



## Children, Visual Images, and Narratives

—Clare Bradford

Colomer, Teresa, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, and Cecilia Silva-Diaz, eds. *New Directions in Picturebook Research*. New York: Routledge, 2010. 261 pp. US\$125.00 hc. ISBN 978-0-415-87690-2. Print.

Edwards, Gail, and Judith Saltman. *Picturing Canada: A History of Canadian Children's Illustrated Books and Publishing*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2010. 381 pp. \$125.00 hc, \$39.95 pb. ISBN 978-0-8020-3759-6, 978-0-8020-8540-5. Print.

Harding, Jennifer, and Pat Pinsent, eds. *What Do*

*You See? International Perspectives on Children's Book Illustration*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2008. 258 pp. £25.99 hc. ISBN 978-1-4438-0007-5. Print.

Lerner, Loren, ed. *Depicting Canada's Children*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2009. 468 pp. \$95.00 hc. ISBN 978-1-55458-050-7. Print.

Pantaleo, Sylvia. *Exploring Student Response to Contemporary Picturebooks*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2009. 243 pp. \$57.00 hc, \$27.95 pb. ISBN 978-0-8020-9799-6, 978-1-4426-1095-8. Print.

The five books that are the subject of this review have in common a preoccupation with visual images and their cultural purposes and meanings in texts for and about children. *What Do You See?* and *New Directions in Picturebook Research* are outcomes of conferences: IBBY's fourteenth annual conference, held

in conjunction with the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature at Roehampton University, and the New Impulses in Picturebook Research conference held in 2007 at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, respectively. Both collections comprise a selection of papers presented at these conferences

and (in the case of *New Directions*) commissioned by the editors. Sylvia Pantaleo's *Exploring Student Response to Contemporary Picturebooks* describes the responses of children from Grades 1 and 5 to a range of contemporary picture books over a period of four years. Gail Edwards and Judith Saltman's *Picturing Canada* is the first study of the history of Canadian illustrated books and publishing for children, commencing with the British-published books about Canada from the nineteenth century and ending with books published in 2005. *Depicting Canada's Children* focuses not on picture books and illustrated books for children but on pictures of Canadian children from the seventeenth century to the present. The five books thus differ in the circumstances of their production, the scope of the topics they address, and the audiences for which they are intended. Two of them, *Picturing Canada* and *Depicting Canada's Children*, foreground Canadian cultural and historical contexts, while the other three traverse texts from a variety of national literatures.

At the beginning of *Picturing Canada*, Gail Edwards and Judith Saltman observe that "the picturebook, a relatively recent development within the history of children's publishing, is the only book format that is the exclusive domain of children's literature" (3–4). Picture books occupy a crucial place in the lives of many children and young people: they very often introduce young children to printed texts and the pleasures they

afford (Nodelman and Reimer), they are widely used within practices of literacy education, and they have demonstrated their adaptability as texts for adolescents and for young adults (Stephens and Watson). Their reception frequently occurs in social contexts that incorporate interpersonal communication of many kinds through dialogue between inexperienced and experienced readers. In many respects, as Elizabeth Parsons has pointed out, they function as "scripts and sites for performance by forming a visual and spatial backdrop, providing textual narratives, scripting dialogues, and incorporating scores for an interplay of speech, gesture and the production of abstract sounds." These performative renderings of picture books are folded into the interpersonal relations of those involved in them. Picture books afford repertoires of visual images and narratives anchored in cultural assumptions, systems of meaning and ideologies. They thus reflect and advocate concepts and values responsive to the times and cultures in which they are produced, even as their reception often stretches beyond these times and cultures, especially in the case of widely translated works such as Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*.

The collection *What Do You See?* comprises twenty-two chapters whose origins as conference papers are evident in their relative brevity and in the disparate nature of the texts and approaches they cover. Participants at conferences often draw upon established



The brevity of the essays works against their capacity to explore the complex questions that they often suggest.



or developing projects, using their presentations to report on work in progress or to sum up findings that have emerged out of their research. Edited collections arising from conferences may capture the breadth and variety of papers and presentation styles, but they often lack the coherence of a collection of essays developed around a more coherent and narrowly focused set of ideas or questions. Harding and Pinsent's collection is divided into four sections: "Part I: Europe," "Part II: Further Afield," "Part III: Remembering the Child Audience," and "Part IV: Conclusion." The essays are enhanced by coloured illustrations, although these illustrations are not often discussed in any detail but function as examples of the styles of illustration produced by individual illustrators, or within surveys of national literatures, rather than as evidence connected with authors' arguments.

The brevity of the essays works against their capacity to explore the complex questions that they often suggest. For instance, Petros Panaou discusses a group of picture books that addresses concepts of cultural difference, affiliation, nationalism, globalization, and regionalization, but his essay glances at these concepts rather than analyzing the implications of narratives, language, and illustrations. Panaou's essay ends by observing that one of the books that he discusses, the Austrian picture book *Das Land der Ecken* (*The Land of Corners*), both promotes European Union (EU) rhetoric of tolerance of the other and incorporates its own version of intolerance through its negative treatment of "undemocratic/non-liberal cultures" (43). I found myself wanting a more sustained argument that might have analyzed the book's ambivalence and evaluated its ideological tensions. Again, Jean Webb's essay, "Aesthetic Hegemony: Native American Culture,"

concludes with the observation that contemporary research in children's literature tends to be dominated by European models and methods of inquiry that are insufficient to inform readings of non-European texts such as the Native American picture books on which Webb focuses. This is an important and accurate observation, but it is also the case that scholars trained in European methods of analysis can readily access the work of Native American and other non-European scholars in order to gain at least a partial understanding of non-European systems of knowledge and narrative or can search for opportunities for first-hand engagement with cultural difference. The impression left by Webb's essay is one of an incommensurable gap between cultures, yet her own approach to the texts she discusses goes some way to suggesting how this gap might be bridged.

Perhaps the principal virtue of *What Do You See?* is that it foregrounds the variety and range of picture books from EU countries, Japan, Mexico, the United States, Australia, and South Africa, and provides examples of how diverse child audiences respond to some of these books. The essays include interviews with illustrators Jan Pienkowski, Satoshi Kitamura, and Klauss Flugge, as well as an account, by the author Dianne Hofmeyr, of the directions taken by South African picture books since the end of apartheid. The book thus offers examples of texts that scholars might pursue and vivid illustrations that will repay close

examination. If its breadth is achieved at the expense of analytical depth, its usefulness lies in its capacity to suggest further directions in picture-book research.

*New Directions in Picturebook Research* is a scholarly collection of seventeen essays that (in the main) arise from conference papers that have been developed into examinations of topics organized in three sections: "Part I: Picturebooks, Literacy, and Cultural Context," "Part II: Picturebooks and Storytelling," and "Part III: Making Sense out of Picturebooks." These sections are somewhat arbitrarily defined, however; for instance, the editors note that the essays in the first section "focus on the relationship between children's response, literacy, metaliterary awareness, the values of contemporary societies, the artistic constructiveness of visual and written text and its implication in cognitive development" (2), a wide swathe of topics and approaches that might have incorporated all the essays in the collection. The title *New Directions in Picturebook Research* suggests rather more than the book accomplishes. It is difficult to determine how the approaches and methods of the authors propose "new directions," since they adhere to a range of literary and cultural theories (in particular, structuralist, narratological, and psychoanalytical frameworks) that commonly appear in essays and books in the field. Individual essays, too, often rehearse well-travelled paths. Perry Nodelman's "Words Claimed: Picturebook Narratives and the Project of

Children's Literature," for instance, not only reprises many of the ideas in Nodelman's *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (2008) but returns to some of the foundational concepts that he broached in his 1992 essay "The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children's Literature." Again, Sandra L. Beckett's "Artistic Allusions in Picturebooks" recapitulates many of her own findings in the essays and books she has produced on retellings and reversions of traditional stories, and Maria Nikolajeva's "Interpretative Codes and Implied Readers of Children's Picturebooks" revisits the structuralist readings she has so often deployed in her examinations of the aesthetics of children's literature. These three essays have valuable and interesting things to say, especially for scholars commencing research in the field, but like the collection as a whole, they do not forge new directions in picture-book research.

The collection incorporates a number of essays dealing with how picture books encode and promote cultural values and ideologies, including Teresa Colomer's "Picturebooks and Changing Values at the Turn of the Century," Nina Christensen's "How to Make Sense: Reflections on the Influence of Eighteenth Century Picturebooks on Picturebooks of Today," and Elina Druker's "Picturebooks and Trojan Horses: The Nordic Picturebook as a Site for Artistic Experiment during the 1950s." Focusing mainly on the formal and aesthetic properties of the books they discuss,

these essays are less than explicit about the cultural and historical contexts in which picture books are produced. Colomer's essay begins with the observation that "of the 250 most distinguished books for child [*sic*] and young people selected by critics and published in Spain in the twenty-first century, half are picturebooks" (41). The implication that the essay will deal with Spanish texts is belied by the fact that the essay deals with two groups of texts, the first published during the 1960s to 1970s, and the second from 1970 to 2000, and includes picture books from Switzerland, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States, and Australia as well as Spain. Using these two groups of books as evidence, Colomer argues that they reflect shifts in how children are regarded, relating these shifts to the increasing economic power of child consumers. I would argue, however, that these broad observations ignore differences within and across cultural and national formations as well as the propensity for children's books to reflect the middle-class environments in which picture books are most often purchased and received by child readers. The Eurocentric perspective of Colomer's essay seems to overgeneralize by implying that the changes she identifies are true of shifts in picture books universally. Christensen's discussion of books from the eighteenth and twentieth centuries makes telling observations about how these texts seek to educate child readers, but it is only in its final page that the essay spells


out how these pedagogical agendas relate to the intellectual and cultural climates in which they were produced. Again, Elina Druker's study of Nordic picture books of the 1950s devotes most of its attention to the changing aesthetics of these books without anchoring these observations to the cultural changes with which aesthetics are enmeshed. More generally, while many of the essays in this collection conduct adept discussions of the themes and content of a variety of picture books, they do not often make the shift from description to analysis that might have allowed for more politicized and historicized accounts of the cultural work that picture books perform.

The essays in *New Directions in Picturebook Research* that most explicitly address the cultural contexts in which picture books are produced and received are those that hinge upon the interplay between texts and young readers: Evelyn Arizpe's "All this book is about books': Picturebooks, Culture, and Metaliterary Awareness," Tomoko Masaki's "A Strawberry? Or the Planet? Children's Aesthetic Response to the Picturebook *Strawberries* by Susumi Shingu, Moving Art Sculptor," and Ingeborg Mjøf's "Being a Guide into Picturebook Literacy: Challenges of Cognition and Connotation," all of which consider how children's lived experiences shape their responses to illustrations and narratives. Arizpe's essay is particularly interesting in the way that it demonstrates the influence of children's cultural assumptions on


their reading, whereas Masaki's essay is notable for its treatment of the cross-cultural engagements that occurred when she introduced English children to Shingu's allusive and contemplative work and for her deft delineation of the varied responses that *Strawberries* evoked among child readers.

The collection is marred by its many departures from idiomatic English expression. Examples include "Karrebæk's book can be read as an allegory over the human species" (65), "the 250 most distinguished books for child [*sic*] and young people" (41), and "Åke Löfgren's and Egon-Moller Nielsen's *Historien om någon* is representative for an aesthetic turn during the 1940s and 1950s" (144). English is not the first language of most of the authors or the book's editors, and the examples I have cited typify mistakes that occur throughout the volume, many involving prepositions, definite/indefinite articles, and number agreement. These departures from English idioms do not generally cause semantic confusion, but they deflect attention from the content of the essays. Closer editorial intervention might have identified these problems and addressed them.

Sylvia Pantaleo's *Exploring Student Response to Contemporary Picturebooks* reflects on her four-year project of gathering data on "children's interpretations of and responses to a selection of contemporary picturebooks" (3). The children in question were in Grades 1 and 5 at the time of the study. In her



. . . the author provides close descriptions of the terms the children use, the predictions they make, and the interpretative strategies they adopt.



introduction, Pantaleo explains that her work is based on the work of American scholar Eliza Dresang, specifically her Radical Change theory. A problem throughout *Exploring Student Response* is that Pantaleo does not sufficiently explain Dresang's theory and how it relates to the approach of other writers on picture books, such as David Lewis, John Stephens and Ken Watson, or Margaret Mackey. Radical Change theory, as Pantaleo outlines it, seems to focus on the postmodernist features that scholars, including Lewis, have noted in picture books since the early 1990s. Such features include the destabilization of boundaries between high and popular culture, narratorial self-consciousness, a mingling of genres, parody, metafictional elements, and hyperreality (Stephens and Watson 42). A flurry of essays and book chapters on postmodernism and picture books occurred during the 1990s. The most recent publication on this topic is *Postmodern Picturebooks: Play, Parody, and Self-Referentiality* (2008), a collection of essays edited by Pantaleo and Lawrence R. Sipe.

The responses and reactions of the children observed by Pantaleo are often full of interest, and the author provides close descriptions of the terms the children use, the predictions they make, and the interpretive strategies they adopt. Too many of her descriptions of the children's reading are confined to recounting what the children say and do in response to their reading, however. For instance, Pantaleo's account of the response of Grade 1 children to Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park* hinges on the extent to which they avert to the book's strategy of presenting the same events through the perspectives of four characters. In this section, Pantaleo includes a transcript of the children's discussion, but her analysis of this transcript is confined to her consideration of the children's

understanding of what occurred in the book's narrative. Yet the children's own language is evocative and telling, demonstrating a sense of the book's affective dimensions, an aspect of narrative that goes unnoticed in Pantaleo's discussion of this transcript. Indeed, the transcripts that dot the book are rarely subjected to analysis that goes much beyond the children's comprehension of the texts they read.

The authors of the essays featured in Loren Lerner's edited collection *Depicting Canada's Children* bring to their discussions of pictures of Canadian children a range of methodological and theoretical approaches, since they work within disciplinary fields that include art history, architecture, communication studies, sociology, education, anthropology, and literary studies, so bringing to the book's discussions of images of Canadian children a wealth of interpretive frames and analytical modes. The essays deal with images of Canadian children in fine art, popular culture texts, photographs, cartoons, film, and sculpture, focusing on how Canadian childhoods have served as signifiers of nationhood, identity, and cultural change. The images discussed in this collection reflect on particular moments in the nation's history, from the early Quebec paintings discussed by François-Marc Gagnon to artwork and photographs of the 1970s and 1980s. The nineteen essays are divided into four sections, "Symbol and reality," "Others and outsiders," "Subjects of care," and "Inner visions."

The most successful essays in the book are those that reach beyond historicist approaches to produce readings of visual images. Sherry Farrell Racette's "Haunted: First Nations Children in Residential School Photography," for instance, conducts an exemplary analysis of "before" and "after" photographs that show Thomas Moore, a First Nations boy, when he enters the Regina Industrial School and after a period of tuition at this institution. Racette deftly shows how staged these photographs were, how overdetermined their depictions of savagery and civilization. Another set of "before" and "after" photographs, in Alena M. Buis's "The Raw Materials of Empire Building: Depicting Canada's Home Children," sustains the fiction of "moral, spiritual, and physical transformations" (142) that were said to characterize the progress of the "Home" children processed by the Barnardo homes and similar agencies as they were "liberated" from their former states of filth and degradation to become model citizens and workers.

Many of the essays reflect on discourses of nationhood, identifying how images of Canadian children were deployed as metaphors of a youthful nation, an imagined community redolent with promise. Carol Payne's essay on the Still Photography Division of the National Film Board shows how strategies for depicting children changed during the 1950s and 1960s, reflecting social attitudes and policies but also, more importantly, constructing powerful symbols



of a progressive and energetic Canada. In “Mapping a Canadian Girlhood Historically through Dolls and Doll-Play,” Jacqueline Reid-Walsh and Claudia Mitchell call upon memories of doll play to probe the Canadianness of girls’ play, opening up topics and approaches that, they say, might “contribute to a new girlhood (and boyhood) studies agenda” (125). One of the most arresting studies of how child figures have been deployed in the interests of nationhood is Susan Hart’s “A Child’s Place in Ottawa’s Commemorative Landscape,” which considers sculptural works such as Yoo Young Mun’s *Monument to Canadian Fallen* in Confederation Park. Hart shows how the children who feature in these monuments are inserted into national narratives, gesturing toward the nation’s future and signalling constructions of gender, class, and ethnicity in the imagined community of the Canadian state.

For scholars working within the disciplinary field of children’s literature and culture, *Depicting Canada’s Children* affords a valuable study of how Canadian children and young people have been represented across a range of textual modes. The essays in this collection might usefully be read in conjunction with texts directed to young readers, which are as much *about* as *for* children. Loren Lerner’s essay on George Reid’s narrative paintings, for instance, would enrich readings of nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century Canadian texts; similarly, studies of depictions of homeless and marginalized children in contemporary

texts for young people could benefit from Derek Foster’s “Locating Children in the Discourse of Squeegee Kids,” his analysis of public and media discourses about young people who clean motorists’ windshields in the 1990s. Foster’s discussion of cartoons, newspaper reports, and public statements by politicians point to the functions of the squeegee kids within discourses of care, discipline, and morality, just as texts for young people depict and advocate relations between marginalized young people and the adults and organizations they encounter.

Gail Edwards and Judith Saltman’s *Picturing Canada* combines literary history with an account of the history of Canadian book production for children, locating these literary and publishing trajectories against the backdrop of debates and preoccupations that have surrounded the formation and development of the Canadian nation. Alongside these concerns, the authors track changing perceptions and constructions of children and childhood, attending to the larger cultural contexts that shape such changes. The book is organized chronologically, devoting Chapters 2 to 6 to discrete periods: “Beginnings to the 1890s,” “The 1890s to the 1950s,” “The Postwar Period,” “The 1970s,” and “The 1980s.” Chapter 7, the first of two chapters dealing with the years between 1990 and 2005, attends to the “Structural Challenges and Changes” that have characterized publishing, librarianship, retail, and scholarship in the Canadian context during these twenty-five years, while Chapter 8 focuses on children’s

illustrated books produced across this period. The book concludes with a consideration of Canadian cultural identity/identities and picture books in a globalized marketplace.

The research methodologies and approaches that Edwards and Saltman outline in their introduction to the book are wide-ranging, incorporating archival research, interviews with practitioners, and a thorough survey of secondary material. The book is the principal outcome of the Canadian Children's Illustrated Books in English project. The project website <<http://ccib.arts.ubc.ca>> is itself a generous resource, providing an outline of the project's scope, methodologies and contributors, reading lists, book award information, and a searchable database of illustrated and picture books from 1960 onward. Drawing upon the support of bodies including the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the project involved a large cohort of graduate students who acted as research assistants and contributed to the website and the database. In what strikes me as a particularly Canadian way, Edwards and Saltman's account of the project foregrounds collaboration, cross-sector engagement, and a careful negotiation of difference.

The historical sweep of the book's content, not to mention the breadth of its subject matter (Canadian publishing for children, the critical reception of texts, shifts in cultural and national values and their influence on children's books), must have presented

the authors with a difficult balancing act. The very mass of detail that they have uncovered might, for instance, have produced a history consisting largely of lists of books, publishers, or editors, interspersed with commentary. Again, the worthy project of tracing the emergence and development of Canadian publishers for children might have descended into an uncritical celebration of publishers' achievements. The authors have judiciously avoided these and other dangers through the organizational and analytical strategies they have adopted. Key to their approach is their frank acknowledgement of the limitations of their study and their explanations of the methods and analytical frameworks they adopted. For instance, in Chapter 1 the authors reflect on the processes whereby books gather cultural value to become canonical works. They explain that, while they have selected texts on which to focus, they do not attempt to formulate a canon of books, publishers, authors, or illustrators. They then discuss the canonizing impulses that lie behind the practices and methods whereby books are selected for awards, outlining how they interpret the award lists: as indicators of "what children's literature professionals consider to be the most significant and important books at any given time" (15). They also acknowledge that the methods whereby these lists are formulated raise "serious issues of representation, marginalization, and exclusion" (15), so signalling that they do not adhere to the widespread if naive idea that awards constitute a



... *Picturing Canada*  
throws light on the web  
of cultural and literary  
practices, institutions,  
and individuals engaged  
in the production,  
dissemination, and  
reception of illustrated  
texts for children and  
young people . . . .



reliable, dispassionate index of “quality.” The authors’ approach to questions of canonicity and canon development typifies their more general modus operandi, which negotiates between and across the multiple political, cultural, and literary influences that have shaped the production and reception of picture books and illustrated books for young people.

Another strategy through which the authors shape and focus their discussion is their frequent use of case studies—authors, illustrators, publishers, and organizations whose work can be seen to “elucidate change and continuity over time” (15). By attending closely to the work of individuals and organizations and by examining their impact, the authors achieve an effect similar to the ethnographic approach that Clifford Geertz characterized in 1973 as “thick description” (6), where human behaviour is not merely described but analyzed in terms of its social and cultural purposes and outcomes, producing a layered, complex picture. The approach taken by Edwards and Saltman conforms, too, with Geertz’s advocacy of “self-consciousness” (448), by which he means that fieldworkers should reflect on their own practice and on the values and views that colour their data analysis. In a similar way, *Picturing Canada* throws light on the web of cultural and literary practices, institutions, and individuals engaged in the production, dissemination, and reception of illustrated texts for children and young people, at the same time acknowledging the motivations and analytical strategies that inform the book’s approach. Thus, its account of the history and development of Kids Can Press from the 1980s reflects on the political and cultural agendas of the publishers, Valerie Hussey and Ricky Englander, the pedagogical and ideological principles that shaped their publishing program, and the relationships that

Hussey and Englander developed with the authors and illustrators whose work they published. In Chapter 8, where Edwards and Saltman advance the history of Kids Can Press to 2005, they address questions of internationalization, marketing, and cultural diversity, treating Kids Can as both a specifically Canadian organization and also as an exemplar of how children's publishing negotiates between local and global influences.

The forty black and white illustrations included in the book are not merely decorative but are used to bolster arguments about aesthetics, styles of representation, and changing ideologies. At the centre of the book are twenty colour plates that were carefully chosen to exemplify the dominant concerns of Canadian illustrated books and picture books and the potency of visual images in conveying and resisting cultural norms.

*Picturing Canada* is focused on the Canadian context and on those questions of identity that have been of such import to the nation. Canada's history of English-French struggle, its colonial origins, its cultural diversity, and its contiguity to the United States have all powerfully shaped perceptions of what it means to be Canadian. In particular, practitioners in the field of children's literature are sharply conscious of the power and influence of American publishers and their impact on the reading habits of Canadian children and young people. Edwards and Saltman offer a particularly nuanced account of what "Canadian" has meant over

time and how picture books and illustrated books have exemplified and complicated notions of nationhood.

Although *Picturing Canada* is not primarily concerned with textual analysis but rather with the history of children's publishing in Canada, its discussions of texts and the contexts of their production and reception are informed by the authors' familiarity with debates over some of the most contentious topics in literary and cultural studies, especially those concerning theories of postcolonialism and multiculturalism. Edwards and Saltman draw upon contemporary literary, pedagogical, and cultural theories to account for changes and developments in publishing, most effectively in relation to Aboriginal textuality for children and the social functions of this field of texts. The book provides a groundbreaking study of children's publishing in Canada and of the material conditions and cultural shifts that have informed the production of illustrated books and picture books. They offer much more than this, however: by alerting readers to the complex issues that surround textuality for children and young people, they suggest lines of inquiry and fields of research that will build on the foundational work carried out in this book. The areas where I looked for a more comprehensive discussion were those around gender and sexuality. The authors attend to changing gender roles as they are represented in picture books, but do not address more fundamental questions about shifting conceptions of feminine and masculine subjects,

especially in the light of poststructuralist theories of difference. Heteronormativity is challenged not only by picture books such as Ken Setterington's *Mom and Mum Are Getting Married!* but also by narratives and representations that in one way or another contest the binaries that structure conventional concepts of gender and sexuality.

The impact of pictures upon children is difficult to quantify, but it is frequently evoked in memoir and autobiography. In *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, Walter Benjamin describes the visual images of his childhood with a vividness that fuses his memories of his younger self with his reflections on the meanings that these images have accrued during his later life. He recalls his intense interest in the Imperial Panorama, a wooden cylinder around which viewers looked through peepholes at exotic scenes and people, his awe as he gazed at the Victory Column on Königsplatz, his sense of peace and order as he observed his mother's table setting of white porcelain sprinkled with a pattern of blue cornflowers. Benjamin's descriptions of these memories foreground the intensity of the emotions and bodily responses they elicited. "In these images," remark Uwe Steiner and Michael Winkler, "the child's gaze

meets the countering look of the adult, who recognizes in them the prehistory of his own present" (2). The images that feature in picture books and illustrated books also perform a twofold movement whereby adults draw upon memory and observation, at the same time constructing subject positions for the young readers implied by narratives and illustrations.

Children comprehend their world, *inter alia*, through visual images incorporated into narrative forms such as picture books, illustrated books, cartoons, and films. Like the young Walter Benjamin, they encounter pictorial elements in high and popular art, in buildings and civic design, in toys, games, and artifacts. The studies of picture books and illustrated books that I have discussed, as well as Loren Lerner's essay collection on images of Canadian childhoods, point to some of the contexts in which images are produced and received and the cultural meanings and agendas they reflect and produce. For just as the language of narratives is never innocent or transparent, so images for and about children are always imbued with the fears and desires of those who create them and with the complex and often contradictory ideologies of the cultures where they are created.

## Works Cited

- Benjamin, Walter. *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*. New York: Belknap, 2006. Print.
- Canadian Children's Illustrated Books in English. U of British Columbia. 10 May 2010. Web. 13 May 2011.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic, 1973. Print.
- Nodelman, Perry. *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2008. Print.
- . "The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children's Literature." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 17 (1992): 29–35. Print.
- Nodelman, Perry, and Mavis Reimer. *The Pleasures of Children's Literature*. 3rd ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003. Print.
- Pantaleo, Sylvia, and Lawrence R. Sipe, eds. *Postmodern Picturebooks: Play, Parody, and Self-Referentiality*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.
- Parsons, Elizabeth. "Starring in the Intimate Space: Picture Book Narratives and Performance Semiotics." *Image & Narrative* 5.1 (2004). Web. 13 May 2011.
- Sendak, Maurice. *Where the Wild Things Are*. New York: Harper, 1963. Print.
- Settingington, Ken. *Mom and Mum Are Getting Married!* Illus. Alice Priestley. Toronto: Second Story, 2004. Print.
- Steiner, Uwe, and Michael Winkler. *Walter Benjamin: An Introduction to His Work and Thought*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2010. Print.
- Stephens, John, and Ken Watson. *From Picture Book to Literary Theory*. Sydney: St. Clair, 1994. Print.

Clare Bradford is Professor of Literary Studies at Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia. Her books include *Reading Race: Aboriginality in Australian Children's Literature* (2001), which won both the Children's Literature Association Book Award and the International Research Society for Children's Literature Award; *Unsettling Narratives: Postcolonial Readings of Children's Literature* (2007); and *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature: Utopian Transformations*, with Kerry Mallan, John Stephens, and Robyn McCallum (2009). In 2009, she was awarded the first International Trudeau Fellowship, and throughout 2010 she conducted research in the Centre for Research in Young People's Texts and Cultures at the University of Winnipeg.