimulated to do the same.

Overall, a cyclical process was discovered: When the picture book maker is actively involved in playfully imaging while making the picture book, implementing the eleven creative triggers, they might entice the reader to be more imaginative and playful when making the picture book and perhaps even in daily life.

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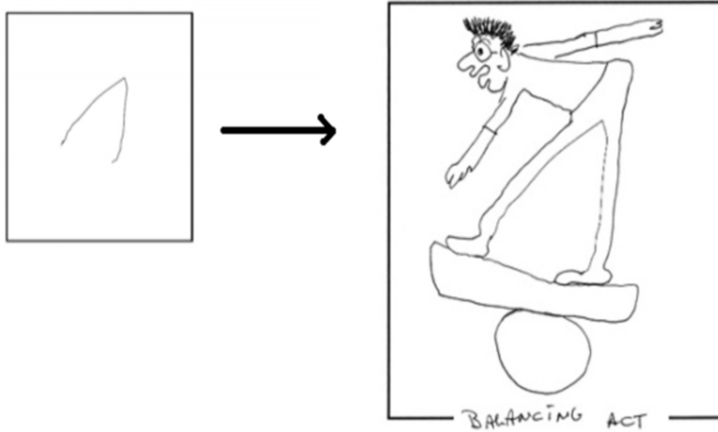
ADDENDUM OF IMAGES



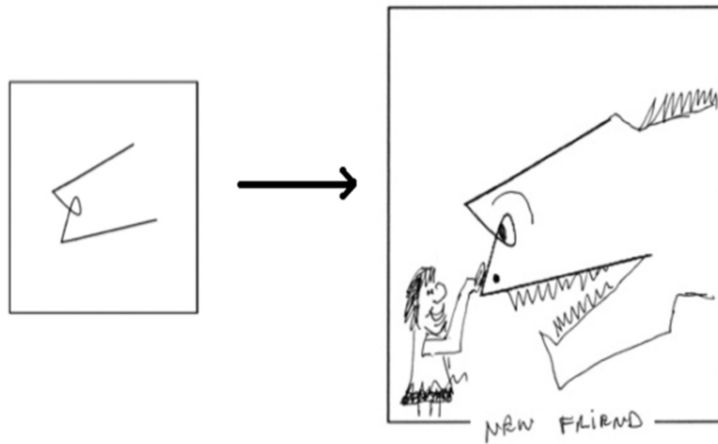


Fig. 1 Torrance. *Here are 2 examples of incomplete drawings and then the responses*. (2020) [Online]. Available: https://johndabell.com/2020/01/06/torrance-tests-of-creative-thinking-ttct/ [Accessed 8 March 2020].

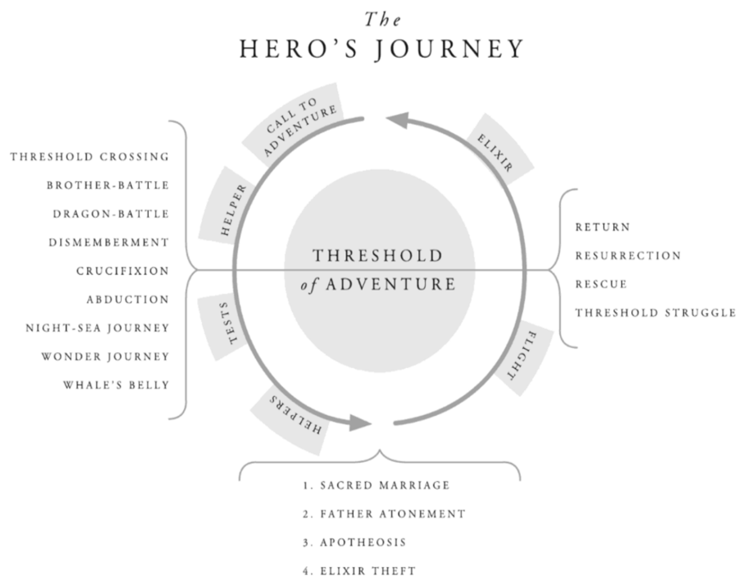


Fig. 2 Campbell. *The Hero's Journey* (1949: 210)

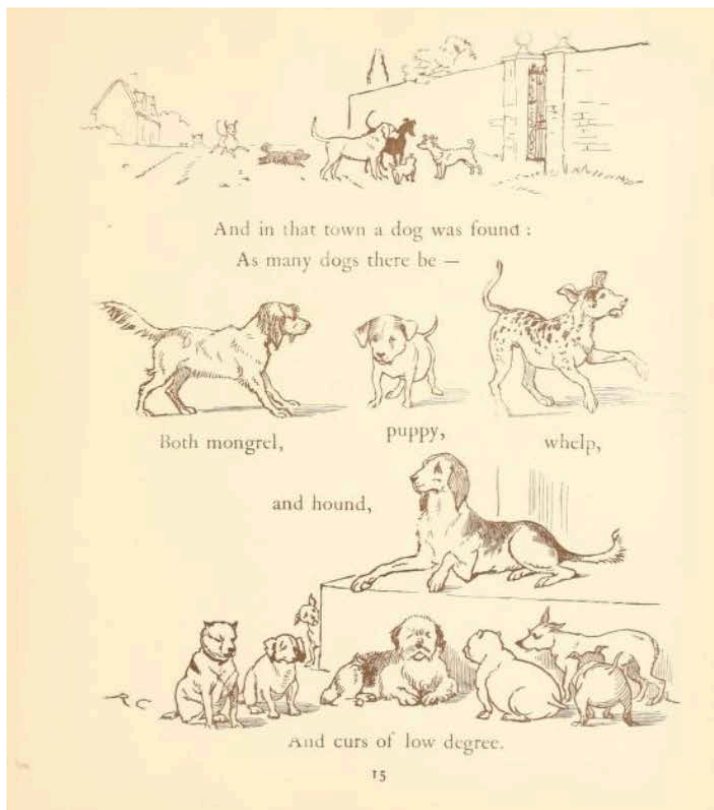


Fig. 3 Caldecott. *Elegy on the death of a mad dog* (1979: 14)

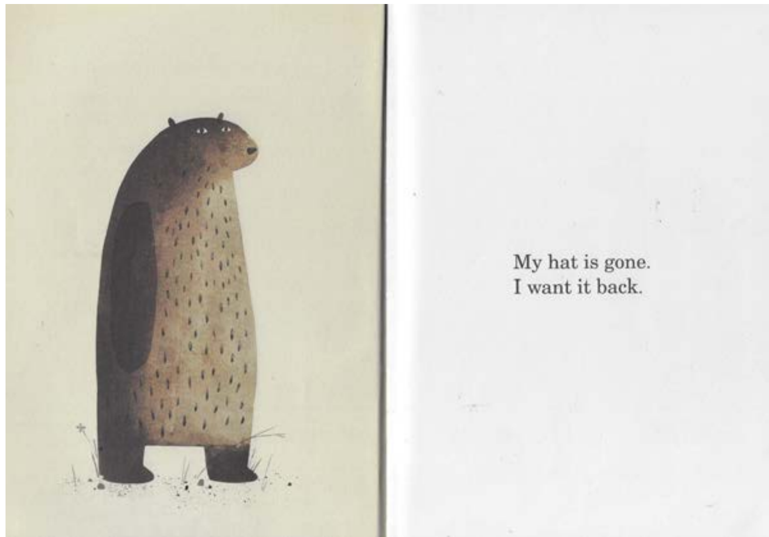


Fig. 4 Klassen. *I want my hat back* (2011)

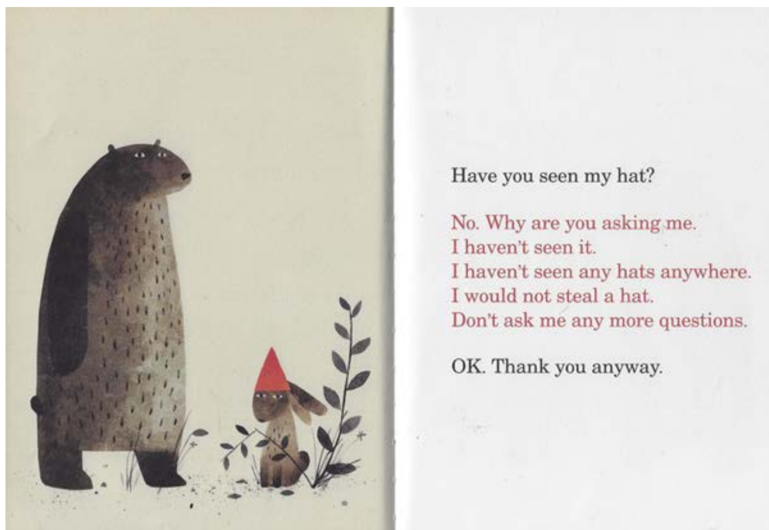


Fig. 5 Klassen. *I want my hat back* (2011)

Fig. 6 Klassen. *I want my hat back* (2011)

Fig. 7 Klassen. *I want my hat back* (2011)

Fig. 8 Klassen. *I want my hat back* (2011)

Fig. 9 Erlbrugh. *Duck, Death and Tulip* (2008)

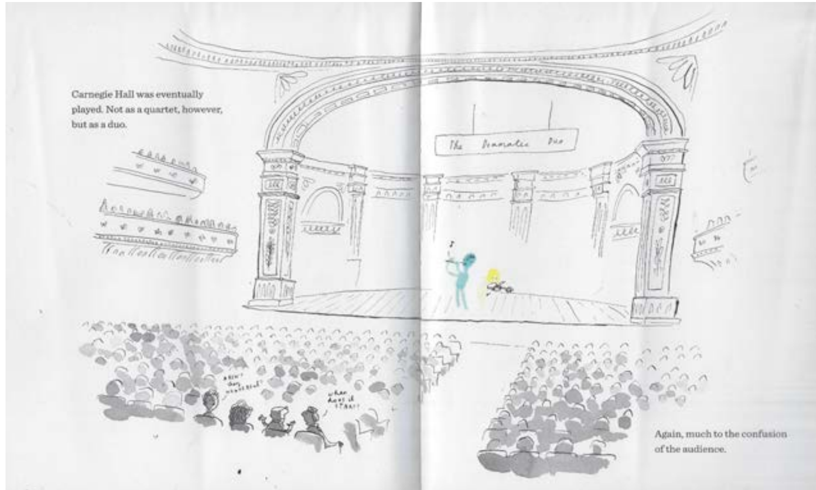


Fig. 10 Colfer & Jeffers. *Imaginary Fred* (2015)

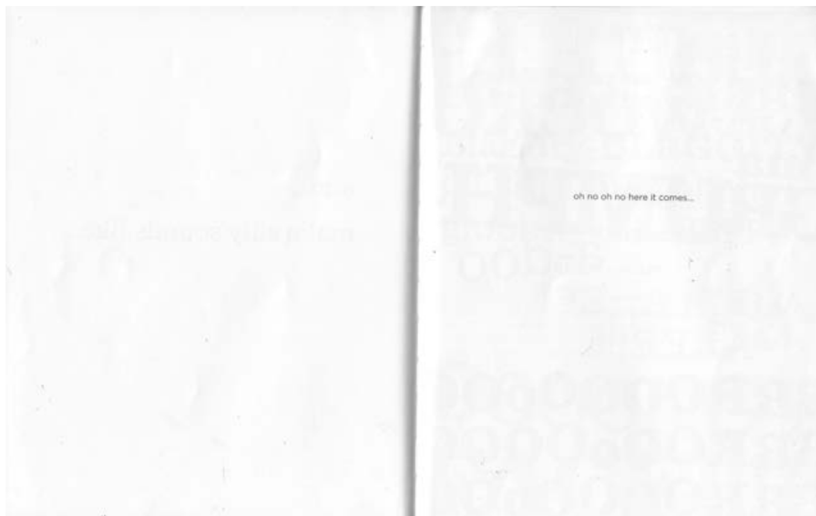


Fig. 11 Novak. *The book with no pictures* (2016)

Fig. 12 Novak. *The book with no pictures* (2016)

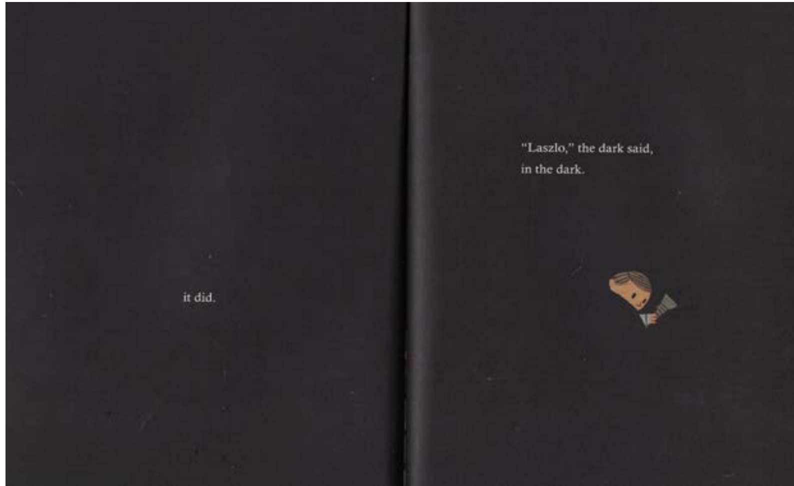


Fig. 13 Klassen & Snicket. *The dark* (2014)

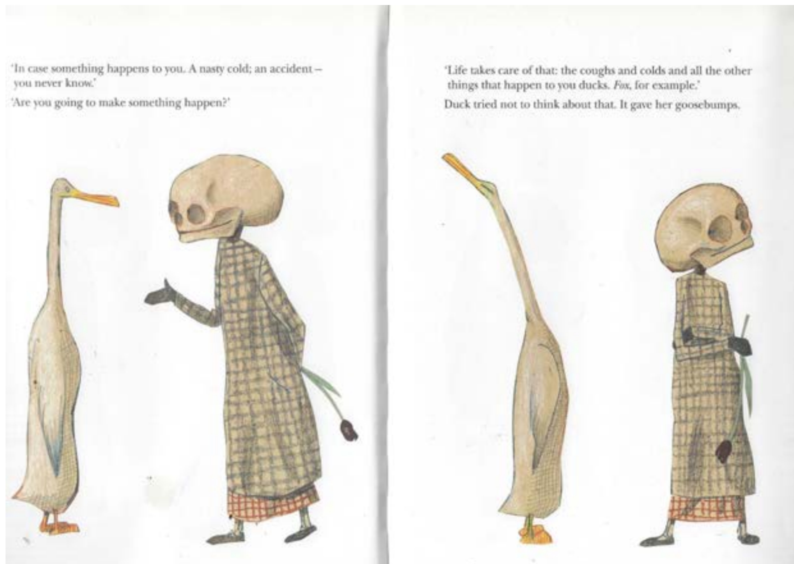


Fig. 14 Erlbrugh. *Duck, Death and Tulip* (2008)

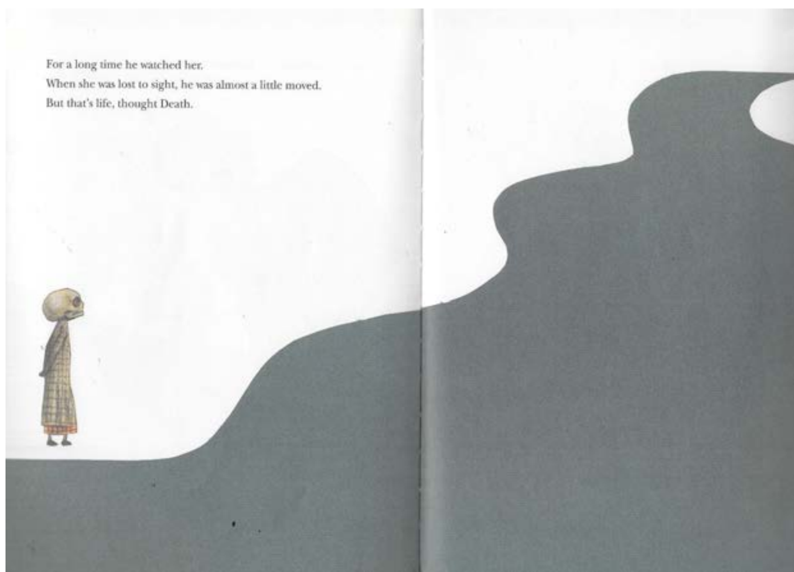


Fig. 15 Erlbrugh. *Duck, Death and Tulip* (2008)

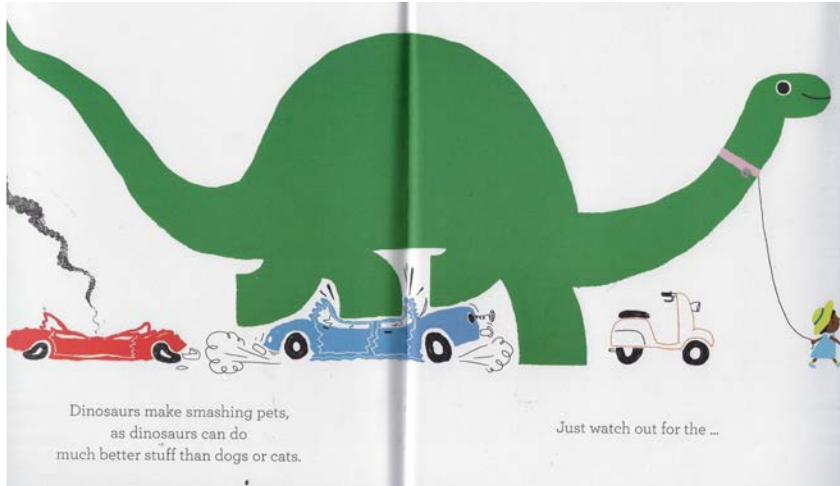


Fig. 16 Barrow & Dawnay. *If I had a dinosaur* (2018)

Fig. 17 Barrow & Dawnay. *If I had a dinosaur* (2018)

Fig. 18a Butchart & Boutavant. *Never tickle a tiger* (2015)

Fig. 18b Butchart & Boutavant. *Never tickle a tiger* (2015)

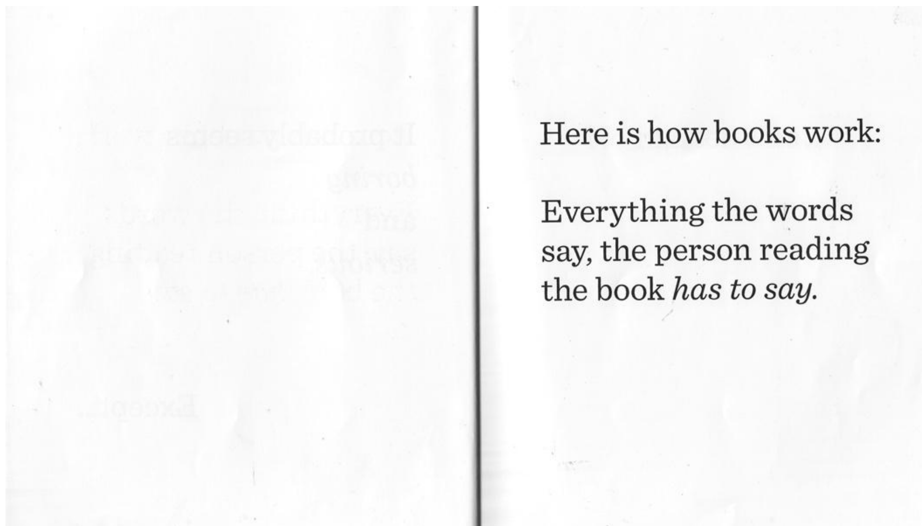
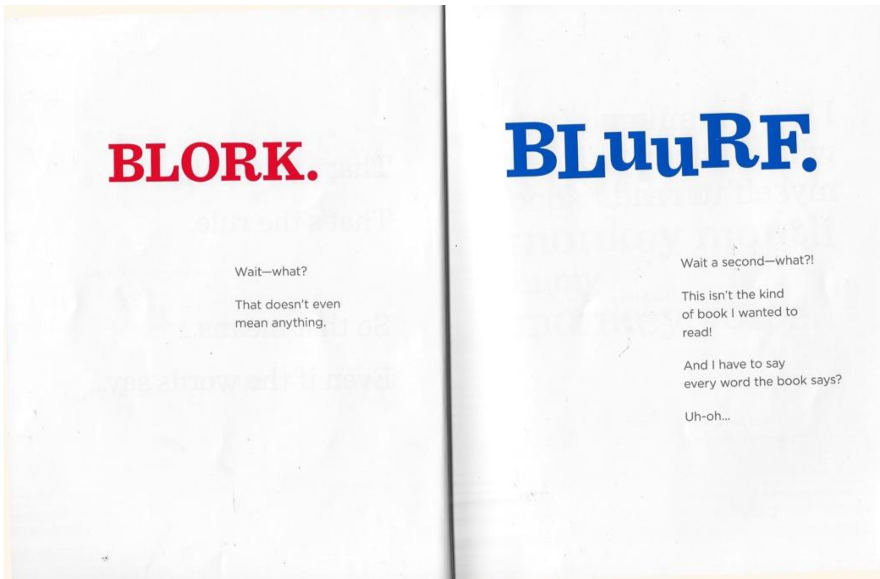


Fig. 19 Novak. *The book with no pictures* (2016)



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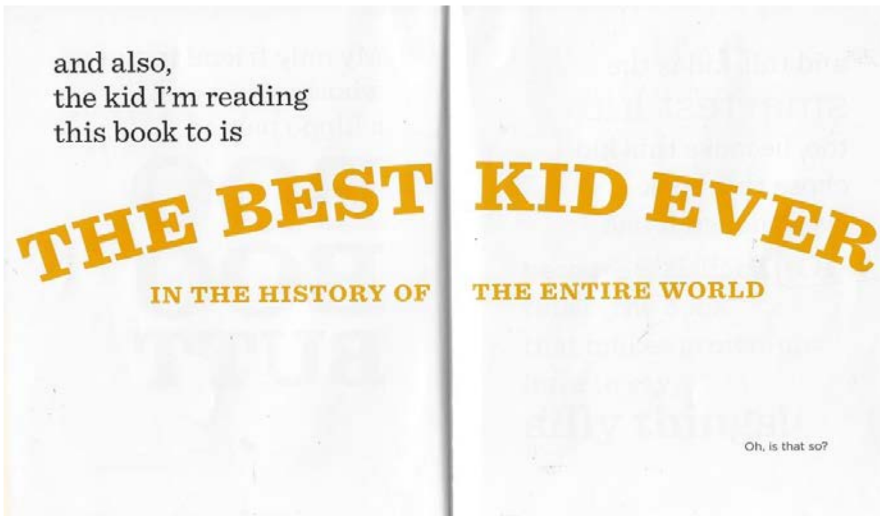

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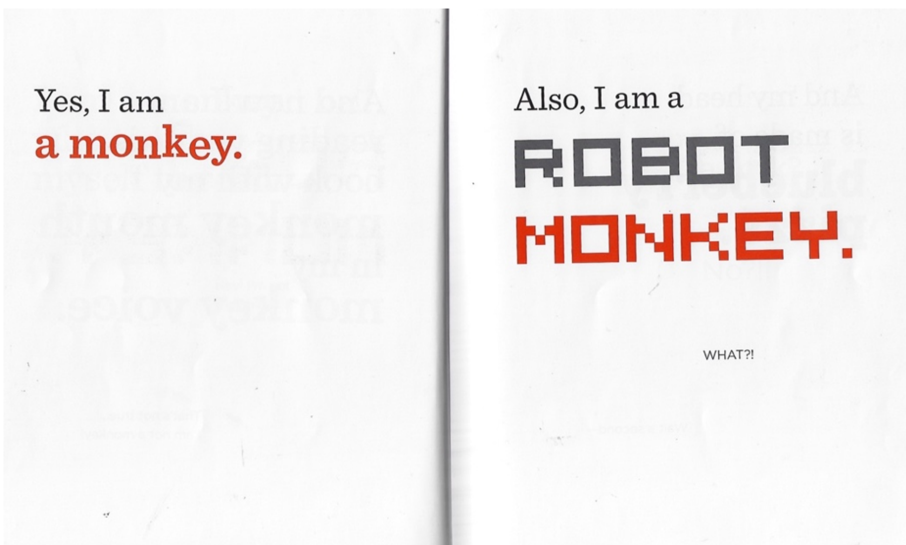


Fig. 22 Novak. *The book with no pictures* (2016)

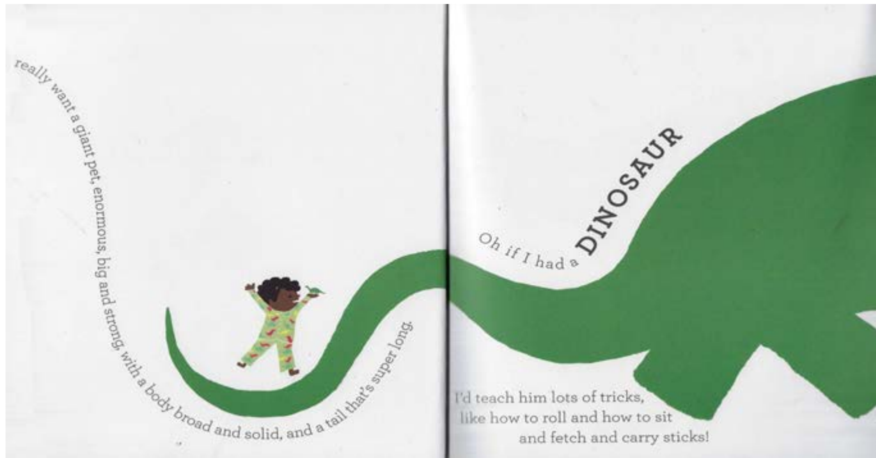


Fig. 23 Barrow & Dawnay. *If I had a dinosaur* (2018)

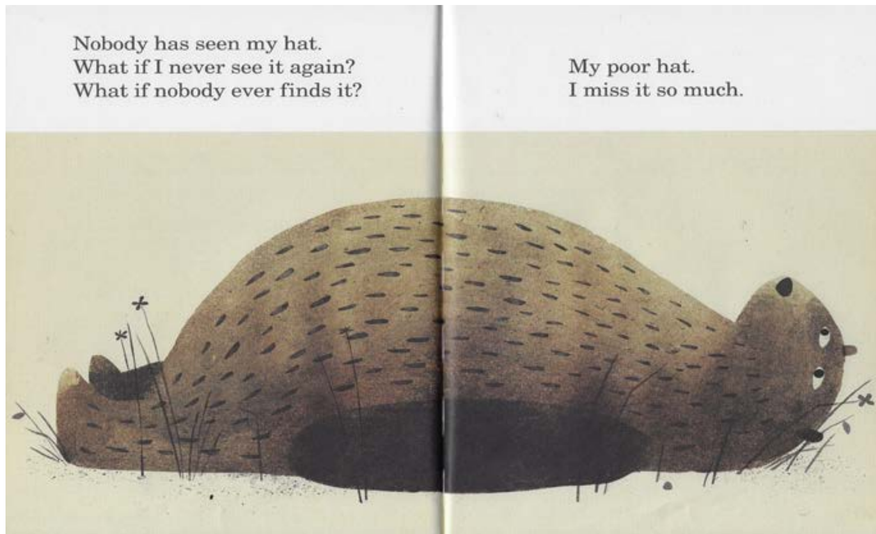


Fig. 24 Klassen. *I want my hat back* (2011)

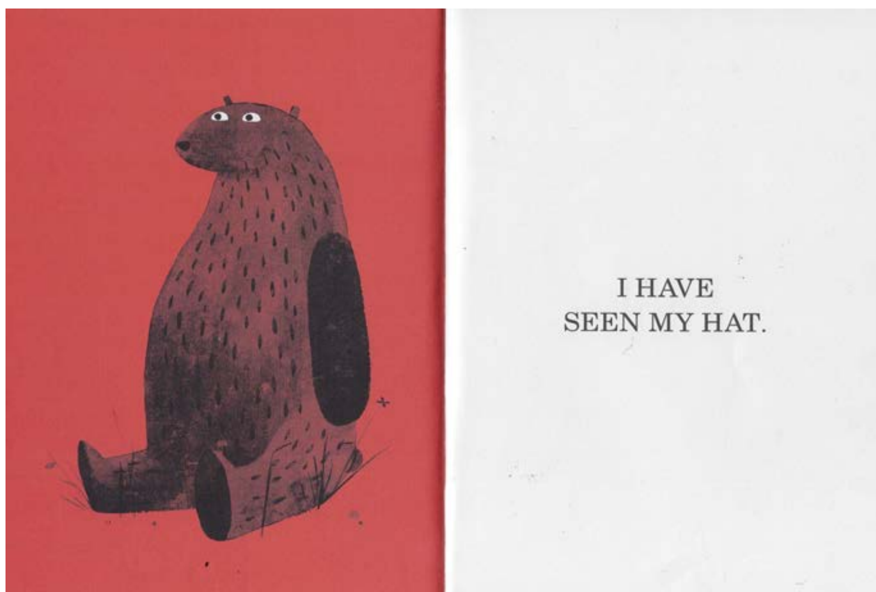


Fig. 25 Klassen. *I want my hat back* (2011)

Fig. 26 Klassen. *I want my hat back* (2011)

Fig. 27 Fanelli. *Mythological monsters* (2002)

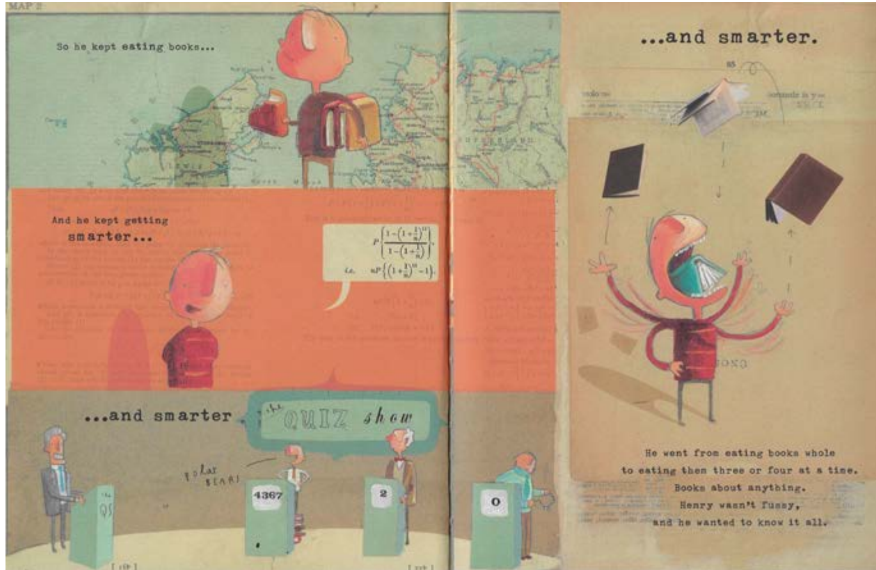


Fig. 28 Jeffers. *The incredible book eating boy* (2009)

Fig. 29 Jeffers. *The day the crayons quit* (2013)

Fig. 30 Haddon & Birmingham. *The sea of tranquility* (2008)

Fig. 31 Llenas. *The colour monster* (2016)

Fig. 32 Llenas. *The colour monster* (2016)

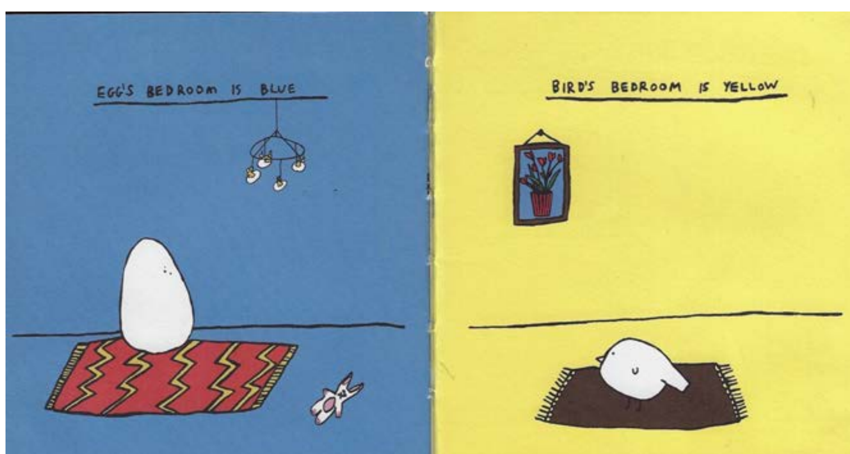


Fig. 33 Higlett. *Egg and bird* (2007)

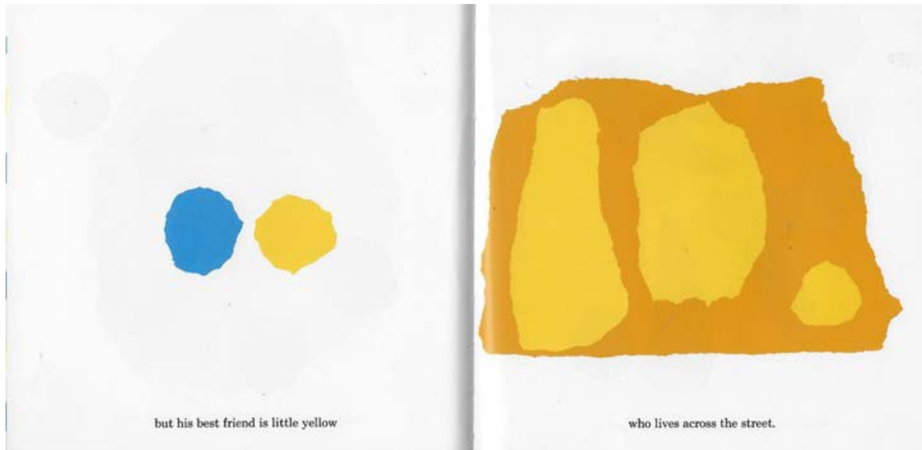


Fig. 34 Lionni. *Little blue and little yellow* (1959)

Fig. 35 Matisse. *The snail* (1953)

Fig. 36 Llenas. *The colour monster* (2016)

Fig. 37 Llenas. *The colour monster* (2016)

Fig. 38 Eland. *When sadness comes to call* (2020)

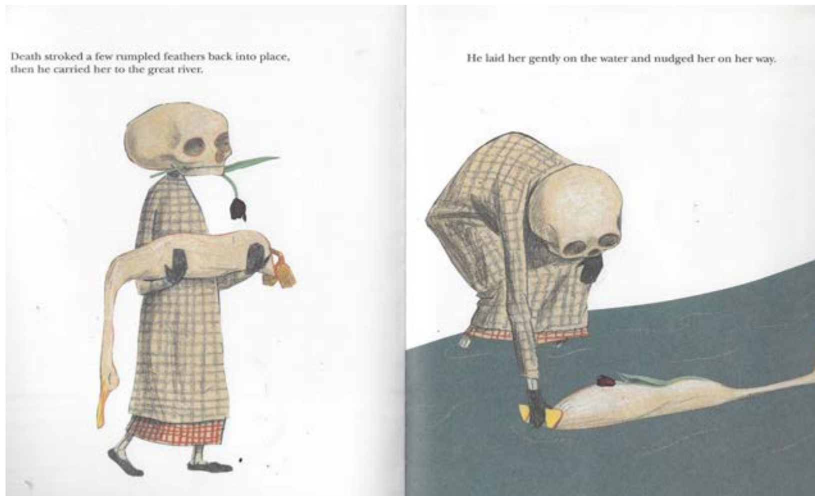
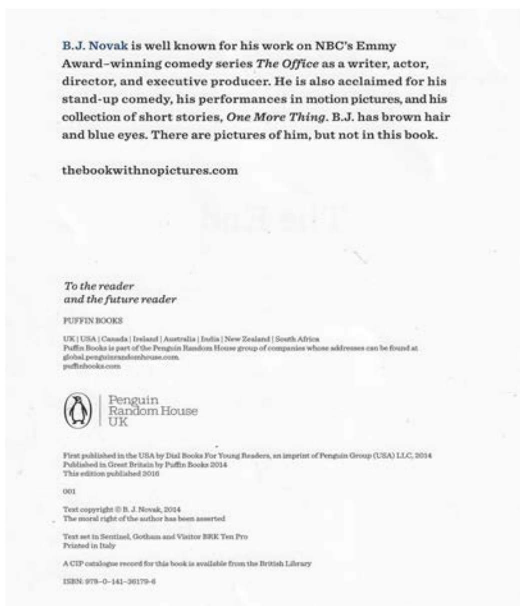


Fig. 39 Erlbrugh. *Duck, Death and Tulip* (2008)

Fig. 40 Barnett & Klassen. *Triangle* (2017)



B.J. Novak is well known for his work on NBC's Emmy Award-winning comedy series *The Office* as a writer, actor, director, and executive producer. He is also acclaimed for his stand-up comedy, his performances in motion pictures, and his collection of short stories, *One More Thing*. B.J. has brown hair and blue eyes. There are pictures of him, but not in this book.

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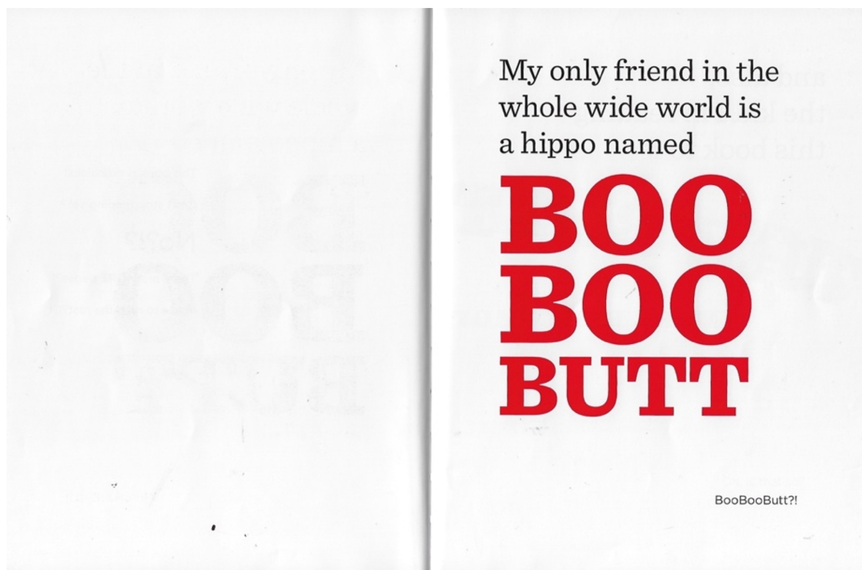
Fig. 41 Novak. *The book with no pictures* (2016)

Fig. 42 Klassen. *I want my hat back* (2011)

Fig. 43 Llenas. *The colour monster* (2016)

Fig. 44 Llenas. *The colour monster* (2016)

Fig. 45 Butchart & Boutavant. *Never tickle a tiger* (2015)



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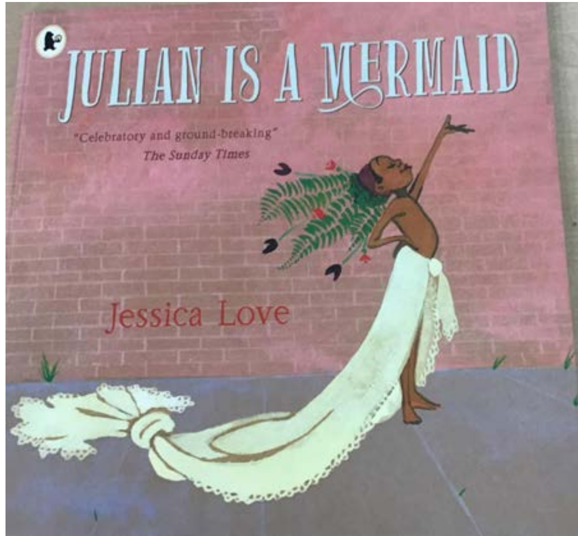

Fig. 48 Love. *Julian is a mermaid* (2018)

Fig. 49 Barrow & Dawnay. *If I had a dinosaur* (2018)

Fig. 50 Eland. *When sadness comes to call* (2020)

Fig. 51 Llenas. *The colour monster* (2016)

Fig. 52 Holtzworth & Erlbruch. *Die Molletjie wat wou weet wie op sy kop gedinges het* (1989)

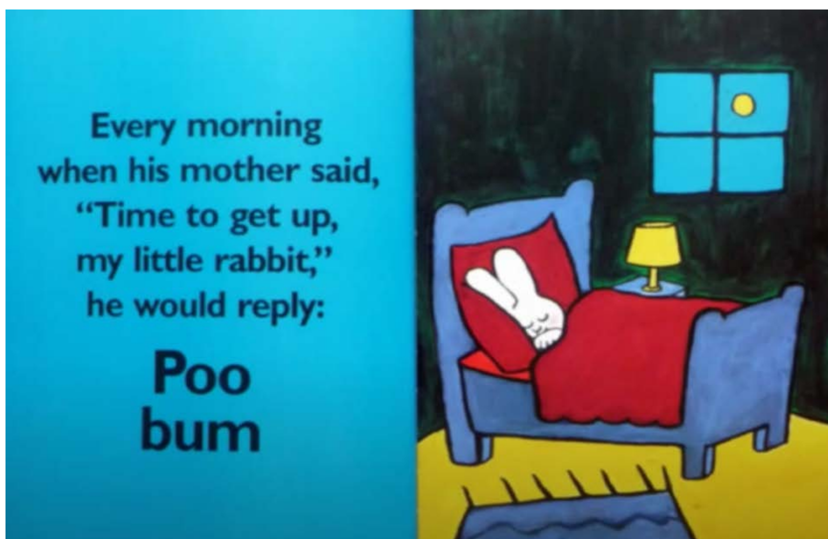

Fig. 53 Blake. *Poo Bum* (2002)

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Fig. 55 Klassen & Snicket. *The dark* (2014)

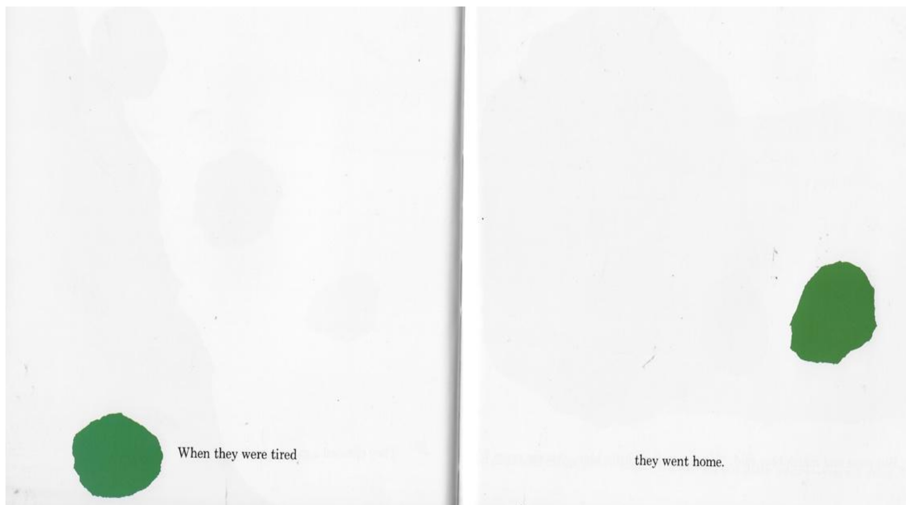

Fig. 56 Lionni. *Little blue and little yellow* (1959)

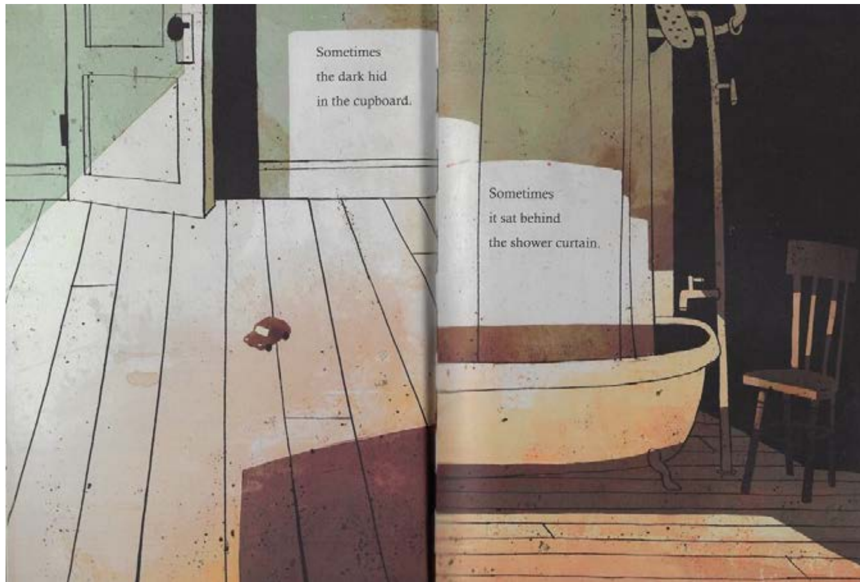

Fig. 57 Klassen & Snicket. *The dark* (2014)

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Fig. 59 Simpson. *Afraid of the Draak* (2022)

Fig. 60 Simpson. *Afraid of the Draak* (2022)

Fig. 61 Simpson. *Chappies with the change, please* (2022)

Fig. 62 Simpson. *Don't put things up your nose* (2022)

Fig. 63 Simpson. *How Sandile got all the girls* (2022)

Fig. 64 Simpson. *It is dark.* (2022)

Fig. 65 Simpson. *Let's play archelogist-archeologist* (2022)

Fig. 66 Simpson. *My skeleton* (2022)

Fig. 67 Simpson. *Skinny colour* (2022)

Fig. 68 Simpson. *The busy bee* (2022)

Fig. 69 Simpson. *The mouse who loved cheese* (2022)

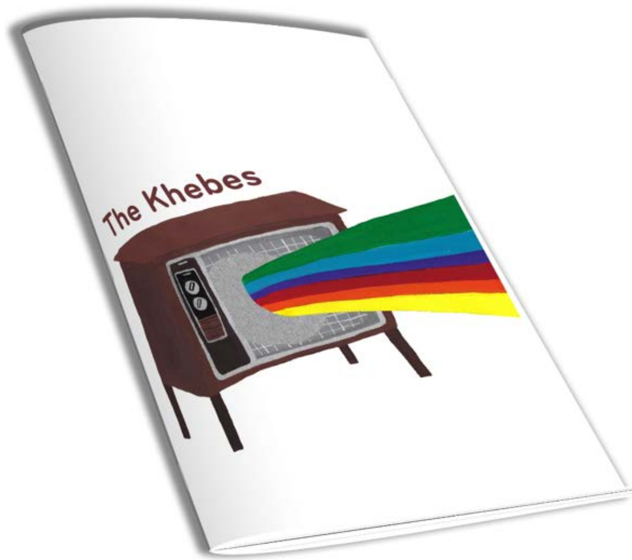

Fig. 70 Simpson.
The Khebes (2022)

Fig. 71 Simpson.
The thief (2022)

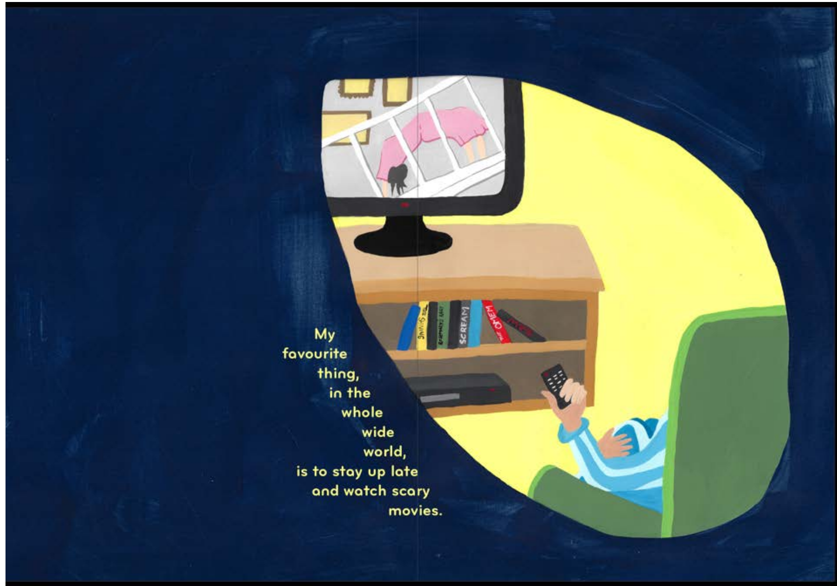

Fig. 72 Simpson. *Afraid of the Draak* (2022)

Fig. 73 Simpson. *Afraid of the Draak* (2022)

Fig. 74 Simpson. *The thief* (2022)

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Fig. 77 Simpson. *Afraid of the Draak* (2022)

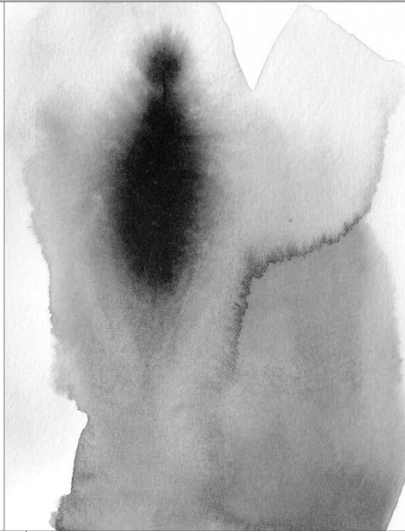


Fig. 78 Simpson. *It is dark.* (2022)

Fig. 79 Simpson. *How Sandile got all the girls* (2022)

When you arrive at Homeleigh Farm,
you get a little bakkie* full of food,
that you can feed the animals with.

*a plastic bowl

Fig. 80 Simpson. *Don't put things up your nose* (2022)

Scrolling through social media,
I saw that my best friend's
kid started big school today.

Wow, I thought, to start school in the year 2020...
that's 26 years after I started school!

Fig. 81 Simpson.
Skinny colour (2022)

Fig. 82 Simpson.
Afraid of the Draak (2022)

Fig. 83 Simpson.
Chappies with the change, please (2022)

Fig. 84 Simpson. *The mouse who loved cheese* 2022)

Fig. 85 Simpson. *Chappies with the change, please* (2022)

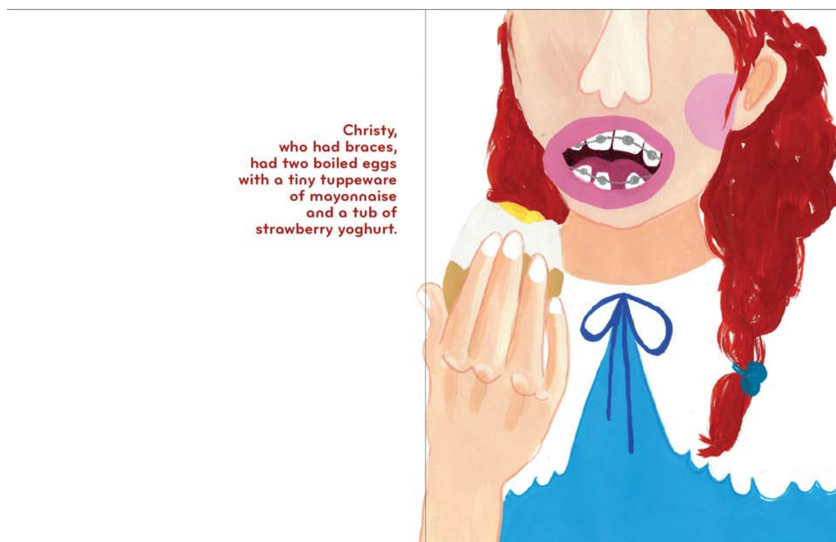


Fig. 86 Simpson. *How Sandile got all the girls* (2022)

Fig. 87 Simpson. *Afraid of the Draak* (2022)

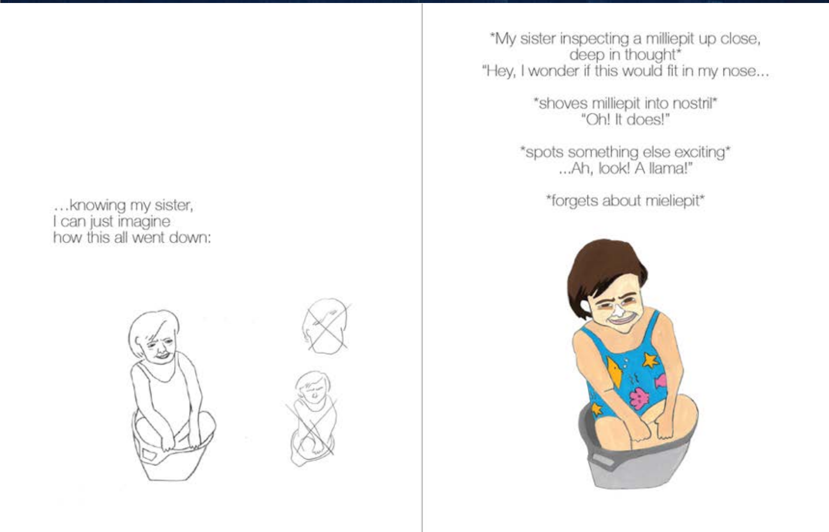


Fig. 88 Simpson. *Don't put things up your nose* (2022)

Fig. 89 Simpson. *How Sandile got all the girls* (2022)

Fig. 90 Simpson. *Skinny colour* (2022)

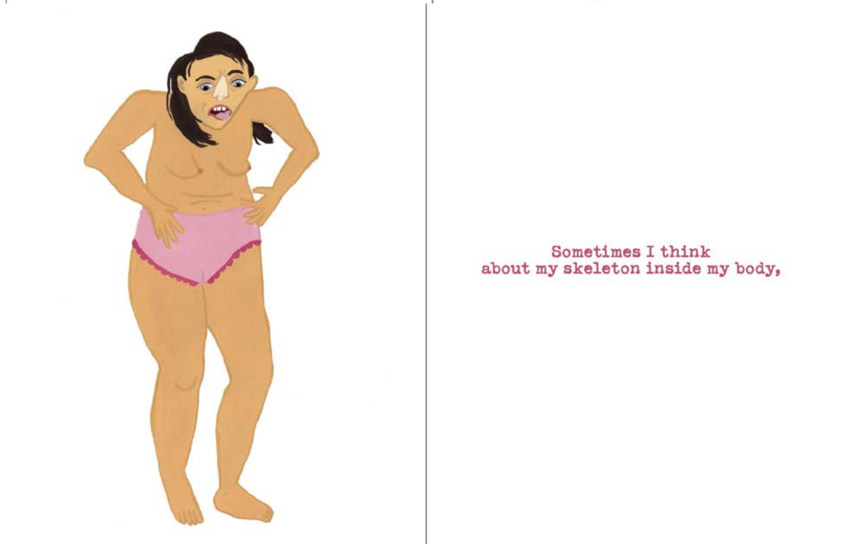


Fig. 91 Simpson. *My skeleton* (2022)

Fig. 92 Simpson. *Don't put things up your nose* (2022)

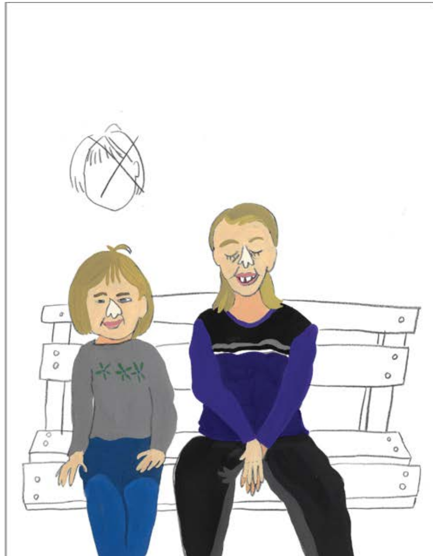


Fig. 93 Simpson. *Don't put things up your nose* (2022)

Fig. 94 Simpson. *Don't put things up your nose* (2022)

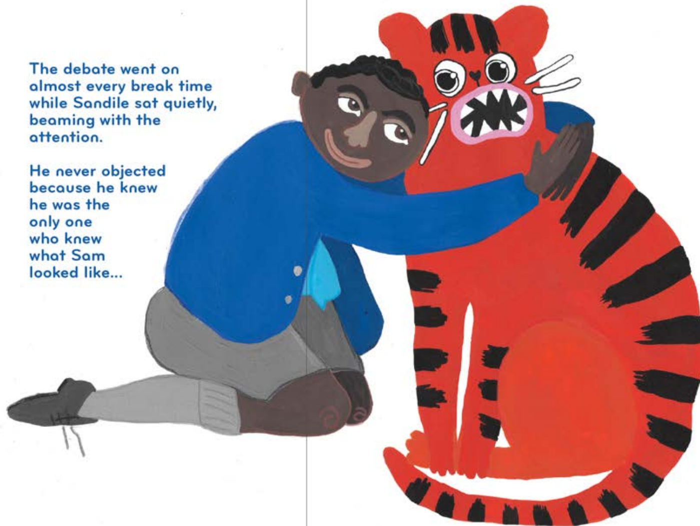


Fig. 95 Simpson. *How Sandile got all the girls* (2022)

Fig. 96 Simpson. *How Sandile got all the girls* (2022)

Fig. 97 Simpson. *The busy bee* (2022)

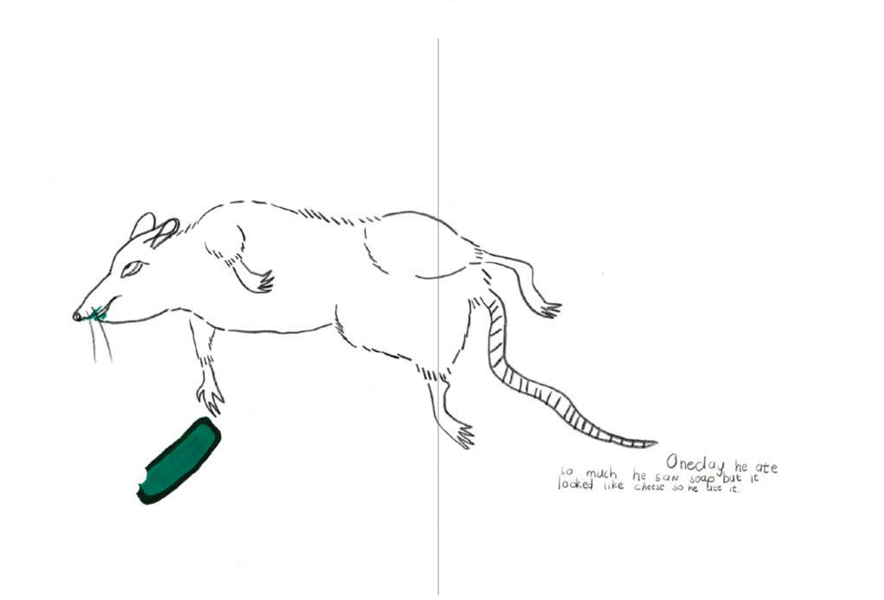
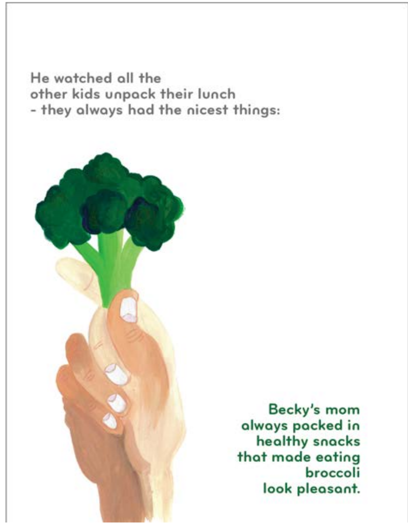
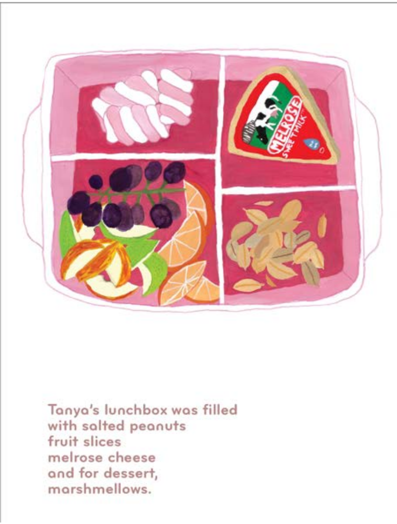


Fig. 98 Simpson. *The mouse who loved cheese* (2022)





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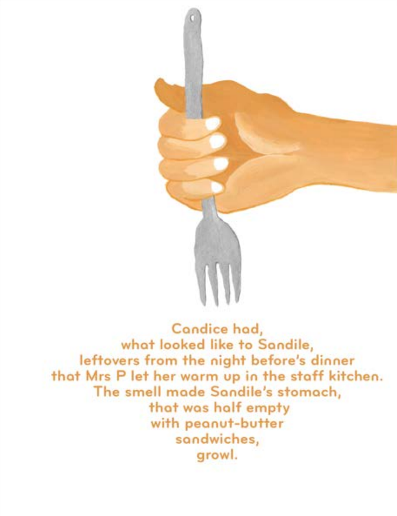

Fig. 100 Simpson. *How Sandile got all the girls* (2022)

Fig. 101 Simpson. *The mouse who loved cheese* (2022)

Fig. 102 Simpson. *The mouse who loved cheese* (2022)

Fig. 103 Simpson. *Afraid of the Draak* (2022)