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1 Introduction

This diploma thesis aims at investigating how authors of postmodern picture books for children employ postmodern strategies like metafiction, intertextuality, nonlinearity, and reader interaction. Moreover, it is intended to explore how these strategies can be implemented using pictures and made accessible for the young audience of picture books. In order to provide a basis for the proposed investigations literature about postmodernism and about the characteristics of postmodern literature which are intended to be analysed is reviewed. Moreover, a theoretical definition and description of picture books in general and of postmodern picture books in specific is supplied. Relating to five selected postmodern picture books for children I discuss how postmodern strategies can be applied in this genre. I was encouraged to compose this diploma thesis by the assumptions that it is possible to use postmodern strategies in a way that is appropriate for children, that the application of postmodern strategies is influenced by the visual effects of picture books as well as by the young audience of the genre, and that there are certain aims authors of postmodern picture books try to accomplish. The following research questions I mean to answer in this diploma thesis are based on these assumptions:

- How can postmodern strategies be applied in a way that is appropriate for children?
- In how far do the visual aspects and the young audience of picture books influence the application of postmodern strategies?
- What functions and effects do authors intend to achieve when applying postmodern strategies in picture books for children?

I decided to write about postmodern strategies in picture books for children because I considered it rather unlikely that a connection between these two quite distant concepts would be meaningful or even possible. The fact that postmodern literature is known for its complex structures like metafiction or nonlinearity makes it seem inappropriate to apply it in picture books. The genre of picture books is widely associated with the youngest 'readers' who are often not yet able to read but mainly look at the pictures while adults read the verbal text to them. This seemingly far distance between the complex postmodern genre and the simple, childish character of picture books makes it difficult to imagine a connection of the two concepts in

postmodern picture books for children. However, after having conducted some research I realised that this combination is not as unlikely as it appears at first sight. Many scholars report about postmodern effects in picture books and there are different methods how to make postmodern strategies appropriate and comprehensible for very young readers or viewers. Many picture books feature nonlinear structures and provide readers with the possibility to decide for themselves how to approach a book and how to interpret it. This reflects the contemporary trend of reading online hypertexts which are characterised by their interconnectedness with numerous other online texts. Readers of hypertexts can decide individually how to proceed in their reading experience. Therefore, I argue that one of the main reasons why postmodern texts are popular among today's young readers is connected to the objectives of authors trying to prepare young people for the postmodern society they are going to enter once they grow up. Below I provide an overview of my diploma thesis which comprises three main parts.

The first section of the thesis consists of a literature review providing a brief history of postmodern literature and defining the concept of postmodern literature. Moreover, the postmodern literary strategies of metafiction, intertextuality, nonlinearity, and reader interaction are defined and explained in specific.

In order to provide a basis for the discussion of picture books for children the second part reviews literature about this genre. This section consists of a brief history and a definition of picture books. Moreover, for the sake of linking part one and part two, the subgenre of postmodern picture books for children is described and explained referring to several examples.

The third and final section of this thesis aims at exploring how authors of several selected postmodern picture books for children manage to integrate postmodern strategies in their works. The analysis of five postmodern picture books intends to investigate how postmodern strategies are influenced by the presence of pictures in picture books as well as by the young audience of this genre. Moreover, it should be explored what effects and functions authors of postmodern picture books aim to convey and why complicated postmodern strategies can be appealing to young children.

2 Postmodernism

The aim of the thesis at hand is to engage in the field of postmodern picture books for children by analysing the functions and effects of postmodern strategies in picture books. It is, therefore, indispensable to clarify how the term 'postmodernism' is understood and applied throughout this thesis. By presenting the various usages of this term which became "overloaded with meaning" (Nicol 1) and "one of the most used, and abused, words" (Sim vii), the following section aims at describing this thesis' notion of postmodernism. I firstly attempt to provide several definitions of the concept and to shortly illustrate its main philosophical positions. Afterwards a short history of postmodernism is provided and its relevance in various fields of study is presented. Special attention is granted to the philosophers Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, and Fredric Jameson whose theories are central to the concept of postmodernism in general. In the subsequent part, however, I intend to focus exclusively on postmodernism in a literary context and to review literature on characteristic features of postmodern works. Thereby, the focus is on postmodern features in narrative fiction for adults. After defining postmodernism in a literary context, I intend to generate a reasonable list of those postmodern features which should later be applied to analyse the selection of postmodern picture books for children.

2.1 Genre Definitions

It is generally agreed among scholars like McHale (3), Lucy (63), Herman (456), and Nicol (1) that postmodernism is extremely difficult to define. McHale claims that it is not even clear who was the first to mention or apply the concept of postmodernism. The challenging act of defining postmodernism is aptly illustrated by the following quote: "'Postmodernist'? Nothing about this term is unproblematic, nothing about it is entirely satisfactory" (McHale 3). By placing a question mark after the implied term, McHale highlights the general difficulty or even inability scholars are facing when intending to provide a comprehensive definition of postmodernism. Herman even takes another step, raising the issue of whether postmodernism actually exists: "Whether it is a period, a movement, or a general 'condition' of culture, how broadly or narrowly it is distributed around the world, when it began and whether it has ended, even whether it happened at all, are all matters of dispute" (Herman 456).

The difficulties in defining postmodernism may be caused by the fact that the term is understood differently among scholars and is used to refer to phenomena in various fields of cultural endeavour. Postmodernism is manifest in architecture, art, literature, film, painting, music etc. (Hutcheon, *Politics* 1). Connor notes that “there are [...] many separate histories of postmodernism that are internal to different disciplines and areas of culture [...]. Postmodernism was always a phenomenon of cultural interference, the crossing or conjugation of ideas and values” (17). Allen agrees defining postmodernism as a “vast subject” that is used to refer to a “historical, social and cultural epoch” (176) stressing that it is not only present in culture or literature but also in society. Moreover, Allen points at the contested quality of the expression and acknowledges that it has been a great subject of discussion in the late 20th and early 21st century (176).

Another possible explanation for the challenge of defining postmodernism is raised by Linda Hutcheon who specifies postmodernism as “a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges” (*Poetics* 3). It is complicated and maybe impossible to define a concept which refuses to accept the very existence of concepts or structures in culture. Hutcheon argues that “postmodernism is fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political” (*Poetics* 4). In a later publication she states that postmodernism “[i]n general terms [...] takes the form of self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement. It is rather like saying something whilst at the same time putting inverted commas around what is being said” (Hutcheon, *Politics* 1). This makes it extremely hard to categorise postmodern works and explains why it is difficult to find an apt definition of postmodernism.

Despite the eminent difficulties in defining postmodernism I intend to provide a short overview of the most important and widespread definitions. Before engaging in analysing postmodern literature it is essential to be familiar with postmodernism’s underlying philosophical positions. The most important postmodern attitude is that “any sense of reality is only a construct” (Korte 148). Hutcheon argues that postmodernism tries to “de-naturalize some of the dominant features of our way of life; to point out that those entities that we unthinkingly experience as ‘natural’ [...] are in fact ‘cultural’; made by us, not given to us. Even nature, postmodernism might point out, doesn’t grow on trees” (*Politics* 2). This means that in postmodern philosophy

reality is regarded as a construct that can only be created through texts in different media. According to Korte, it can solely be experienced “through and as textualization. Any distinction between fiction and what we take for reality thus collapses, as does the notion that literature can represent the experience of ‘reality’ mimetically” (149). This insight of reality being a cultural construct is the central philosophical position of postmodernism. It is, therefore, omnipresent in postmodern literature and central throughout the whole thesis at hand.

Many scholars attempted to formulate reasonable definitions of postmodernism. In the following, several of those definitions are presented and compared to each other. Stuart Sim, for instance, defines postmodernism as follows:

Postmodernism is a wide-ranging cultural movement which adopts a sceptical attitude to many of the principles and assumptions that have underpinned Western thought and social life for the last few centuries. These assumptions, which constitute the core of what we call modernism, include a belief in the inevitability of progress in all areas of human endeavour, and in the power of reason, as well as a commitment to originality in both thought and artistic expression. (Sim 285)

Sim’s definition of postmodernism both highlights the diverse usage of the concept and argues that postmodernism is critical of the approved assumptions which have been dominant for the past centuries and make up modernism. In other words, postmodernism is “a rejection of many, if not most, of the cultural certainties on which life in the West has been structured over the past couple of centuries” (Sim vii). According to Sim, postmodernism has not yet ceased to exist but still prevails highly influential in the 21st century (viii). Even though it is an extremely diluted movement “it does mean something – and does stand for something” (Sim xii). Nicol who understands postmodernism as a set of different postmodernisms due to the concept’s diversity (xvi) argues that the reason why the term ‘postmodernism’ is continued to be used nowadays is that it describes the “significant alterations in society as a result of technology, economics and the media” (1-2) in the second half of the 20th century. These changes affected many different aspects of life such as art, culture, and maybe even the way we think (Nicol 2).

McHale highlights the diversity of postmodernism by referring to several different critics and their understandings of postmodernism. Referring to Lyotard he defines postmodernism as “a general condition of knowledge in the contemporary

informational regime" (4). McHale, moreover mentions Jurij Tynjanov's concept of 'the dominant', which is mentioned by the Russian linguist and literary theorist Roman Jakobson in one of his lectures. "The dominant may be defined as the focussing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components" (qtd. in McHale 6). McHale makes use of the concept of 'the dominant' when presenting his notion of postmodernism. The main argument in his explanation of postmodernism which is frequently quoted by other scholars is that its dominant is an ontological one and that it, therefore, asks ontological questions. Modernism is mainly concerned with epistemological questions like "What is there to be known?; Who knows it?; How did they know it, and with what degree of certainty?" (9). McHale, however, observes a "shift of dominant from problems of *knowing* to problems of *modes of being* – from an epistemological dominant to an *ontological one*" (10). He refers this dominant also to postmodernist fiction, defining it to be ontological as well. Ontological questions asked in postmodernism are "What is a world?; What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?" (10). This uncertainty about what a world is, is also present in Allen's perception of postmodernism which is strongly concerned with the concept of representation and whether or how reality can be represented today (176-7). "Reality, we might say, is something which is partially created by the media through which it is represented. This point has led many to focus on the relationship between reality and representation, fact and fiction" (Allen 177). The insight that the relationship between reality and representation or fiction is not straightforward at all is a central component of postmodernism. Hutcheon accurately defines postmodernism as "a problematizing force in our culture today: it raises questions about (or renders problematic) the common-sensical and the "natural"" (*Poetics* xi). Allen observes that our experience of contemporary art as well as culture "increasingly comes to us in forms of reproduction. News reports of political and social events are provided by competing television channels, often with their own political and social agendas. These reports employ processes of framing, editing and other reproductions of images and speech" (177). Nicol provides a similar argument illustrating the fact that we are estranged from the authentic and real aspects of life with living "in a postindustrial, information-driven, media/culture-saturated world" (4). He further argues that "the code actually produces reality: we experience the world through the sign system of values set down in its underlying metaphysic" (Nicol 5). Moreover, he argues that we no longer work with

real products but staring at computer screens and working with different abstract information. Not only when working but also during leisure times people increasingly engage in abstract experiences. “Existence has become more ‘virtual’ than real” (Nicol 4). I strongly agree with these arguments as nowadays we are not experiencing culture at first hand but mostly through different media of representation or reproduction like television, radio, or the Internet.

2.1.1 History and Periodization

Unlike McHale, Sim claims that it *is* known who firstly applied the term ‘postmodern’. According to Sim, it was the painter John Watkins Chapman who employed the expression in the 1870s referring to art that goes “beyond Impressionism” (viii). However, the term went through several changes in meaning and it was not until the second half of the 20th century that ‘postmodern’ received the meaning of “a reaction against modernism and modernity” (Sim viii). Most scholars refer to this interpretation when defining postmodernism and it is widely agreed upon the fact that this phenomenon emerged in the second half of the 20th century. Barry mentions that the term ‘postmodernism’ was already used in the 1930s but sets the beginning of its current meaning to Lyotard’s work *The Postmodern Condition* which was first published in 1979 (86). Nicol (1) argues that the term first appeared in the 1940s in the field of architecture but began to be widely used in the 1960s referring to culture and literature that was rejecting modernist forms. He, therefore, defines it as a product of the second half of the 20th century (xiv). Connor (1) agrees that postmodernism rose in the 1970s and early 1980s. In the 1970s and early 1980s the term ‘postmodernism’ was mainly established only within the academic world and it came into usage outside of academic circles in the mid-1980s (Lucy 82). Herman states that the prefix ‘post’ defines postmodernism as subsequent to modernism and, thereby, agrees that it is a phenomenon of the second half of the 20th century. However, Herman is aware of the fact that the relationship between modernism and postmodernism is highly disputed and far more complicated than a mere succession (456). A reference to modernism when defining postmodernism is manifest and, therefore, applied by many scholars. The relationship between modernism and postmodernism is discussed later in this section when I focus on postmodern literature. Gregson mentions that postmodernism initially emerged after the Second World War and writes that postmodernist disbelief was caused by historical events of the Second World War (1). In order to understand

Gregson's standpoint of connecting the Second World War with postmodern disbelief one needs to know that, according to Gregson,

[t]he dominant attitude in postmodernism is disbelief. The dominant strategy of both postmodernist philosophy and postmodernist aesthetics is deconstruction, which is disbelief put into practice. Deconstruction is an anti-system, or a system that subverts systems; it is a mechanism that exposes mechanisms. Deconstruction unscrews belief systems and uncovers their whirring cogs. (1)

He argues that postmodernism questions whether we are able to understand the structure of reality or language since we are part of it ourselves and is suspicious of everything that claims to be authentic or to express the truth. As humans cannot stand outside the structure of reality or language and observe it, it is impossible to fully understand it. This attitude of disbelief and deconstruction is a central feature which differentiates modernism and postmodernism (Gregson 4-5). Gregson's arguments stem from the theory of poststructuralism, rejecting the idea of structuralism that human culture could be explained as a structure. According to structuralism "meaning is derived from the relations between elements in the system rather than their capacity to refer to something outside it" (Nicol 7). Its counterpart, poststructuralism, is an important movement of the second half of the 20th century and engages in "the separation of the realm of language from the real world" (Nicol 6). Even though poststructuralism serves as a point of departure for postmodern theorists like Lyotard and Baudrillard, Nicol stresses that postmodernism and poststructuralism are not the same thing (6). Gregson highlights the fact that poststructuralism often provides a point of departure for postmodern theorists because postmodern theory focusses on problems of representations and constructions of reality. "It focuses upon how the 'real' is constructed through language, how it is everywhere transformed into textuality, and how what appears literal is in fact metaphorical" (Gregson 7).

2.1.2 Lyotard, Baudrillard, and Jameson

When defining postmodernism it is indispensable to mention the French theorists Lyotard and Baudrillard who prevail as the founding fathers of postmodernism. The American literary theorist and Marxist intellectual Fredric Jameson also earns special attention when engaging in postmodernism. Lyotard who is often referred to as a philosopher and not a literary critic (Nicol 12) wrote the highly influential work *The Postmodern Condition* which was first published in 1979. In his book he states that the "condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies" is what should be

denominated as 'postmodern' (xxiii). He was the first one to emphasise the postmodern disbelief, defining postmodernism "as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences" (xxiv). Lyotard argues that people no longer believe in metanarratives explaining the world. Herman calls these narratives "master narratives of progress, enlightenment, and human liberation that served to legitimate modern culture" (456). Nicol states that according to Lyotard people are interested rather in "little narratives [...] which do not attempt to present an overarching 'Truth' but offer a qualified, limited 'truth', one relative to a particular situation" (12). Barry agrees stating that "'mininarratives', which are provisional, contingent, temporary, and relative and which provide a basis for the actions of specific groups in particular local circumstances" (87) are much more helpful and interesting for society. Lyotard argues that the postmodern changing in the prominence of knowledge started at the end of the 1950s (3). Lyotard's philosophical thoughts on postmodernism are highly interesting as he does not interpret postmodernism as a construct following modernism but preceding it. While acknowledging that the postmodern "is undoubtedly a part of the modern" he argues that "[a] work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant" (79). Lyotard's thoughts have many similarities with Eco's understanding of postmodernism. Eco claims that every era experiences its own postmodernism when what was modern is not able to develop any further and one refers again to the past. "The renewed engagement with the past is made possible through the use of irony, paradoxically saying something new, but only by acknowledging that it has already been said" (Eco, qtd. in Nicol 14).

The following definition of postmodernism aptly summarises Lyotard's understanding of the postmodern:

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms [...]. A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*. (Lyotard 81)

Baudrillard's theory of postmodernism is based on the thought that in a postmodern society there is no sense of the real but only signs, simulations, and representations. His idea of a 'hyperreality' is mentioned in most works on postmodern theory. He declares the concept of 'hyperreality' in one of his most influential works called *Simulacra and Simulation* which was first published in 1981. He argues that "[t]oday abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (1). He continues that "simulation threatens the difference between the "true" and the "false," the "real" and the "imaginary"" (3). Barry associates Baudrillard with "'the loss of the real', which is the view that in contemporary life the pervasive influence of images from film, TV, and advertising has led to a loss of the distinction between real and imagined, reality and illusion, surface and depth" (87). Baudrillard uses the example of Disneyland which, according to him, has the goal "of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real" (13). He argues that Disneyland and similar theme parks intend to make people "believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation" (12). Gregson summarises Baudrillard's theory as a description of "the postmodern dominance of simulation, on a culture so influenced by the technological media that any sense of the real is lost and replaced by the multiplying of signs and representations" (9). Nicol simplifies Baudrillard's words saying that simulation is about the fact that we are now able to replicate things but are afterwards unable to judge which one was the original as we are constantly engaging with representations (5-6). Baudrillard's theory is central to postmodernism's main philosophical position declaring that there is no difference between reality and fiction. Although Baudrillard is respected as one of the first theorists to engage in postmodernism, his theory is not resistant to criticism. Linda Hutcheon, for instance, criticises his simulacrum theory as being "too absolute, too dogmatic for the provisional and decentered phenomena it pretends to describe" (*Poetics* 229). She argues that ideas of truth and reality have not, as Baudrillard claims, perished altogether. According to her, those ideas are merely "no longer unproblematic issues, assumed to be self-evident and self-justifying" (*Politics* 32). Her argument declares that according to postmodernism everything is cultural, meaning conveyed and communicated through representations. She disapproves of Baudrillard's theory of the hyperreality stating that

[t]he postmodern, as I have been defining it, is not a degeneration into 'hyperreality' but a questioning of what reality can mean and how we can come to know it. It is not that representation now dominates or effaces the referent, but rather that it now self-consciously acknowledges its existence as representation – that is, as interpreting (indeed as creating) its referent, not as offering direct and immediate access to it. (Hutcheon, *Politics* 32)

Fredric Jameson comes from a Marxist tradition and describes postmodernism as “late capitalism” (*Postmodernism* xxi). Herman aptly summarises Jameson’s notion of postmodernism which is based on economic history arguing that “[a]ccording to Jameson, postmodernism in the cultural sphere [...] reflects the late capitalist mode of production in the economic sphere” (456). Jameson states that postmodernism has been caused by economic changes of new products and technologies since the 1950s (*Postmodernism* xx). In his foreword to Lyotard’s *Postmodern Condition* Jameson describes postmodernism as a change not only in culture but also in social and economic issues (*Introduction* vii). Jameson does not provide a clear definition of his notion of postmodernism. He argues that compiling a satisfying definition of postmodernism is extremely challenging due to the fact that postmodernism refers to a variety of different realms like economy, culture, religion etc. (*Postmodernism* x). Moreover, he states that finding an appropriate definition is difficult because “the concept is not merely contested, it is also internally conflicted and contradictory” (*Postmodernism* xxii). Nevertheless, Jameson is convinced that “we cannot *not* use” (*Postmodernism* xxii) the term ‘postmodernism’. However, he highlights that whenever we use this expression we need to be aware of its contradictive nature. “*Postmodernism* is not something we can settle once and for all and then use with a clear conscience. The concept, if there is one, has to come at the end, and not at the beginning, of our discussions of it” (*Postmodernism* xxii).

2.1.3 Postmodern Literature and its Characteristics

Having summarised the main aspects of postmodernism as a historical, cultural, social, and philosophical movement, I am focussing on postmodernism and postmodern features in literature in the subsequent section. Lucy states that the postmodern position that “everything is text [...] [which] denies any special value to literary texts, is taken usually for a central tenet of postmodernism” (ix). This postmodern attitude which has already been mentioned above is especially important when discussing postmodern literature.

According to Connor, literature is “one of the most important laboratories of postmodernism” (62). It is, therefore, useful to examine how different scholars define this literary movement of the second half of the 20th century. Lewis understands postmodernist writing as “the dominant mode of literature in the second half of the twentieth century” (169) which first emerged in the early 1960s and was fully established by the late 1980s (169). Nicol states that postmodernism is “too diverse to be a genre” (31) and describes “postmodern fiction as a particular ‘aesthetic’ – a sensibility, a set of principles, or a value-system which unites specific currents in the writing of the later half of the twentieth century” (xvi). Abrams draws a connection between postmodern literature and the period after the Second World War. He argues that postmodern literature is influenced “by the experience of Nazi totalitarianism and mass extermination, the threat of total destruction by the atomic bomb, the progressive devastation of the natural environment, and the ominous fact of overpopulation” (168). As has already been mentioned above, postmodernism is obviously related to modernism but the relationship is far from straightforward. Abrams supports the thought of postmodernism as a contradictory concept arguing that postmodernism continues modernism but also tries to break away from modernism. This is also noticeable in postmodern literature and art as postmodernists are against the ‘high art’ of modernism and more interested in ‘mass culture’ like films or newspapers (168). Nicol agrees with Abrams that postmodernism “*both* breaks with modernist conventions *and* continues with them” (32).

Unlike many other literary theorists, Nicol does not refer to modernism as a counterpart to postmodernism when defining postmodern literature. He argues that realism offers a better ground for establishing comparisons as these two concepts represent two opposites as far as their interests in fictionality are concerned. Postmodern fiction is aware of the fact that the transcription of reality, which is central to realism, is no longer possible. These questions about the condition of being narrated, about narrative modes of representation, and about the relationship between reality and fiction are omnipresent in postmodern literature but completely absent in realist literature (Nicol xvii). Therefore, it is reasonable to highlight not only the relationship between postmodernism and modernism but also grant serious attention to the relation between postmodernism and realism. According to Nicol both modernism and postmodernism

are concepts which criticise the realism of the 19th century (18-23). It is, therefore, not appropriate to consider these two movements as opposites.

One of the main problems of postmodern literature is that it has to acknowledge the impossibility of relating “to what goes beyond comprehension in contemporary experience” (Connor 67). Connor refers to Lyotard who “frequently describes this relation of nonrelation between the postmodernist work and the postmodern world as a relation of “incommensurability,” meaning, literally, a relation of nonmeasurability. Things that are incommensurable cannot be measured against each other because no common scale or measure is available for the purpose” (67). This again stresses the issue of reality and fiction or representation which is pervasive in postmodern literature. Gregson quotes J. G. Ballard who wrote in 1974 that

the balance between fiction and reality has changed significantly in the past decade. Increasingly their roles are reversed. We live in a world ruled by fictions of every kind – mass-merchanizing, advertising, politics conducted as a branch of advertising, the instant translation of science and technology into popular imagery, the increasing blurring and intermingling of identities within the realm of consumer goods, the pre-empting of any free or original imaginative response to experience by the television screen. We live inside an enormous novel. (qtd. in Gregson 2)

These postmodern ideas emerged during the 1960s and early 1970s. They represent a movement away from narrative and representation (Gregson 2). Gregson asserts that the supremacy of cultural constructs entails “a deconstructive sensibility in which the relationship between the constructed and the real is constantly interrogated” (15). Connor calls the postmodern time a “culture of interruptions” (77) which is characterised by a “massively increased frequency of cultural impingements of all kinds, as different cultural forms and media encounter one another and exchange their characteristic cadences, tempi, and duration” (77). Literature can, therefore, no longer be separated from other media and from new forms of technological reproduction and storage of information like television, radio and the Internet. The general culture of interruptions is increased rather than resisted by narrative structures in literature, mixing different forms of media and genres (Connor 78).

Connor mentioning narrative structures and the mixing of genres in literature directly leads the discussion to typical characteristics of postmodern narratives. Lewis defines postmodern texts as “self-reflexive, playful and exceedingly aware of the medium of

language in an attempt to revivify the novel form” (169). Nicol agrees as far as self-reflexiveness and awareness of the medium of language are concerned. He provides three central features of postmodern texts:

- 1) a self-reflexive acknowledgement of a text’s own status as constructed aesthetic artefact
- 2) an implicit (or sometimes explicit) critique of realist approaches both to narrative and to representing a fictional ‘world’
- 3) a tendency to draw the reader’s attention to his or her own process of interpretation as s/he reads the text (Nicol xvi)

Nicol highlights that these features do also appear in other texts, not only in postmodern ones. Therefore, the dominance of those features in postmodern literature is important. He refers to McHale and agrees that one should refer to Jacobson’s explanation of “the dominant” (qtd. in Nicol xvi) when describing a work of art or a literary genre.

Many scholars agree with Lewis and Nicol that one of the central characteristics of postmodern literature is “its self-consciousness about language and processes of narration, questions of (re)presentation and the text’s relationships with literary traditions and practices, each of which may become matters of address within the text” (Edwards xi). Self-consciousness often becomes apparent in metafictional strategies like “self-reflexive images” or “critical discussions of the story within the story” (Waugh 22). Therefore, metafiction is one of the important features of postmodern literature which are going to be examined in the following sub-section and applied when analysing postmodern picture books. Edwards, moreover, stresses that postmodern fiction engages self-consciously with traditional forms of discourse and challenges “conservative ideas about disciplines, procedures, and the nature of knowledge” (7).

Postmodernism questions “modernism’s commitment to progress” and encourages “a dialogue between past and present in thought and the arts. Postmodernism has, therefore, involved a rejection of the modernist commitment to experiment and originality, and a return to the use of older styles and artistic methods – even if this is done in an ironic manner” (Sim 285). Sim agrees with Hutcheon who argues that the past is always present in postmodernism (*Poetics* 4). The connection to traditional forms and the mixture of different genres is also mentioned by Abrams who highlights the tendency of postmodern literature to “blend literary genres, cultural and stylistic levels, the serious and the playful” which is the reason why postmodern works “resist

classification according to traditional literary rubrics" (168). Allen (5), Edwards (xi), and Nicol (2) also mention this blending of established styles, genres, and practices. Moreover, Allen (5), Edwards (xiv), and Nicol (2) associate pastiche, imitation, and experimentation rather than original production with postmodern literature. Waugh even calls this an "explicit parody of previous texts whether literary or non-literary" (22). Lewis interprets the popularity of pastiche, imitation and parody to have resulted from a feeling of frustration that every stylistic idea has already been put into practice. Postmodern authors, therefore, "tended to pluck existing styles higgledy-piggledy from the reservoir of literary history, and match them with little tact" (173). Lewis's statement does not only clarify the popularity of parody but also gives a reasonable explanation of the mixture of genres in postmodernism. These characteristics are all part of the greater concept of intertextuality which is, like metafiction, one of the most important features in postmodern literature and is, therefore, discussed in detail below and applied in the picture book analysis.

Another important characteristic of postmodern narratives is nonlinearity. Lewis describes this feature as "temporal disorder; the erosion of the sense of time; [...] the loose association of ideas [...] [and] a loss of distinction between logically separate levels of discourse" (171). McHale quotes David Lodge who also mentions "contradiction, discontinuity, [and] randomness" (qtd. in McHale 7) as postmodern features of literature. Waugh agrees mentioning a "total breakdown of temporal and spatial organization of narrative" and "continuous undermining of specific fictional conventions" (22) in her list of postmodern features of literature. Nonlinearity is a very diverse feature of postmodern literature, as it contains several different aspects. Those are going to be investigated in detail in the following subsection and some of them will be employed in my analysis of picture books.

The final characteristic feature of postmodern literature which is going to be discussed below is 'reader interaction'. It is typical for postmodern fiction to challenge and motivate its reader "to be an active co-creator of meaning rather than a passive consumer" (Nicol xiv). Nicol, moreover, mentions that postmodern literature invites the readers to question the common beliefs about literature. They are encouraged to ask questions about and to contemplate what fiction or reading is in the first place, why we read and why authors write, or why authors of postmodernism use experimental forms instead of sticking to the traditional forms (xiv). Nicol refers to reader interaction as

one of his three characteristics of postmodern text, saying that postmodern fiction has “a tendency to draw the reader’s attention to his or her own process of interpretation as s/he reads the text” (xvi). Reader interaction also constitutes an important aspect of postmodern picture books for children and is, therefore, also considered when analysing picture books later in this thesis.

2.2 Postmodern Strategies and their functions and effects

The following classification of postmodern strategies includes metafiction, intertextuality, nonlinearity, and reader interaction. However, it needs to be acknowledged that these categories do not have exact boundaries but are influencing one another. Reader interaction or a direct addressing of the reader by the author can, for instance, be elicited from a metafictional strategy of emphasising the text’s fictionality. Moreover, the border between intertextuality and nonlinearity is extremely blurred as an intertextual feature like a text in a text can also be interpreted as a violation of the text’s linearity. The same intertextual device of a text in a text can also be interpreted as a metafictional device highlighting the texts artificial nature. These are merely a few examples of the interrelatedness of postmodern strategies which needs to be considered throughout this thesis.

2.2.1 Metafiction

The term ‘metafiction’ was first used by Robert Scholes “to indicate the capacity of fiction to reflect on its own framing and assumptions” (Herman 301). Herman emphasises metafiction as a typical postmodern feature mentioning that it developed as a literary practice “from the mid-70s to the mid-80s, precisely when the ‘explosion of theory’ and the attempt to define postmodernism as ethos and epoch was taking place in the United States and Europe” (301).

Definition

The following definition and description of metafiction is based on Waugh’s book *Metafiction* which is widely accepted as a very important work on this typically postmodern phenomenon. However, the following section also grants some attention to other scholars.

Waugh defines metafiction as

a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the

relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text. (2)

This definition shows the close interrelatedness of metafiction and the postmodern idea of reality as a text or a cultural construct. It is, therefore, comprehensible that metafiction is often labelled as “the most characteristic practice in postmodern fiction” (Nicol 16). It has been popular from the 1970s onwards (Waugh 2) and “[a]lthough metafiction is just one form of post-modernism, nearly all contemporary experimental writing displays some explicitly metafictional strategies” (Waugh 22). However, Waugh also mentions that metafiction is older than the novel itself and calls it “a tendency or function inherent in *all* novels” (5). Hermann (301) states that Robert Alter agrees with Waugh saying that metafiction is typical for postmodern literature but that novels have always contained self-reflexive components.

Self-consciousness, self-reference, and the foregrounding of a text’s status as a fictional construct, which all contribute to a blurring of the fictional world and reality, are very common descriptions of metafictional works (Nicol 16, 35; Sim 272). Sim adds that in metafictional texts “the act of writing itself is foregrounded, with the author insisting that we recognize the artifice involved in constructing a narrative” (272). Lucy simplifies this statement stating that “‘metafiction’ refers, in short, to fiction that is ‘about’ fiction” (83). Metafictional works “explore a *theory* of fiction through the *practice* of writing fiction” (Waugh 2).

Waugh interprets the huge attention to metafictional aspects of texts as a consequence of the elevated self-consciousness in society and culture in the second half of the 20th century and also connects it to an increased cultural interest in the functions of language as a tool for constructing what we understand as our ‘reality’. She declares that in order to discuss these issues it was necessary to use what she calls “‘meta’ terms” (3) as tools for exploring “the relationship between this arbitrary linguistic system and the world to which it apparently refers. In fiction they are required in order to explore the relationship between the world of the fiction and the world outside the fiction” (Waugh 3). Gregson offers a different explanation of the increased interest in meta-levels referring to the fact that modernism and especially postmodernism are the first epochs in which writers and artists are aware of the fact

that they are postmodernists (xiii). This awareness may have contributed to the raised awareness of meta-levels in literature and art.

A special variety of metafiction that needs to be mentioned here as well, as it is frequently used in postmodern picture books, is metalepsis. Herman (303) includes a description of this postmodern strategy in his definition of metafiction which suggests a close connection between those two characteristics of postmodern fiction. He argues that unlike 'normal' narratives which underlie a clear division between the "level of narration and that of the narrated events, [...] metalepsis produces a 'short-circuiting' of levels, calling this distinction into question" (303). Narrative metalepsis means that the extradiegetic narrator intrudes into the story and in extreme cases metalepsis can even extinguish the boundary between fiction and reality (303). Lewis calls such phenomena "vicious circles" which can appear in the form of "short circuits (when the author steps into the text) and double binds (when real-life historical figures appear in fictions)" (178). Metalepsis is, obviously, connected to other postmodern strategies like intertextuality, nonlinearity and reader interaction.

Functions and effects

The most important and interesting question to consider when analysing postmodern literature is: 'What functions and effects does the postmodern text intend to convey?' As metafiction is "an elastic term" (Waugh 18) and can communicate a great variety of functions and effects to the readers, authors have the opportunity to use it in order to pursue many different intentions.

A very typical function of metafiction is foregrounding "the role of the author and reader in inventing and receiving the fiction" (Abrams 196) in order to reach the effect of making the readers aware of the fact that they are reading a fictional text and preventing them from losing themselves in the world of the story. Moreover, metafiction frequently has the function of emphasising the presence of frames which are part of fictional works. Nicol argues that the principal effect of metafiction is "to draw attention to the *frames* involved in fiction, which are usually concealed by realism" (35). The attention to frames is also mentioned by Waugh who states that "[c]ontemporary metafiction draws attention to the fact that life, as well as novels, is constructed through frames, and that it is finally impossible to know where one frame ends and another begins" (29). Waugh states that "[e]verything is framed, whether in

life or in novels” (28) touching the general postmodern idea of reality as a construct. Metafictional works can, for instance, raise awareness of frames by incorporating devices such as “stories within stories”, “characters reading about their own fictional lives”, a “self-consuming world or mutually contradictory situations” (Waugh 30). Although the strategy of ‘the story within the story’ which is also referred to as ‘frame,’ ‘Chinese box,’ ‘Russian doll,’ or ‘embedded narrative’ is typical for postmodern works, it is also widespread in all narrative literature in general (Nelles 339). Moreover, it is very common that the author steps into the story, breaking the frames of the story. This strategy is what I defined above as ‘metalepsis’. When the author appears in his or her own fiction, he or she moves from the extradiegetic to the diegetic level (Nicol 37). When stepping into his or her own story the author does not comment “on the *content* of the story but on the act of narration itself, on the *construction* of the story” (Waugh 131). Thereby, metalepsis highlights the problematic relationship between reality and fiction by disrupting the “boundary of a fictional narrative – the one between inside and outside, between story and world” (Malina 3).

Another central function of metafiction in literature is to foreground the central postmodern position that there is no difference between reality and fiction and that fiction is, therefore, unable to represent reality. Waugh declares that metafiction helps readers to understand “the contemporary experience of the world as a construction, an artifice, a web of interdependent semiotic system” (9). Furthermore, Waugh argues that by showing readers how fictional worlds are created metafiction has the effect of clarifying that our own reality is “similarly ‘written’” (18). Nicol agreeably states that metafictional collision of reality and fiction facilitates the comprehension of the fact that “fiction is fictional, but no more so than reality” (39).

Nicol highlights that metafiction is not pretending to offer the reader any insight into the real world (35). Rather, it reminds the reader “that the work of fiction we read *is* fiction; it is not a mirror-reflection of the world but a combination of worlds on a page that we must make sense of by relating them to other texts, not the external world” (Nicol 16). Nicol’s reference to metafiction as a strategy that encourages the reader to relate postmodern texts to other texts shows metafiction’s close connection to another postmodern strategy, namely intertextuality. This feature is going to be discussed in the following subsection.

2.2.2 Intertextuality

Intertextuality is a central characteristic of postmodern literature and is highly present in the picture books that are going to be analysed later in this thesis. It is, therefore, important to introduce a clear definition of this concept and to present its main functions and effects.

Definition

The word ‘intertextuality’ was coined by Julia Kristeva (Still and Worton 1). It was initially used among poststructuralist theorists like Roland Barthes in order to upset or destroy ideas of objective representation and interpretation (Allen 3). Herman gives a very straightforward definition of intertextuality, arguing that “[i]ntertextuality refers to the presence of a text A in a text B. A is the ‘intertext’ if one stresses the textual precursor, the ‘pretext’ absorbed by a later text. Or, one could call B the intertext if one lays emphasis on the text incorporating a previous text and thereby becoming intertextual” (Herman 256). On a more complex level postmodern theorists highlight that intertextuality

foreground[s] notions of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence in modern cultural life. In the Postmodern epoch, theorists often claim, it is not possible any longer to speak of originality or the uniqueness of the artistic object, be it a painting or a novel, since every artistic object is so clearly assembled from bits and pieces of already existent art. Intertextuality, as a term stands at the centre of such contemporary conceptions of art and cultural production generally. (Allen 5)

In other words, intertextuality emphasises that any text is made of other texts by using citations and repetitions or by transforming earlier texts in form (Abrams 317). Abrams quotes Julia Kristeva who was the first to use the word ‘intertext’ stating that every text is an intertext or “an intersection of numberless other texts, and existing only through its relations to other texts” (317). This leads to the central statement of intertextuality that the “world itself is seen as a text” (317) which again connects intertextuality directly with the postmodern attitude of seeing the world or reality as a cultural construct that can only exist through textuality. Postmodern theorists argue that texts are intertextual because they do not have any independent meaning (Allen 1). Still and Worton give two reasons why no text can be considered an autonomous whole. Firstly, before writing a text, the author is also a reader of other texts which automatically makes the text swayed by various allusions and citations. Secondly, a text only becomes existent thanks to a reader who reads it. Therefore, the meaning that is achieved when reading

only exists due to the interaction between the text and all the texts the reader brings to it (Still and Worton 1-2). Allen concludes that reading is, therefore, not possible without tracing the text's relations to other texts. Meaning exists not within one text but within the textual relations between a certain text and all other texts that are related to it. Therefore, "[t]he text becomes an intertext" (Allen 1). However, intertexts are not only the texts the reader brings to a text, as Still and Worton stated, but also texts the reader needs to be familiar with in order to comprehend a book or other text in its full significance (Riffaterre 56). This means that intertextuality is dependent on the readers' prior knowledge. On the one hand, the readers bring their own texts to the text they are reading and on the other hand, they need to be able to understand the author's allusions to other texts.

An interesting example of intertextuality, which is mentioned by several scholars when writing about this phenomenon, is the intertextuality of the Internet. Allen describes the Internet as "a new form of textuality which is infinitely more flexible, manipulative and [...] accessible. One feature of the new computing technologies which has been the subject of increasing debate and theorization is its far greater capacity, compared to print culture, for interconnectedness" (194). He, furthermore, mentions that not only the Internet but also e-books as well as hypertexts in general are examples of intertextuality (194). Dillon defines hypertext as an "electronic text that provides links between key elements, allowing the reader to move through information non-sequentially" (262). Dillon's reference to the fact that hypertext is not read sequentially connects it also to the postmodern phenomenon of nonlinearity that is going to be discussed below. Herman, moreover, relates the interconnectedness of different texts to Lyotard's argument that contemporary society is much more interested in 'little narratives' than in the grand metanarratives (459).

Functions and effects

The following subsection intends to describe the functions of intertextuality in works of literature and describe its effects on readers. This thesis acknowledges and values the position of Kristeva, Barthes, Derrida, Riffaterre, and Sollers arguing that any text is intrinsically intertextual (Herman 257). However, in order to be able to relate this analysis to specific texts referring to specific other texts, I agree with scholars who consider this generalist view unhelpful and "restrict intertextuality to the interplay of identifiable (Genette) or 'traceable' texts (Doležel)" (Herman 257). There are different

ways in which texts can be related to each other. Herman names “allusion, commentary, parody, pastiche, plagiarism, irony, paraphrase, travesty, [and] quotation” (Herman 260). The fact that intertextuality can appear in many different variations needs to be considered when asking questions about its functions and effects in literature. Parody, pastiche, irony, or travesty would, for instance, have the intention of making fun of an older text they refer to while allusion, commentary, or quotation feature more objective references to other texts.

Allen describes the intertextuality of hypertext saying that “[a]lthough only one book or *lexia* may be activated at one time, readers of hypertext are assisted by ‘browser’ menus displaying networks of other ‘links’” (195). The existence of other texts is, thereby, constantly implied by the intertextuality of the hypertext. Applying this theory to ordinary books that feature intertextual characteristics it can be argued that intertextual works featuring allusion or commentary but also parody or pastiche have the intention of reminding their readers of the fact that the text they are currently reading is just one little part of the whole universe of interconnected texts. Thereby, intertextuality pursues similar goals like metafiction. By reminding readers of the existence of other stories and texts, they are prevented from losing themselves in the one story they are reading. Through intertextual devices readers are confronted with the problematic relationship between reality and fiction. Once more, the interconnectedness between various strategies of postmodern literature becomes apparent.

Herman mentions a very important point concerning the relation between intertextuality and postmodernism. According to him, there are two ways of understanding intertextuality. The first one is referring to it as a universal discourse and the second one is seeing it as an aspect of postmodernism. He states that when talking about intertextuality as a postmodern practice scholars are mainly referring to “‘limited’, self-acknowledged intertextuality” (260-1). In order to declare what ‘limited’ intertextuality means he refers to theorists like Mieke Bal. She defines ‘limited’ intertextuality as “instances of *intertextual* embedding, where a given narrative A is ‘nested’ inside – and ‘interpolates’, as it were – another narrative B, which furnishes the framework within which A is reproduced” (260). Limited intertextuality shares characteristics with the metafictional device of ‘the story within the story’ which has

been mentioned above. Both strategies foreground the fictional character of a work of literature and highlight the process of writing a narrative.

2.2.3 Nonlinearity

In the following, nonlinearity as a characteristic of postmodern literature is going to be defined and discussed. The fact that this composed noun consists of the two parts 'non' and 'linearity' already makes it obvious that nonlinearity refers to a concept which depicts an opposite to linearity. Anton states that 'linearity' is commonly referred to structures that are "serial" or "discursive" (80). In contrast, 'nonlinearity' describes structures that do not follow a clear serial or discursive pattern. Alluding to film theory, Anton argues that

the word "nonlinear" refers to narration styles or editing processes wherein stories do not unfold in sequential order. According to these characterizations, Morse code, computer language, written sentences, or a sequence of dance steps might be described as "linear," whereas sculpture, architecture, painting (or even some kinds of films), might be offered as illustrations of the "nonlinear". (80)

Definition

Anton's general definition of nonlinearity can be applied to postmodern literature. Nonlinearity as a postmodern strategy can appear in a variety of different shapes. Herman refers to what I consider the basic meaning of nonlinearity when describing the difference between realistic and metafictional fiction. "[I]n the former, there is a linear path leading to a singular fate; in the latter, this illusion of singularity is shattered as each specific fiction both incorporates the entirety of the fictional universe with its infinite paths and alternatives" (301). Other characteristics of nonlinear texts are, for instance, no clear point of view or narrative voice and a constant strain between "'fiction', 'dream', 'reality', 'vision', 'hallucination', 'truth', 'lies', etc.'" (Waugh 136). Richardson focusses on nonlinearity in a text's temporality. He presents six strategies that violate realistic temporality: Circular, contradictory, antinomic, differential, conflated and dual or multiple narration (48-51). In circular narratives, which are present in many postmodern works, the ending of the story comes back to its beginning and, thereby, endlessly continues (Richardson 48). Contradictory or self-contradictory stories feature different versions of the stories that are incompatible with each other. These narratives do not possess an unambiguous, linear story but various contradictory variants which impair the notion of the story (Richardson 48).

Contradictory narratives are also very common in postmodern literature. Antinomic narratives move backwards in time. Richardson mentions that some antinomic narratives even combine moving backwards and forwards in time (49). In differential narrative the time passes faster or slower for certain characters than for others (50) and conflated narratives are characterised by different sets of events occurring at the same time in a story, even though they are known to happen or have happened at different times. The distinct events are not separated from each other by any framing devices and their relation to each other is not entirely clear. Richardson's final strategies of violating realistic temporality are dual or multiple narratives in which separate lines of plot begin and end simultaneously but require a different amount of days to unfold (51). Not all of Richardson's strategies are part of the postmodern picture books I am going to analyse later in this thesis. However, contradictory as well as circular narratives will be part of my analysis as they are central aspects of postmodern literature.

Functions and effects

One way of illustrating the functions and effects of nonlinearity is by referring to digital hypertexts. Scholars agree that when reading online we are reading hypertexts as we have numerous options of clicking on a variety of links leading us to other websites that are in some way connected to the text we are reading. There is no predetermined sequence the reader is meant to follow when engaging in reading a hypertext. Moreover, readers of hypertexts are often disturbed or interrupted by information which does not have any connection to the text they are reading, like, for instance, advertisements at the edge of the screen. There are even video advertisements which suddenly pop up and capture the space of the entire computer screen. The reader gets interrupted as he or she needs to look for the tiny 'x' to click on in order to make the video disappear. Alternatively, the advertisement could also be successful in distracting the reader and guiding him or her to another website selling products or advertising online videos or texts. A reading experience like the one described above can definitely not be defined as 'linear' or 'static'. Delany and Landow define the hypertext as a text that is "composed, and read, non-sequentially; it is a variable structure, composed of blocks of text [...] and the electronic links that join them" (3). They argue that hypertexts challenge readers as well as theorists of literature because of their nonlinear structure. However, they also mention that hypertexts do have

positive or even revealing aspects. Hypertexts, unlike 'normal' texts have the possibility to reveal psychological processes happening in the reader's brain when reading a text. They illustrate their argument saying that

the text as the reader *imagined* it – as opposed to the physical text objectified in the book – never had to be linear, bounded or fixed. A reader could jump to the last page to see how the story ended; could think of relevant passages in other works; could re-order texts by cutting and pasting. Still, the stubborn materiality of the text constrained such operations: they required some physical task such as flipping pages, pulling another book from a shelf, or dismembering the original text beyond repair. (Delany and Landow 4)

Delany and Landow are making a valid statement in arguing that hypertext or nonlinear narratives in general expose mental processes and nonlinear reading habits most readers experience. Connor refers to hypertext computer novels which represent another form of nonlinear texts and provide the reader with several fragments of text which can be combined in various sequences. Thereby, these texts have the capability of generating numerous different plot lines (78).

McHale refers to nonlinear texts as "self-erasing narratives" and argues that they "violate linear sequentiality by realizing two mutually-exclusive lines of narrative development at the same time" (108). A special case of self-erasing narratives is multiple endings. McHale explains the importance of endings with their crucial position in a narrative's sequence (109). Multiple endings are very common in postmodern literature and are present in several of the postmodern picture books that are going to be discussed later in this thesis. They often have the function of providing readers with alternatives rather than illustrating one inherent ending of the story. Readers, thereby, have the possibility of choosing their favourite ending or making up their mind about which alternate endings they would find appropriate for a story. The fact that the author gives power to the reader and allows him or her to choose how a text should proceed or end, highlights like the abovementioned postmodern strategies, the fictionality of narratives. The readers are reminded that they are just reading a book and not actually entering a different world. The topic of empowering the readers and encouraging them to make choices while reading is discussed in more detail in the following subsection which engages in reader interaction or co-authoring of reader and author.

2.2.4 Reader interaction

The last postmodern characteristic which is going to be defined and discussed has a slightly different status in this thesis than the three abovementioned ones. An interaction between author and reader or a co-authoring during the process of reading is not only a typical aspect of postmodern literature but can also be considered as a consequence of metafiction, intertextuality, and nonlinearity. The following paragraphs intend to clarify this special status of reader interaction in postmodern fiction.

Definition

Reader interaction can appear in various forms. The author can, for instance, address his or her readers directly by asking them questions in order to encourage them to think about a text's propositions. Other ways of interaction between author and reader include nonlinear narratives in which the reader has the power to decide in which sequence to read the text or self-erasing narratives providing the readers with two mutually exclusive variants of a story. Nicol states that postmodern fiction often has the intention of preventing its readers from "passively entering the fictional world by constantly reminding us that it is a fictional world" (39). From this statement it can be concluded that the goal of postmodern fiction is to create active readers who are motivated to engage productively in a text they are reading. In order to achieve this goal, postmodern fiction uses devices like metafiction (to remind us of the fictional nature of a story), intertextuality (to remind us that a story always exists in relation to other stories), and nonlinearity (to encourage us to question the linear structure of 'normal' stories). This argument can be confirmed by Edward's statement that the postmodern experimentation "with the forms of fiction, and therefore with the construction of meanings, compliments readers by challenging them to participate in that interassociation of texts and contexts which is the play of language" (5-6).

Functions and effects

Functions and effects of reader interaction are, for instance, that these texts challenge their readers. Nicol especially refers to postmodern literature as texts which intend to encourage us as readers "to reconsider our relationship with the world of fiction and the story it tells. Self-conscious writing, in other words, produces self-conscious reading" (40). Nicol, thereby, confirms my argument that postmodern strategies like self-conscious or metafictional writing elicit active reading. He even goes one step further and demands that postmodern theory should grant more attention to how

postmodern fiction is read and not only focus on how it is written. Postmodern literary theory is not only about postmodern writers who write in a new way, but also about postmodern readers who change their reading habits. Referring to Ezra Pound's request 'make it new' Nicol argues that "[p]ostmodernism might be characterized by a more implicit but just as insistent demand to 'read in a new way'" (40). Postmodern reading, therefore, departs from reading as a passive engagement and moves to understanding reading as an active, productive, cooperative activity between author and reader.

3 Picture Books

As this diploma thesis aims at analysing postmodern picture books the previous section was only the first part of the theoretical basis that needs to be clarified. In order to engage in postmodern picture books it is not only important to understand what 'postmodern' means, but also to define a clear notion of 'picture books'. The following section intends to provide an overview of the history of picture books as well as a selection of definitions and typical characteristics of the genre. Moreover, a definition of postmodern picture books for children is provided as a supporting basis for the subsequent analysis.

3.1 Genre Definition

Scholars widely agree in defining the genre of picture books referring to its young audience and its unique combination of texts and pictures. In order to tell a story that can easily be grasped by young children picture book authors convey information on the verbal as well as on the visual level. Perry Nodelman stresses that picture books usually combine many pictures with relatively little text or even without any text. Arguing that texts and pictures hold different functions in picture books than in any other form of literature he states that "[p]icture books [...] are unlike any other form of verbal or visual art" (Nodelman, *Words about pictures* vii). In a more recent publication he especially highlights the fact that the picture book is "the one form of literature invented specifically for audiences of children – and despite recent claims for a growing adult audience for more sophisticated books, the picturebook remains firmly connected to the idea of an implied child-reader/viewer" (Nodelman, *Words Claimed* 11). He argues that except for picture books all kinds of literature, like novels, poems, or plays that are targeted at children or young adults, are adaptations of the adult

versions of the genres. Due to the fact that the audience of picture books is inexperienced children, “picture books are a significant means by which we integrate young children into the ideology of our culture” (Nodelman, *Illustration* 116). While Kristin Hallberg plainly defines picture books as books “with at least one picture on each spread” (qtd. in Nikolajeva and Scott 11), Nikolajeva and Scott’s definition interprets the combination of the visual and the verbal level of communication as the main characteristic of picture books. Picture books “communicate by means of two separate sets of signs, the iconic and the conventional” (Nikolajeva and Scott 1). Whalley highlights the close relationship between pictures and text as a central characteristic of picture books. She defines a good picture book as “one where the accompanying pictures enhance or add depth to the text. A bad illustrated book is one where the pictures lack relevance to the text, or are ill placed and poorly drawn or reproduced” (300). The difference between the iconic and the conventional level of communication in picture books is going to be discussed later in this section when I intend to contrast text and pictures of picture books. Barbara Kiefer who describes the history of the picture book genre quotes one of the most cited and valued definitions of picture books by Barbara Bader. Bader wrote a highly influential work on American picture books in 1976 which developed to a classic in picture book research. According to Bader,

[a] picturebook is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and foremost an experience for a child. As an art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning page. (qtd. in Kiefer 9)

Bader not only refers to the intended audience and the interaction between text and pictures, but also understands the picture book as a work of art that is dependent on social, cultural, and historical circumstances. In her short outline of the history of the genre Kiefer argues that when considering the picture book as an art form it can be dated back at least thirty thousand years to cave paintings in southern France (Kiefer 11). However, the picture books of the Middle Ages are much closer to what we refer to as picture books today. Picture books experienced a golden age and great significance during the Middle Ages (15) and were firstly targeted especially at children in the 16th and 17th century (16). Kiefer (16) and Whalley (300) foreground Johann Amos Comenius’s book *Orbus Sensualium Pictus*. Comenius’s illustrated

encyclopaedia for children which was first published in 1658 is considered the first illustrated picture book for children. In the 18th century picture books were firstly produced for children's entertainment rather than for educational functions. John Newbery was a highly influential figure of the picture book of the 18th century and the first one to understand the production of picture books as a real branch of business (Kiefer 16-7). The 19th century is often referred to as the golden age of the picture book (Goodman 297). Authors like Walter Crane, Kate Greenaway, and Randolph Caldecott can be considered the most important picture book authors of the late 19th century. But also Beatrix Potter who wrote several books in the early 20th century was pioneering in the field of picture books (Nodelman, *Words about pictures* 2). Kiefer adds that Edmund Evans raised the genre to a completely new level by making a lot of effort to add colour to picture books in the 1860 (18). The first two decades of the 20th century can be classified as another high age of the picture book, as a huge number of picture books were published during this period (Whalley 309). Throughout the 20th century the picture book was seen as an object of culture (Kiefer 9) that was frequently approached from an educational standpoint (Nikolajeva and Scott 2). Since the 1980s picture book research mainly considers picture books as a form of art and as an educational device. However, Colomer, Kümmerling-Meibauer, and Silva-Díaz mention that picture books have never been of so much critical interest as in the past few years (1). Colomer highlights the effect of the changes in society on picture books of the turn of the century. New topics of picture books in the 21st century are, for instance, divorce, migration, single-parent families, adoption, or same-sex couples (Colomer 44-5).

Concerning the theoretical engagement in picture book criticism, Nikolajeva and Scott express several points of disapproval. Although they acknowledge that the picture book is referred to as an art object by several scholars, they criticise that the visual part of picture books is often merely seen as decoration. Especially when picture books are referred to as part of children's fiction or from an educational perspective, theorists tend to neglect the pictures and focus more on the textual aspects (Nikolajeva and Scott 2-3). The fact that the texts often exist before the pictures (Nodelman, *Words about pictures* 40) does not legitimate this tendency. Furthermore, Nikolajeva and Scott criticise scholars who fail to analyse the text or pictures within the context of the

picture book (2-3). The interconnectedness of text and pictures is further evaluated in the following paragraphs.

3.2 Characteristics

Scholars apply different terminology when describing the extremely close relationship between text and pictures in picture books that constitutes the central characteristic of this genre. Nodelman does not consider illustrations as works of art per se, as they are always connected to a text and only gain meaning from this connection. Likewise, the text in picture books is dependent on the pictures and can only exploit its full significance in combination with them. According to Nodelman, the majority of the information is conveyed by the pictures while the texts “often sound more like plot summaries than like the actual words of a story” (*Words about pictures* viii). Due to their mutual dependence text and pictures specify one another. The text clarifies what the picture intends to convey and the picture gives meaning to the text. Readers need to be flexible and pay equal attention to both parts as the books “alternate between their two modes, and we cannot both read the words and peruse the pictures at the same time” (Nodelman, *Words about pictures* viii). Sipe defines the connection between texts and pictures as a synergistic relationship and highlights that text and pictures can transform one another. He argues that the important aspect of the relationship between texts and pictures is not only “the union of the text and illustration but also [...] the perceived interactions or transactions between these two parts” (Sipe, *How Picture Books Work* 98-9). Nikolajeva agrees with Nodelman as well as with Sipe and states that text and pictures reinforce and complete one another. A text can, for instance guide the reader’s attention to a certain picture and vice versa (Nikolajeva, *Interpretative Codes* 31). Therefore, she argues that it is highly important for readers of picture books to understand that “in picturebooks, the meaning is produced by the synergy of word and image. To extract meaning from the verbal text alone [...] is pointless” (*Interpretative Codes* 32).

The reason why children are provided with illustrated books is usually explained with the assumption that images can convey meaning more naturally and directly than text. Understanding pictures is supposed to be easier for young children than comprehending text. Therefore, a text that is accompanied by pictures is easier to understand for children than a text without images (Nodelman, *Illustration* 114). In a different publication Nodelman declares why pictures are easier to comprehend than

words. He states that if the term 'tree' appears in a text, it can refer to any tree. The word does not specify how the tree looks like and it does not provide any information about its age or size. A picture, however, has the possibility of depicting only one specific example of a tree. Moreover, a picture always depicts the tree "more exactly, in a more specific way than just the word itself. Because pictures are, in fact, less arbitrary, easier to understand than words, it seems safe to assume that that extra information will not confuse or upset young viewers" (Nodelman, *Words Claimed* 14). Nodelman refers to the difference between the 'iconic' picture which actually resembles the object it implies and the 'symbolic' words which are arbitrary (Nodelman, *Illustration* 114). The iconic pictures illustrate the text by showing the reader/viewer what the symbolic words mean. Thereby, children are able to understand what the text refers to in terms of the pictures that accompany the text (*Illustration* 116). Nodelman reminds of the fascinating fact that pictures are completely obvious and straightforward to us even though they convey their messages through several arbitrary conventions (*Illustration* 116). Pictures are actually not as natural as they appear and in order to understand the meaning of a picture the viewer needs to be familiar with certain conventions. The viewer needs to know, for instance, that the man on a picture is not really only four inches tall but depicts a representation of a grown man. Another example is that a house in the background is not really smaller than a man depicted in the foreground, but its size simply represents that it is farther away than the man (*Illustration* 114). Because of the fact that conventions like these are obvious to us, pictures are a great tool for clarifying text.

Nikolajeva and Scott ascribe specific functions to pictures and texts in picture books. They agree with Nodelman that both components are very complex signs but apply a slightly different terminology. They define images as complex 'iconic' signs and words as complex 'conventional' signs. Iconic signs or pictures are ascribed with the function of describing or representing and the aim of conventional signs or words is "primarily to narrate" (1). They argue that the tension between pictures and words, which is omnipresent, provides an extensive number of possible interactions between images and texts in picture books. Both the verbal and the visual components tend to have gaps that can be filled by the other. Alternatively, the gaps can also be left for the reader to complete (Nikolajeva and Scott 2).

Goodman describes words and pictures as two components that are “inextricably linked” and equally important in the telling of the story (296). Moebius agrees and highlights that in a picture book neither words nor pictures can have meaning by themselves as one works for the other in an inseparable dependency (311). He, moreover, mentions that words and pictures can convey slightly contradictory information. By referring to the “‘plate tectonics’ of the picturebook, where word and image constitute separate plates sliding and scraping along against each other” Moebius illustrates this complex relationship (313). Using a different imagery Moebius manages to describe the constant transformation of words and pictures by one another. Sipe states that “we interpret the texts in terms of pictures and the pictures in terms of the text in a potentially never-ending sequence” (*How Picture Books Work* 102). Therefore, we constantly “adjust our interpretation of the pictures in terms of the words, and our interpretation of the words in terms of the pictures” (*How Picture Books Work* 103). Sipe’s argument that picture books need to be reread is, therefore, highly plausible. It is obvious that the reader/viewer is not able to notice all potential implications of the pictures, the text, and the relationship between both (*How Picture Books Work* 101). Nodelmann, similarly, mentions that in a picture book the prose text is often very unsteady because the small portions of text are constantly disrupted by the pictures which split them (*Words about pictures* 249). The text always leads the reader forward in the plot while pictures intend to describe how a certain situation looks like at a particular moment in the story. While the text tries to push us further, the picture wants to hold us back. Nodelmann calls this the “rhythm of picture-book stories” which consists of a constant moving forward and pausing (*Words about pictures* 261). An important question that arises when considering the interplay of verbal and visual components of picture books is ‘Where do readers/viewers look first? At the pictures or at the words?’ Nodelman answers this question arguing that we first look at the pictures and afterwards read the text. He argues that even if someone starts by reading the text instead, he or she is bound to experience the colour and shape of the pictures. This experience already makes it easier to interpret the words correctly (*Words about pictures* 242). After having read the text, Nodelman argues that readers tend to have a closer look at the pictures again. This sequence of looking at the picture, reading the text, and having a closer look at the picture is suggested by the fact that pictures are often placed on the right side of the book (*Words about pictures* 243).

However, it needs to be regarded that the reading/viewing sequence depends to a large degree on the characteristics of specific picture books.

Sipe relates the verbal and the visual components of the picture book to our concepts of time and space. He mentions G. E. Lessing's reference to the fact that all art is oriented on our understanding of space and time. "We see a painting all at once; but in order to experience literature or music, we have to read or listen in a linear succession of moments through time. This raises the question of whether there could be arts that are based on both time *and* space – on simultaneity as well as successivity" (*How Picture Books Work* 99). Acknowledging that such kinds of arts like picture books, films, or theatre do exist, Sipe argues that there is a constant "tension between our impulse to gaze at the pictures – to forget about time in creating an "atemporal structure" – and to not interrupt the temporal narrative flow. The verbal text drives us to read on in a linear way, where the illustrations seduce us into stopping to look" (Sipe, *How Picture Books Work* 101).

Focussing on the verbal and visual components of picture books Nikolajeva and Scott compiled a list of subcategories of the genre. Their list proceeds from the 'symmetrical' picture book, where pictures and text convey the exact same information, to 'sylleptic' picture books which feature two or more narratives that are independent of each other. They assert that most classical picture books are 'symmetrical' or 'complementary' because their visual and verbal parts tell two mutually redundant narratives by filling each other's gaps. 'Expanding' or 'counterpointing' picture books, which are characterised by two mutually dependent narratives that can in some cases contradict each other, as well as the abovementioned 'sylleptic' picture books, are unusual in classic picture book narration (Nikolajeva and Scott 12-7). However, these more complex types of picture books are very common in postmodern works which are going to be dealt with in the subsequent section of this thesis.

Nodelman mentions another aspect of the complex relationship between pictures and text in picture books. His argument is based on his assumption that the pictures of picture books are mostly more complex, detailed, and sophisticated than the words (*Words Claimed* 17). Therefrom, he infers that texts are usually applied to focalise what happens in the story through the eyes of the child character. The pictures, however, often present the child from a certain distance and are, therefore, used to

focalise the events by someone who “has the ability to record all the visual surrounding details the child is not necessarily conscious of” (Nodelman, *Words Claimed* 17).

It can be concluded from the paragraphs above that the structure of picture books and the relationship between words and pictures is highly complex. The availability of a visual as well as a verbal dimension is used in order to achieve various effects which are typical for the picture book, like the double focalisation mentioned above. Nodelman refers to the fact that picture books are obviously a genre for child readers but apply highly sophisticated codes as a paradox. On the one hand, picture books convey simple stories for children, but on the other hand, they do so by employing complex visual and verbal signs. Nodelman understands this paradox as central to the genre of picture books stating that “it is part of the charm of many of the most interesting picture books that they so strangely combine the childlike and the sophisticated – that the viewer they imply is both very learned and very ingenuous” (Nodelman, *Words about pictures* 21).

As picture books are targeted at children, they are very often connected to the educational field of study. Many scholars have analysed picture books referring to their educational goals and messages. Nodelman agrees that many picture books do convey certain lessons to child readers or viewers. He mentions, for instance, that “species-centricity” (*Illustration* 117) is typical for picture books. This means that as soon as there is a human character in any picture, the focus is on this part of the image and not, for instance, on the flower he or she is holding. By experiencing conventions like these, children obviously learn and gradually internalise social conventions. Nodelman acknowledges this influence of picture books, but does not agree that this is the only impact that is conveyed by this genre. Referring to the fact that the pictures always give more detailed information about the text and the text provides us with details about the pictures, he argues that “the words in picture books always tell us that things are not merely as they appear in the pictures, and the pictures always show us that events are not exactly as the words describe them” (*Illustration* 123). In a different publication Nodelman argues that the picture book is inherently ironic in two ways. Firstly, the difference between the rather objective pictures and the comparatively subjective text inevitably makes the picture book an ironic genre. Secondly, the contrast between the chronological progress of the plot and the complete absence of time in pictures categorises all picture books as ironic (*Words*

about pictures 228-9). He sees irony as a crucial characteristic of picture books because it teaches readers and viewers to notice the differences between the information provided by the pictures and by the text. Thereby, children can learn to doubt the information that is conveyed in picture books. Moreover, they experience that picture books do face limits when trying to represent the world. By realising that the world is often misinterpreted they are unlikely “to confuse any particular representation with reality, or to be unconsciously influenced by ideologies they have considered” (*Illustration* 123). Disagreeing with the common assumption that picture books tend to press their readers into conforming established social views, Nodelman argues that picture books make their readers aware of the semiotics of this genre through which their world is presented to them. Thereby, readers can achieve the ability of thinking about their own individual realities (*Illustration* 123).

Another distinctive characteristic of picture books is the fact that they very often address a double audience. They are designed to entertain both young children and experienced adults (Nikolajeva and Scott 21). Scott mentions that picture books provide a great possibility for children and adults to collaborate in reading and viewing and understanding the story (101). This collaboration functions smoothly because children usually possess great capabilities of analysing the pictures in detail, while adults are more focussed on understanding the verbal aspects of the book (Nikolajeva, *Interpretative Codes* 31). This cooperation between child and adult reader is possible because “picturebooks bridge the gap between the verbal and nonverbal, creating an artistic form equally appealing to sophisticated and to less sophisticated readers” (Nikolajeva and Scott 262). Especially when discussing postmodern picture books in the following section it will be interesting to consider which aspects of the books are mainly targeted at children and which parts aim at entertaining an adult audience.

3.3 Codes

In order to be able to analyse picture books it is necessary to be familiar with the different codes picture book authors use to achieve certain effects in their works. The following section intends to describe the most important codes and methods applied to convey different atmospheres, moods, and emotions in picture books. These effects are typically achieved by the visual components of picture books. I acknowledge Nodelman’s argument that the pictorial codes that convey mood and atmosphere cannot be separated into single components in pictures. He categorises these codes

as “predominating qualities of a book as a whole” (*Words about pictures* 41). In partial dependence on Nodelman’s categorisations I am going to present picture book codes focussing on the position of characters and objects on the page, the usage of frames, colours, social and cultural symbols, and codes of conveying movement and chronology in pictures.

The position of characters and objects on the page can have several implications of a person’s state of mind, the general atmosphere of a situation, or the importance of certain objects to the story. Referring to characters, there is a difference whether a character is depicted in the centre of the page or in one of the corners. According to Nikolajeva this often expresses a character’s state of mind and self-confidence, intensifying more obvious signs like the person’s outward appearance and physiognomy (*Interpretative Codes* 37). Moebius agrees and mentions that it is also crucial whether a character appears high or low on a page. Height often indicates a thrilled mood or a dream state but can also mark power or self-assuredness. A low page position usually implies the opposite, like a depressive state of mind or a low social status. Moebius, moreover, adds that these effects can be highlighted or lessened depending on whether the person is depicted in the front or in the background of the page. Moebius also grants attention to the fact that the position of a character can imply security or danger. If characters are depicted on the left page, they are in a more secure space than if they were depicted on the right. As we automatically think from left to right, a character at the left knows (or sees) what is going to happen next, while a person depicted on the right side could be surprised by what will occur on the following page (Moebius 316-7). Nodelman also refers to this important chronological aspect of the picture book spread. He highlights that traditional picture books are, when opened, usually wider than they are high. Therefore, he argues that there is much more meaning conveyed by whether an object is positioned in the left or the right, than by whether it appears on the top or the bottom of the page (*Words about pictures* 135). Another indication of danger mentioned by Moebius is the absence of a horizon. This especially conveys a lack of orientation and the character’s loss of control over a situation (Moebius 316-7). Nodelman states that due to gravity pulling down objects, the top of the images is usually utilised less than the bottom. Therefore, we are attracted more by everything that appears at the top part of the page

and authors place important objects or characters at the top in order to convey their importance to the story (*Words about pictures* 134).

Not only a character's position but also the way in which he or she is framed in the picture is crucial for conveying certain emotions and atmospheres. Moebius, for instance, highlights that if a picture is framed the viewer experiences the image as a brief glance 'into' another world. If, however, a picture is unframed a more immediate experience is conveyed that can be compared to observing a world from 'within' (Moebius 318). Another effect that is achieved by frames is a sense of tidiness and objectivity. Nodelman argues that a frame makes an image appear calmer, less dynamic, unemotional, and objective. Books which provide an extremely objective view of events even feature frames around their textual paragraphs. On the contrary, subjective stories that are focussed on emotion feature considerably less frames. Nodelman, further mentions that picture books often feature objects that act as framing devices like, for instance, windows, doors, or mirrors. Especially title pages often depict doors or windows, inviting the readers/viewers into the world of the book. Moreover, framing devices can have the function of guiding the viewer's attention to the important parts of the picture (Nodelman, *Words about pictures* 50-1). Finally, Moebius even presents a theory concerning the effects of frames of different shapes. According to him, a person that is surrounded by a round or oval frame tends to be more safe and satisfied than one that is framed by square objects. Square shapes often indicate problems or absence of freedom (Moebius 318).

A rather obvious way of conveying emotion and atmosphere in picture books is the usage of colours. Nodelman reasonably argues that the most significant effect of colours is the whole colour design of the book rather than the colours of particular objects within the pictures (*Words about pictures* 141). Colours are conventionally used to elicit certain moods. Nodelman mentions, for example, that blue implies sadness, red indicates heat or affection, yellow means happiness, green stands for advance and development, and grey is often connected with inexpressive characters (*Words about pictures* 60-1). Because nowadays picture books usually feature different colours, authors who use only black and white often intend to convey an effect by doing so. One possible function that could be intended by limiting a book's colours to black and white is to highlight that what is told is an extremely objective view on what happens in the story. This strategy is based on the fact that we tend to connect

black and white with the unapologetic truth and with objectivity without the tiniest sign of subjectivity. Black and white pictures are assumed to present the truth precisely without any interference of subjective colours (Nodelman, *Words about pictures* 67).

Nodelman raises awareness of social and cultural symbolism in picture books. Readers or viewers need to be familiar with these symbols in order to understand the books' full meaning. However, picture books also teach their audience how social and cultural symbols work. Common cultural assumptions are, for instance, that darkness represents mischief while light stands for positive and good things. Therefore, bad characters are often depicted in the darkness or wearing hats or caps that bring their faces in the shadow. Good characters, on the contrary, appear in light surroundings and seldom wear hats. Moreover, assuming cultural comprehensions of what is beautiful and what is ugly, the heroes are typically beautiful or handsome while the villains are ugly. By featuring beautiful heroes and ugly villains picture books teach their audience such cultural values. (*Words about pictures* 111-2). However, there are other cultural values the readers or viewers are assumed to already possess. Nodelman mentions that cultural values can help viewers understand facial expressions or demeanour of characters. It is, for instance, clear to us that characters with upturned lips are happy (*Words about pictures* 117). Considering the picture book as a whole, Nodelman observes that common picture books extremely often describe "a journey that almost inevitably symbolizes a growth in understanding; [...] doors and windows are symbolic thresholds, and roads and streams are symbolic paths to wisdom" (*Words about pictures* 108).

Conveying movement and time is a quite complex part of picture books. Although pictures obviously cannot depict actual movement or passage of time, there are several codes which allow picture book authors to imply movement in their images. A common technique is repetition of the same characters or objects in several pictures. If, for instance, a character is repeatedly depicted in different postures the viewer understands that the pictures intend to convey a chronological sequence of events. According to Nodelman it is even possible to show a chronological movement within one single picture by relying on well-known conventions. As the pictures are usually similar to real life, the author can assume that the audience knows what typically happens before or after a certain action (Nodelman, *Words about pictures* 195). If, for instance, a picture shows a person 'flying' down a diving platform we understand that

he or she is about to touch the surface of the water. Another possibility to imply movement within one picture is distorting of characters and objects. Moreover, the fact that we automatically look at the pictures from left to right we assume that depictions of characters that are oriented towards the right are moving forward. Nodelman actually observed that characters are often directed to the left when they are in way hindered to proceed their plans (*Words about pictures* 162-4). The common habit of moving from the top to the bottom of a page and our tendency to first look at the pictures can be used to achieve tension or confusion. If a picture book features text above pictures readers or viewers might be unsure where to start. Thereby, tension is conveyed (*Words about pictures* 55). Moreover, a mixture of motions from the right and from the left is frequently used to convey hectic pace or disorder (*Words about pictures* 165).

Having described the genre of picture books and its characteristic strategies and codes, I am now going to step closer to the main topic of this thesis by attempting to define the subgenre of postmodern picture books.

3.3 Postmodern picture books

Bette P. Goldstone who wrote several articles on postmodern picture books acknowledges that the development of the new genre of postmodern picture books has been caused by social and cultural change. Like every other literary genre picture books have expanded throughout the centuries due to the culture that surrounds them. Typical picture books of the 20th century, for instance, feature a very naïve tone and optimistic endings. Postmodern picture books of the late 20th and early 21st century are characterised by more complex structures. Being confronted with these postmodern picture books children are supported in making sense of the complex world they are part of (Goldstone, *Whaz up* 362). Nikolajeva and Scott agree that towards the end of the 20th century the objectives of picture book authors have been changing. Instead of a clarifying relationship between text and pictures, postmodern picture books tend to feature ambiguities between text and illustration. This challenges the readers and requires them “to bring their own answers, their own resolutions to the works, and to join forces with the author/illustrators in creating the scenario, the story, and the interpretation” (Nikolajeva and Scott 259).

Eliza T. Dresang who coined the concept of 'Radical Change' also argues that the change in children's literature is connected to changes in society. She mentions the terms 'interactive' and 'nonlinear', which are frequently used in digital media and the Internet, as particularly representative of contemporary society (282-3). She describes 'Radical Change' as an elemental change not only in the picture book genre but in all children's literature (284). 'Radical Change' is established by three concepts of the digital age, namely 'connectivity', 'interactivity', and 'access'. Dresang refers 'connectivity' to the necessity of drawing connections when engaging with hypertexts or books with nonlinear arrangements. 'Interactivity' relates to the increasingly active and participating way of reading that is required when dealing with contemporary children's literature. Readers are provided with multiple nonlinear possibilities of how to read and interpret the books and can choose their approaches individually. The third concept 'access' highlights the extinction of limitations in children's literature. Problematic topics or styles are no longer detained from young readers (Dresang 290). Dresang's descriptions of radical change in children's literature offer "a new way of looking at contemporary literature for children and young adults" (291). They intend "to explain and examine contemporary literature for youth as it exists in the digital age" (291) and are, therefore, useful for my analysis of postmodern picture books. Postmodern picture books are concerned with all three concepts of the digital age that have been described above and it is, therefore, necessary to consider Dresang's theory of 'Radical Change' when discussing these book.

3.3.1 Genre definition

Postmodern picture books were first categorised as a separate subgenre of picture books in 2004 by Goldstone. Her article "The Postmodern Picture Book: A New Subgenre" serves as a basis for the following section. She argues that this new genre has been developing from the 1970s onwards and critics like, for instance, Seelinger Trites, Nikola-Lisa, and Dresang agree that there are many similarities between postmodern picture books and postmodern literature for adults. Like other postmodern works these children's books "shatter readers' expectations, demand active co-authoring, and raise questions about what is real" (Goldstone, *Postmodern Picture Book* 197). What comes closest to Goldstone providing a formal definition of the genre is the following listing of postmodern features that frequently appear in postmodern picture books.

Children's picture books may be nonlinear, having multiple storylines running concurrently or containing multiple perspectives. They may display an unusual degree of playfulness, bordering on the absurd with unusual twists and turns. Irony slips into the books both in tone and contradictory story lines. These books can be self-referential, exposing the artistic act of the book's creation. These picture books also invite co-authoring – the power of telling the story is shared between author and the young reader. (*Postmodern Picture Book*, 197-8)

Although Goldstone sees postmodern picture books as a separate subgenre they do not only share characteristics with postmodern literature in general but also with 'normal' picture books. She quotes, for instance, Moebius's list of picture book codes (*Postmodern Picture Book* 198) that has been described in the section above considering them as characteristics that are equally defining for traditional and postmodern picture books. However, there are other features that are even more important for the definition of postmodern picture books. Goldstone lists

- nonlinearity in terms of the story line and multiple narrators;
- irony;
- exposure to the artistic act of the book's creation and coauthoring. (Goldstone, *Postmodern Picture Book* 199)

as the most important features defining postmodern picture books.

Nonlinearity is mentioned first as Goldstone considers it the most common characteristic of postmodern literature. This postmodern strategy is going to be applied later in this paper when analysing selected postmodern picture books in detail. She mentions that nonlinearity can be demonstrated in different appearances like, for instance, through differing story lines in the verbal and the visual text (*Postmodern Picture Book* 199). Due to the fact that postmodern picture books lay bare the process of the book's creation for the reader to see, Goldstone argues that the story gives "power to the reader, inviting the reader to actively construct whole new stories and make decisions about how to read the story. The reader is the stabilizing force and brings order to the seemingly chaotic narrative" (*Postmodern Picture Book* 199). Multiple perspectives of narration, a very typical characteristic of postmodern picture books, can be interpreted as one aspect of nonlinearity as it indicates that the narrator's ability to decide how the story should proceed is divided. Goldstone states that different characters of the book as well as the author and the reader possess decisive power about the story line (*Postmodern Picture Book* 200). Moreover, she mentions another variety of nonlinearity. Several postmodern picture books feature

narrative voices that discuss the story in different ways or from different points of view. This adds childlike playfulness to the story which pleases children who, according to Goldstone, can be “comfort[ed] with informality” (Goldstone, *Postmodern Picture Book* 200).

Irony is very often an aspect of intertextuality, which I am going to focus on in the section on analysing postmodern strategies in picture books. Especially in postmodern retellings of classical fairy tales authors often make use of irony in order to ridicule the long appreciated stories (*Postmodern Picture Book* 200). However, irony is not only applied as a strategy of intertextuality and to parody older texts but is also present when the text and the pictures convey different messages to the reader/viewer (*Postmodern Picture Book* 201). Goldstone, hereby, alludes to Nodelman’s argument that every picture book is inherently ironic because there is always a slight difference between what the text tells and what the images show. Moreover, she mentions the constant tension that is caused by our impulses of both wanting to know how the story proceeds and to have a close look at the pictures. This tension is inherent to all picture books. The difference in postmodern picture books is that the illustrations are not always intended to support the text. Unlike in traditional picture books the pictures do not necessarily have the goal of helping to create a consistent story. Postmodern illustrations often intend to break the plot apart. The reader, therefore, needs to look out “for discrepancies, additional story lines, and unexpected elements. The viewer must recognize these new pictorial elements and decide how to use them” (Goldstone, *Postmodern Picture Book* 201). Nikolajeva and Scott call picture books featuring pictures and words that are conveying different messages ‘counterpointing’ picture books. They list several different varieties of counterpointing picture books which provide the active reader with many possible ways of interpretation. The ones I consider most important are listed in the following: In picture books with ‘counterpoint in address’, for instance, the reader/viewer needs to fill some gaps by combining verbal and visual aspects. ‘Counterpoint in style’ means that the words are, for example ironic while the pictures are not. Picture books with ‘counterpoint in genre or modality’ could feature a realistic text while the images are fantastic. Therefore, picture books provide a great basis for questioning conventional genres (24). Many postmodern picture books feature ‘counterpoint in perspective’ meaning that there are different narrators. One that is telling the story through the text and one that is

experiencing the story through the pictures. In many cases this means that there is a difference between the child's perspective and the adult's narration. Ambiguity is often created by 'counterpoint in characterization' where text and illustration describe characters differently (Nikolajeva and Scott 25).

Goldstone's third point includes two of the postmodern strategies I intend to focus on when analysing postmodern picture books, namely metafiction and interaction between reader and author. The metafictional focus on the process of creating the picture book and on the physical appearance of the books encourage the reader/viewer to think about what 'reality' actually means. They are invited to contemplate what is 'real' about the book, the story, the narration etc. (*Postmodern Picture Book* 201). Moreover, metafiction has the effect of keeping readers from completely submerging into the fictional world of the story. They are constantly reminded that they are only reading a story that has been created in order to entertain them (*Postmodern Picture Book* 201). Postmodern illustrations are particularly interesting as they often move from the surface of the book into the reader's world and even into a world that "exists under and around the pages" (*Postmodern Picture Book* 202). This is another technique of postmodern authors to remind their audiences that what they are reading is not reality but "a wonderful mechanism to see the world in new and unexpected ways" (Goldstone, *Postmodern Picture Book* 202). A very common and easily understandable type of metafiction that is often featured in picture books for children is the author directly addressing the reader/viewer by asking whether he/she wants to know what is going to happen on the next page (Nikolajeva and Scott 221).

To conclude Goldstone's highly appropriate description of postmodern picture books I would like to mention what she considers to be the most specific characteristics which differentiate postmodern picture books from more traditional ones. She describes that "[m]ultiple storylines, narrators, and perspectives, deliberate contradiction between illustration and text showing the book as it really is, and allowing the reader to be privy to the act of the book's creation are communication or semiotic codes that signal to the reader that postmodern picture books need to be read differently" (Goldstone, *Postmodern Picture Book* 203). Her demand for different reading techniques can be connected to Nicol who argues that Ezra Pounds postmodern statement 'make it new' should also mean 'read in a new way' (Nicol 40). Rather than absorbing information

passively, readers of postmodern picture books must actively participate in the process of meaning making.

Besides Goldman, Dryden also provides a valuable collection of characteristics defining postmodern picture books. She conducted a study comparing traditional picture books to postmodern ones and discovered a number of postmodern devices in the visual as well as in the textual aspects of contemporary picture books. Concerning the visual aspects Dryden observed a

permeability of the picture plane and the picture frame; the introduction of alternate virtual pictorial spaces and white space outside the pictorial space; increasing fragmentation of pictorial space; the unpredictable use of multiple angles of view in conjunction with the middle-space, eye-level; and, the use of intimate, close-up demand images. (15)

According to Dryden's research the textual aspects of postmodern picture books feature

proliferation of the single primary circular plot into various multiple, circular and linear plot structures and problematic endings; the proliferation of narrative voices and forms of focalization; and, the proliferation of dialogic intertextual references to other pre-texts, artistic discourses, and a variety of elements from the greater cultural context. (15)

Considering all the abovementioned characteristics defining postmodern picture books I compiled my selection of four postmodern strategies that have been described earlier in this paper and which I intend to use for my analysis of postmodern picture books. These strategies are: 'metafiction', 'intertextuality', 'nonlinearity', and 'reader interaction'.

3.3.2 Audience

It is argued by many scholars that postmodern concepts are often seen as far too complicated and difficult for children to understand. Adults, therefore, tend to "promote closed rather than open texts for children [...] and to deny metafiction because it turns the reader into a self-conscious collaborator rather than an easily manipulated consumer" (Moss 47). Moss, thereby, refers to Jacqueline Rose's argument of adults denying children access to postmodern literature. Criticising these actions of supposedly worried adults, Moss argues that metafiction does deserve a place in children's literature on grounds of three reasons. Firstly, he asserts that children enjoy reading complex, postmodern books. Secondly, children are encouraged by postmodern books to question the forms of traditional texts. Finally, children's literature

is not different from other forms of literature and is playing with the traditional forms anyway (Moss 51). Although Hunt acknowledges that metafictional devices often appear to be too complicated for children, he argues that they are highly present in children's literature. In contrast to what adults widely believe, "children – developing readers – live in a world which is far more conscious of and ambivalent about the relationship between fiction and reality than the world of the skilled reader, and children's writers have responded to this, perhaps more than is generally acknowledged" (Hunt 41).

Goldstone, like Hunt, acknowledges the argument of postmodernism being too abstract and, therefore, not appealing for children (*Whaz up* 366). However, she asserts that postmodern strategies have the power to help children understand their world. She illustrates her argument by mentioning that postmodern strategies are connected to culture and society and can, therefore, help children understand the complex world they live in. Many parts of our lives are shaped by postmodern phenomena like TV shows, computer programs, and, most importantly, the Internet. Postmodern picture books that feature nonlinearity or co-authoring share more characteristics with online hypertexts than with traditional picture books (*Whaz up* 366-7). Therefore, postmodern picture books "reflect the world in which children play and learn. Today's children are part of the point-and-click culture. Information is gained from bytes and text fragments that do not follow a linear, left-to-right sequence" (Dresang and McClelland qtd. in Goldstone, *Whaz up* 367).

Goldstone writes that due to the fact that children often do not yet have a fixed imagination of how a text should develop it is easier for them to change their reading than it is for adults (*Whaz up* 368). However, considering the highly complicated nature of postmodern strategies, Goldstone argues that children are not automatically able to interpret and understand those strategies. In order to grasp the whole meaning of postmodern picture books children need to be instructed to several methods of how to approach these books. It is, for instance, crucial for readers to know that they have the possibility of influencing the story and that the story could be told from several perspectives. Moreover, readers should know that they are not going to be immersed into the world of the story. Most importantly, they need to have the ability of connecting text, illustrations and different perspectives. They need to answer the question "How do these seemingly unrelated parts connect?" rather than "What comes next?" (*Postmodern Picture Book* 203). Goldstone argues that it is definitely worth introducing

children to how to deal with the abovementioned aspects as postmodern picture books have the ability of providing children with confidence in dealing with new reading challenges (*Postmodern Picture Book* 203). Moreover, postmodern picture books can teach children a way of reading they inevitably need to be proficient in when dealing with digital genres like online websites and hypertexts in general. Goldstone inserts a short text by Linda D. Labbo declaring the connection between postmodern picture books and digital genres. Labbo argues that like in postmodern picture books on the Internet everything is interactive and participatory, digital content is always nonlinear and dynamic, and many websites make use of multiple perspectives on certain issues (qtd. in Goldstone, *Postmodern Picture Book* 202).

Serafini conducted a study of young children reading and reacting to Anthony Browne's picture book *Voices in the Park* which is going to be analysed later in this thesis. He observed that after the book was discussed in plenum some students returned to the book to reread certain extracts while others simply put the book down as 'weird'. Serafini concluded from these observations that readers who are able to deal with ambiguity more easily understand postmodern elements (60). He, thereby, confirms McClay's statement that in order to become a successful reader one needs to learn "tolerance for ambiguity" (105). Moreover, the results of Serafini's study show that the majority of young readers do not have enough motivation to put energy to analysing complex, nonlinear, postmodern texts. He, therefore, demands of schools to prepare young readers to the challenges of reading complicated texts. It is nowadays, according to Serafini, not enough for children to acquire elementary literacy skills. Being able to engage in complicated texts is a necessary skill in order to persist in contemporary society (62).

The phenomenon of picture books featuring 'simple' topics but presenting them in highly sophisticated and complex structures caused many critics to deal with the question of the intended audience of these books (Nikolajeva and Scott 260). Moss, for instance, argues that critics are often unsure about the audience of postmodern picture books because the genre would suggest a young readership while the content and structure demand a highly educated audience (54). Both young and experienced readers are challenged by the postmodern discontinuities as they are expected to be very active and deliberate readers (58). Stevenson also mentions the complicated aspects of postmodern picture books and states that certain concepts cannot be

understood by the child reader but can become clear to him/her several years later. Moreover, she mentions the comic effect of picture books that “wink past the child reader to the adult beyond, or wink past the adult to the child” (Stevenson 33). Both child and adult reader, therefore, take pleasure in investigating complex postmodern picture books. Another consequence of the fact that picture books share aspects of both very simple and highly complex literature is mentioned by Moss. He asserts that they present the perfect genre for experimenting with new structures and techniques. Authors encounter a great possibility for examining the very limits of children’s literature (66) and he calls picture books the “richest area of experimentation in children’s literature” (Moss 52).

3.3.3 Postmodern illustrations

Considering postmodern picture books it is particularly interesting to analyse how postmodern strategies are implemented in illustrations. In her article “Postmodern Experiments” Bette P. Goldstone makes a very interesting point about how postmodern picture books apply visual space differently from traditional ones. She mentions that in traditional picture books we assume that there are three planes of space namely background, mid-ground, and foreground (*Postmodern Experiments* 321). Authors of postmodern picture books also use these traditional spaces but, according to Goldstone, they expanded them in three ways. Firstly, “[s]pace has been redefined, reconnoitered, and manipulated into five dimensions. The fourth dimension is the space shared between the physical book and the reading/viewing audience” (*Postmodern Experiments* 322). This means that characters from the book can leave the traditional spaces and can be situated in the space which is normally dedicated to the reader/viewer. As a fifth dimension an area that is located beneath the actual page is introduced. Characters can, therefore, leave the surface of the page and vanish into hidden areas beneath the physical page. Secondly, in postmodern picture books the surface of the pages is “porous and dynamic. Therefore, characters as well as readers/viewers have the possibility of moving between the fantastic world of the story and reality. Goldstone states that “[b]ook characters and story elements spill out of the book into the audience space, while audience members enter the story world” (*Postmodern Experiments* 322). Thirdly, the two abovementioned innovations open additional possibilities for locating text in picture books. The text does not have to be detached from the illustrations but can be “woven around characters, objects, and

settings" (*Postmodern Experiments* 322) and characters of the story can manipulate the text. Goldstone argues that the text is still understood as distinct from the illustrations but it is now possible to integrate it more into the whole work of a picture book (Goldstone, *Postmodern Experiments* 322). These innovations in picture book illustrations also make it easier for the characters to address the audience directly, which again highlights that postmodern literature demands highly active readers and viewers (*Postmodern Experiments* 323).

All abovementioned aspects of postmodern picture books should be illustrated by referring to concrete postmodern picture books in the following section.

4 Analysis: Postmodern strategies in selected picture books

In the following sections it is intended to analyse how postmodern strategies are applied in five different picture books that have been first published between 1990 and 2005. The books to be considered are David Macauley's *Black and White* (1990), Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith's *The Stinky Cheese Man And Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (1992), Anthony Browne's *Voices In The Park* (1998), David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001), and Emily Gravett's *Wolves* (2005). As picture books are characterised by their combination of text and images, special focus is on how this interaction influences the application of postmodern strategies. Moreover, the analysis aims at investigating whether the very young audience of picture books has an effect on the implementations of postmodern strategies. Another interesting question I attempt to answer in the following paragraphs is what effects authors intend to convey when applying complex postmodern strategies in literature that is targeted at children. I intend to find out what the authors' aims are when confronting a young and unexperienced audience with complicated structures like metafiction or intertextuality. The analysis is structured into four sections dealing with four postmodern strategies, namely 'metafiction', 'intertextuality', 'nonlinearity', and 'reader interaction'. These strategies have already been defined and described in theory in section 2.3. In order to illustrate these strategies, the following sections intend to give practical examples of how they are applied in several selected postmodern picture books. As not all five books feature all postmodern strategies I intend to analyse, not every book is mentioned in every section.

4.1 Selected picture books

Before analysing the postmodern strategies ‘metafiction’, ‘intertextuality’, ‘nonlinearity’, and ‘reader interaction’ in six postmodern picture books brief summaries of these books are provided in the following paragraphs.

The picture book *Black and White* by David Macaulay was first published in 1990. Macaulay who is an American illustrator and writer received the Caldecott Medal award for *Black and White* in 1991. The book starts with a word of warning to the readers informing them about the special nature of this picture book. The very first page features a note saying: “WARNING This book appears to contain a number of different stories that do not necessarily occur at the same time. Then again, it may contain only one story. In any event, careful inspection of both words and pictures is recommended” (*Black and White* Title page)¹. Macaulay, thereby, tells his readers how to engage with the book and instructs them to take careful attention to all aspects of the book in order to find out whether it contains one or four stories. Careful inspection of the book is, indeed, necessary in order to understand this complex picture book. This is mainly due to the fact that each double spread of the book consists of four separate stories that feature completely different styles of narration and illustration. The story ‘Seeing Things’ which is always situated in the upper left corner of the book tells the story of a boy who is travelling home to his parents by train. The illustrations in this part of the book are drawn in a very blurry watercolour style. The story ‘Problem Parents’ in the lower right part of the book is about the relationship between parents and children. It features clearly drawn lines but the colours are limited to black, white, and brown. In the upper right corner the story ‘A Waiting Game’ is depicted. This part of the book constitutes a great variety of bright colours and shows commuters who are impatiently waiting for a delayed train. Finally, the fourth story ‘Udder Chaos’ which is positioned in the lower right corner is the most abstract one of the book. It is about a herd of Holstein cows leaving the field and an escaped convict who tries to hide between the cows. Towards the end of the book these four stories begin to merge more and more and in the penultimate double spread the borders between the four quadrants dissolve before everything turns back to normal in the last double spread. However, the ending is not straightforward at all, as there is one additional picture after

¹ As the selected picture books do not feature pagination, the provided numbers refer to the double spreads I numbered myself.

the last double spread in which a huge hand seems to remove the train station of the story 'A Waiting Game'. Edge-Partington summarises that the book

tells the story of the interruption of train service and the impact it has on people's lives. This book allows readers to "see" that things are not always Black and White. It is an illustrative delight that blends a variety of techniques including watercolour, sepia wash, line and coloured ink drawings and combine them with an unusual style and layout to both engage and intrigue readers. (45)

However, it goes without saying that this is only one of many different possible interpretations the book allows. Therefore, *Black and White* offers a great basis for discussing postmodern features.

The second book that serves as an illustration of a postmodern picture book is *The Stinky Cheese Man And Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (abbreviated *The Stinky Cheese Man* from now on) by the American writer Jon Scieszka and the illustrator Lane Smith which was first published in 1992. According to Stevenson, this collection of fairy tale parodies is "the classic postmodern picture book" (32). Several well known fairy tales are turned completely upside down and the whole book is full of self-referential structures. The stories are constantly interrupted by the narrator noticing that he has forgotten to add the table of contents or by the Little Red Hen who desperately tries to convince the narrator to save some space in the book for her story. These techniques make the book a highly metafictional narrative and, therefore, typically postmodern. The readers are fully aware of the fictionality of the book when reading it. Fairy tale parodies that are part of this book are, for instance, 'The Princess and the Bowling Ball', 'The Really Ugly Duckling', 'Little Red Running Shorts', or 'Cinderumplstiltskin', all of which are parodies of the traditional stories. In 'The Princess and the Bowling Ball' the prince exchanges the pea with a bowling ball so he could marry the girl of his dreams. 'The Really Ugly Duckling' tells the story of an ugly duckling who turns out to be a really ugly duck once he grows up. 'Little Red Running Shorts' outruns the wolf and asks him "My, what slow feet you have" (*The Stinky Cheese Man* 10). 'Cinderumplstiltskin', as can be guessed from the title, merges two fairy tales. The rest of the stories are similarly crazy and contain a lot of jokes. Edge-Partington argues that the "interplay of text and illustration in this book create a postmodern masterpiece" (47). The mixed up narratives and confusing structure of the book caused both Pantaleo and Stevenson to compare it to a mixed salad. Pantaleo describes it "as a tossed salad of folk and fairy tales (topped with stinky cheese)" (Pantaleo, *Stinky*

Cheese Man 278), while Stevenson writes that the “postmodernity tosses the design and arrangement of this book like a salad” (Stevenson 33). This unusual picture book provides a very fruitful basis for an analysis of postmodern strategies.

Voices in the Park by the British picture book author Anthony Browne was first published in 1998 and is another great example of a postmodern picture book. Browne is known for his surrealistic pictures and the theme of the gorilla that reoccurs in several of his picture books (Doonan, *Modern Picture Book* 235). Doonan praises him for “the liberating power of his art [that] gives children the chance to recognize the nature of their own personal experiences, and to understand themselves and others better” (*Object lesson* 172). The book is connected to his picture book *A Walk in the Park* which was published in 1977 and serves as the pre-text to *Voices in the Park* (Pantaleo, *Voices in the Park* 218). The book tells the story of a walk to the park of four characters from their four different perspectives. The first voice belongs to a mother who takes her son Charles and their dog to the park. After that, the same story is told by a father who decides to leave the house for a walk in the park with his daughter Smudge and their dog. The third and fourth voices belong to Charles and Smudge respectively. The different perspectives of the four characters are illustrated by narrative as well as illustrative devices. “The full colour panels draw you in and the use of light and tone create a mood and feeling that enables you to see the view from the park by a different pair of eyes each time” (Edge-Partington 44). Browne manages to discuss serious topics like social status and oppression in a way that is appealing for young as well as older readers. Moreover, he encourages readers to think about how people in their environment might perceive certain situations differently from how they themselves experience them. The story is open for various interpretations and “will mean different things to each reader as they create a story in the park” (Edge-Partington 44). Edge-Partington also mentions that the book can be appealing to readers of very different reading levels. Less experienced readers can enjoy the slightly different repetitions of the same story while more experienced ones might notice that the colours, styles and fonts of the four narratives are used to convey the mood of each voice. On a higher level readers can, moreover, think about the serious topics like prejudice or depression that are broached in the book and enjoy the humorous illustrations and allusions to famous art objects (30). *Voices in the Park* with its usage of nonlinearity, symbols, multiple narratives, and typographic

experimentation (Edge-Partington 44) holds several postmodern characteristics and, therefore, serves as a great illustration of a postmodern picture book.

The Three Pigs by the American picture book author David Wiesner was first published in 2001. Like Scieszka and Lane's *The Stinky Cheese Man* this picture book alludes to a traditional fairy tale that is turned upside down throughout the story. Wiesner's adaptation of the fairy tale starts very traditionally but soon steps out of the usual way of narration. When the wolf tries to blow away the first pig's house he blows so strongly that the pig is blown "right out of the story!" (*The Three Pigs* 2). The first pig tells the others that they would be safe once they leave the story and the three of them escape on a paper plane made from the pages of their own story. They continue their journey through other stories. First, they step into the nursery rhyme *Hey Diddle Diddle* and take the cat with them and second, they rescue a dragon of a different story from being slain. After their adventure they decide to find their own story again. Once the wolf comes and wants to blow down their house the dragon scares him away and the three pigs, the cat, and the dragon live happily ever after. The author uses frames and white space to convey the highly metafictional nature of this picture book. Moreover, Edge-Partington indicates that Wiesner changes his illustrative style whenever the pigs enter a different story. In the nursery rhyme, for instance, the pigs are depicted in a very childish and artificial manner while they resemble actual pigs when they step out of the story into the space between the stories. Not only metafictional devices but also parody and intertextuality make this picture book essentially postmodern (Edge-Partington 48).

The last picture book that is intended to be analysed in the following sections is *Wolves* by the British author Emily Gravett. It was first published in 2005 and tells the story of a rabbit who goes to a library and borrows a book about wolves which is, like the 'real' book, also called *Wolves* and is written by Emily Grrabbit. As the rabbit continues reading his book about wolves, the wolf in the pictures gets bigger and bigger while the rabbit himself gets smaller. Finally, the wolf steps out of the book and stands behind the rabbit who does not notice him and continues reading up to the point where he finds out that wolves eat rabbits. The following page only shows the completely frazzled book by Emily Grrabbit. On the following spread the author highlights that "no rabbits were eaten during the making of this book. It is a work of fiction" (*Wolves* 15.). Finally, the author provides a different ending for the "more sensitive readers" (*Wolves*

15.) featuring a vegetarian wolf and the rabbit sharing sandwiches and becoming friends. However, the alternative ending is not very convincing as it is pieced together from the remaining paper strips of the torn book. Moreover, the very last spread shows the rabbit's doormat that is full of mail including a letter from the local library saying that the book *Wolves* has been overdue for quite a while. Featuring metafictional devices, intertextuality, and a nonlinear ending, this picture book serves as a great example of postmodern picture books.

4.2 Metafiction in picture books

In the following section it is, firstly, intended to analyse how metafiction, a crucial aspect of postmodern literature, is influenced by the presence of pictures in picture books. Secondly, effects of the young audience of picture books on metafiction should be investigated. Finally, this section aims at detecting the effects picture book authors intend to convey when applying metafiction in picture books for children. The picture books which are analysed in the following are *The Stinky Cheese Man*, *The Three Pigs*, and *Wolves*.

4.2.1 Effects of pictures on metafiction

The most obvious metafictional aspect of Scieszka and Lane's picture book *The Stinky Cheese Man* is the metanarrative that frames the parodied fairy tales of the story book. Nikolajeva and Scott (222) highlight that this framing narrative features the narrator Jack commenting on the book and arguing with one of the characters, the Little Red Hen, about the appearance of her story in the book. Pantaleo calls Jack an "obtrusive narrator" and refers to the multiple metafictional interferences of the Little Red Hen (*Stinky Cheese Man* 286). Although I agree with Pantaleo as well as with Nikolajeva and Scott, I propose that the metanarrative frame of the book is even more complex than these scholars describe it. Not only Jack and the Little Red Hen but also the Giant who keeps Jack from telling his story and the protagonists from the tale 'Little Red Running Shorts' are part of the metanarrative. All of these characters appear in their own stories as well as in a space between the story world and the 'real' world of the readers. They are frequently depicted in what Goldstone called the fourth dimension in picture book illustrations (Goldstone, *Postmodern Experiments* 322). The metanarrative is the story of Jack, the narrator who intends to write the book of 'Fairly Stupid Tales'. He is, however, impeded in his undertakings by several characters of these stories. Firstly, the Little Red Hen is repeatedly interrupting and complaining that

her story is not part of the book. Secondly, the Giant keeps Jack from telling his story and instead squeezes 'The Giant's Story' into the book. Thirdly, Little Red Running Shorts and the Wolf decide to leave their story because Jack has accidentally revealed everything that is going to happen. As the narrator has already given away everything and, thereby, "blew it" (*Stinky Cheese Man* 10), both Little Red Running Shorts and the Wolf refuse to take part in the story. Two blank spaces on the following spread represent their disappearance (see Fig. 1). Moreover, one entire page is left blank because the narrator cannot tell this story without the protagonists. He desperately cries: "Wait. You can't do this. Your story is supposed to be three pages long. What do I do when we turn the page?" (*Stinky Cheese Man* 10). Towards the end of the book two pages with a blue and yellow pattern signify the endpaper of the book. Jack explains that he intends to trick the sleeping Giant into thinking that the book is already over and instructs the reader to turn the next page very quietly. But once again Jack's plan is destroyed by the Little Red Hen who again complains about the narrator and asks who should eat the bread she baked for her story if it is not even told. By hearing the words 'bread' and 'eat' the Giant wakes up and eats both chicken and bread while Jack manages to escape.

The fact that the positions of these characters in a space between story world and 'real' world is not only described verbally but is also visually declared makes the metafictional effect much more easily graspable for young readers. In all instances of the metanarrative the characters' positions are supported visually by using framing devices (Nikolajeva and Scott 224). The narrator Jack who is constantly commenting on the process of him compiling the storybook is often depicted outside of the stories or at the edge of the stories' pages. For instance, when he reads the Giant's story he looks at the page from the upper left corner of the 'real', physical page the reader is holding and complains about the Giant's silly story (see Fig. 2).



Figure 1: Little Red Running Shorts (from: Stinky Cheese Man 10)

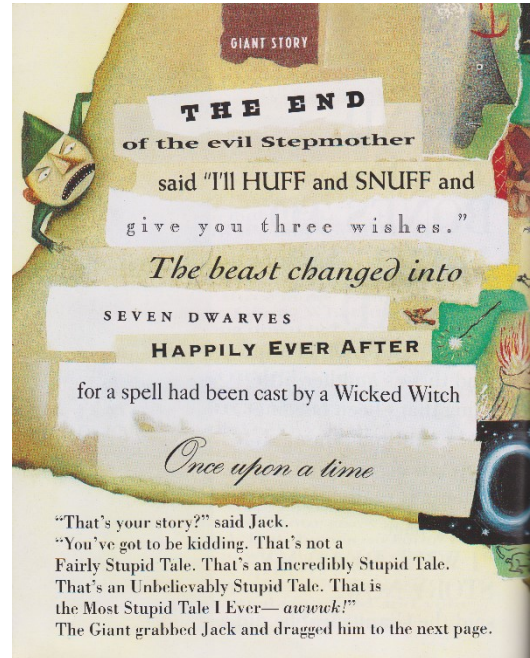


Figure 2: Giant Story (from: Stinky Cheese Man 13)

Scott (108) and Dryden (114) both mention that framing is also used in *The Three Pigs* in order to highlight the book's fictionality. Dryden argues that like Jack in *The Stinky Cheese Man*, the pigs also leave the story world and step out into a world that is closer to the reader's world. When the wolf blows the first pig "right out of the story" (*The Three Pigs* 2) the pictures help understand the metafiction as the pig is blown out of the frame that surrounds text and pictures of the story and now appears next to those frames on blank space (see Fig. 3). Nikolajeva refers to this technique as "negative space" or "absence of background, blank area around characters or objects, that often emphasizes the central position of the character" (*Interpretative Codes* 33). Wiesner applies 'negative space' when all three pigs have managed to escape from the story and use a page from their story to fold a paper plane and explore this curious

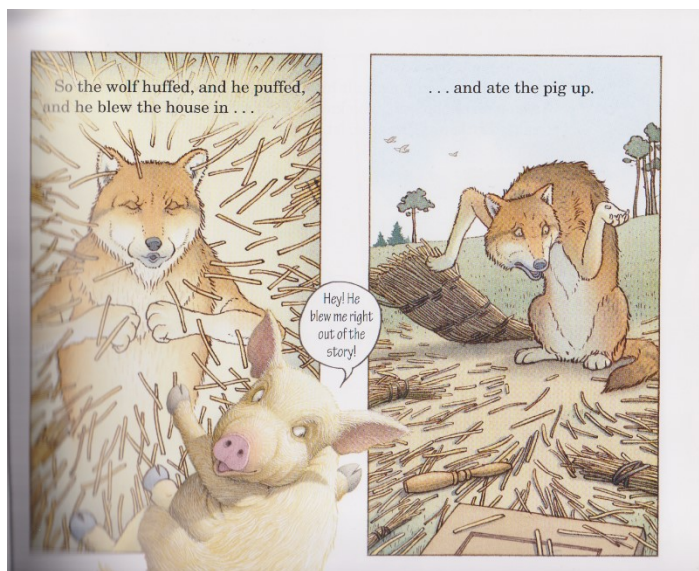


Figure 3: Metafiction (from: *The Three Pigs* 2)

space" or "absence of background, blank area around characters or objects, that often emphasizes the central position of the character" (*Interpretative Codes* 33). Wiesner applies 'negative space' when all three pigs have managed to escape from the story and use a page from their story to fold a paper plane and explore this curious

place outside their story. Wiesner makes use of 'negative space' in order to convey that the pigs are no longer in the story. One of the double spreads is almost entirely blank and only features the back of the paper plane with the three pigs flying away out of the book (see Fig. 4).



Figure 4: Paper Plane (from: *The Three Pigs* 8)

Moreover, when the pigs are wandering through the 'universe of stories' with pictures of all stories that exist these pictures are depicted on the background of 'negative space'. This curious place again highlights the fictionality of the tale about the three little pigs but also of all other stories (see Fig. 5). Also Gravett's book *Wolves* makes use of framing and of 'negative space'. It includes a metanarrative of the rabbit going to the library and borrowing a book about wolves. It soon becomes clear that this is the exact same book the 'real' reader is holding in hands. Like in *The Three Pigs* the wolf escapes the world of his book and appears on a level between the story and the 'real' world of the reader. This space is depicted completely blank and the escaping wolf and later also the rabbit who does at first not notice the wolf are not surrounded by any background.

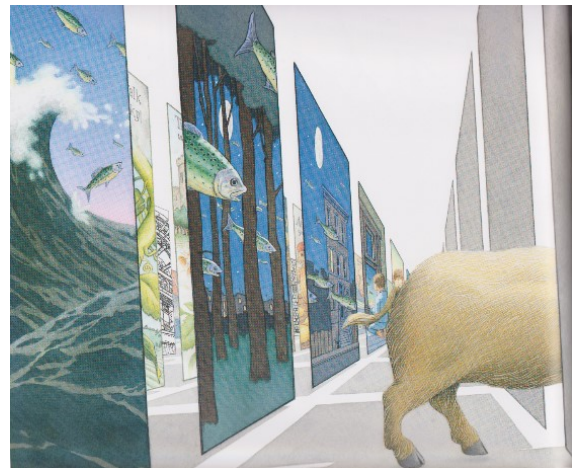


Figure 5: Metalevel (from: *The Three Pigs* 16)

Another visual aspect of Wiesner's book that clarifies its metafictional nature, is the fact that the pigs are depicted in different styles depending on whether they are still in the story or outside of it. Once the first pig is blown out of the story it looks much more like a 'real' pig than the ones which are still in the story. The pigs change in their appearances again when they enter other stories. In the nursery rhyme the pigs' fur and texture look highly artificial (see Fig. 6) and in the black-and-white tale about a

constructed nature. Moreover, this structure leads to a slower reading of the text as the “the words are ‘read’ in the same process as we ‘read’ pictures” (*Postmodern Experiments* 326). Goldstone highlights that because the border between text and pictures breaks down it becomes much more important how the texts are positioned in the illustrations (*Postmodern Experiments* 327). This merging of text and pictures obviously has a great impact on how the author applies metafiction in his story.

Another metafictional device which becomes clearer when conveyed in a combination of verbal and visual aspects is ‘mise-en-abyme’. This is a special form of framing where the “text – visual or verbal – [is] embedded within another text as its miniature replica” (Nikolajeva and Scott 224). Pantaleo observes that the Giant compiling his story is a mise-en-abyme device as the structure of his story resembles the overall, jumbled sequence of *The Stinky Cheese Man* (see Fig. 2). Not only the disordered structure (beginning with ‘The end’ and ending with ‘Once upon a time’) but also the book’s illustrative design is replicated in the Giant’s story (Pantaleo, *Stinky Cheese Man* 286). Nikolajeva and Scott mention that also Gravett uses mise-en-abyme in her picture book (226). Her implementation of this technique is particularly interesting as it can be observed in the pictures as well as in the text of the book. Pantaleo mentions visual mis-en-abyme referring to the book on the flyer that lies on Rabbit’s doormat and the cover of the book Rabbit is holding which resemble the dust jacket and the cover of the real book (Pantaleo, *Mutinous Fiction* 19). Textual mise-en-abyme takes place as “[r]eaders are reading *Wolves*, and Rabbit is also reading a version of *Wolves*, but readers are reading about Rabbit reading this version of the book. [...] Rabbit reading his book duplicates the world of readers reading *Wolves*, which is a book about Rabbit reading *Wolves*” (Pantaleo, *Mutinous Fiction* 19). Pantaleo, moreover, mentions that the parody of Gravett’s name changing it to ‘Grrrabbit’ in the book Rabbit is reading is also an instance of textual mise-en-abyme (*Mutinous Fiction* 19).

4.2.2 Effects of the audience on metafiction

Besides the metanarrative there is another self-conscious aspect of *The Stinky Cheese Man* that leads the readers’ attention to the physical appearance of the book and to publishing conventions. The book does not only self-reflectively comment on the process of compiling it but also refers to the paratexts at the beginning and the end. When Jack refers to the page with the dedication which is turned upside down he writes: “I know. I know. The page is upside down. I meant to do that. Who ever looks

at that dedication stuff anyhow? If you really want to read it – you can always stand on your head” (*Stinky Cheese Man* 2). Other examples are the table of contents which appears only after the first story, the narrator reprimanding the Little Red Hen who begins talking about her story before the title page, or the Little Red Hen complaining about the “ISBN guy” spoiling her picture on the back cover. The fact that these metafictional references to the book as an artefact are supported by visuals makes them easier to understand for children. Nikolajeva argues that it is typical for postmodern picture books to use back and front covers and the space before the ‘real’ story starts as narrative space (*Play and Playfulness* 60).

As the authors make these jokes and misuse the paratexts of the book they obviously assume that their audience is aware of how these parts of books normally work. But can they be sure that child readers will be aware of these functions? It is by no means self-evident that young readers understand these jokes on paratexts. However, if the audience of picture books is assumed to consist of adults as well as children engaging in the picture book together, adults can support children in understanding the paratextual jokes. This guides the readers’ attention to traditional conventions of books that are normally taken for granted and encourages readers to question them. Questions children might have already asked themselves are addressed and a clarifying discussion between adult and child is stimulated. The audience of postmodern picture books, therefore, has an impact on how authors use metafictional devices. However, the issue of seeing the audience as a team of adult and child reader is only one possible way of approaching this issue. Several scholars (Pantaleo, *Stinky Cheese Man* 290; Sipe, *Case Study* 234) have conducted studies that imply that children are more open to metafiction than adults as they are not as prone to the traditional narrative conventions as adults are. Sipe reports that the children in his study were not resisting the story, but engaged in it even though they were not familiar with metafictional stories (*Case Study* 234). This, obviously, contradicts my argumentation of authors applying complex metafiction because adults are there to support children in understanding them. It is, therefore, advisable to consider both tendencies when analysing postmodern picture books.

In the theory part of this thesis it has already been mentioned that when engaging with picture books adults tend to focus primarily on the text while young children’s attention is drawn to the pictures. It is striking that Gravett’s *Wolves* uses very little text to tell

its story. One could even argue that the story is understandable without the text. Hall observes that the metafiction in *Wolves* is conveyed through the pictorial aspects of the picture book (145). (The distance between text and pictures in *Wolves* is further elaborated in the section 'Nonlinearity'.) Thereby, even children who are not yet able to read have the possibility of grasping the metafictional nature of the book. The fact that Rabbit is getting smaller while reading about wolves and the wolves are getting bigger at the same time is a sign that children tend to notice faster than adults (Pantaleo, *Mutinous Fiction* 18). Moreover, children are reminded of the fictionality of the book by several images. For instance, in the tragic moment when Rabbit realises that he is in great danger it is indicated that the whole situation is after all only constructed fiction as Rabbit is still holding a copy of the same book that is opened at the exact same page (Hall 140) (see Fig. 7).



Figure 7: Wolf eats Rabbit (from: *Wolves* 13)

4.2.3 Effects authors intend to convey

Authors who use metafiction in their picture books mostly have the intention of distancing the reader from the text and constantly reminding him/her that the story is fictional (McCallum, *Metafictions* 398). Moreover, they usually intend to put the readers in active positions of interpreting the narratives and show them how texts function and how meaning is created in reality (McCallum, *Metafictions* 398). Fludernik mentions that the comments of the narrator on the narrative highlight the fact that the narrative is fictional and created by the narrator (384). Jack the narrator in *The Stinky Cheese Man*, for instance, reminds the readers again and again that he is the one who compiles the story book. Concerning *The Three Pigs* El-Tamami writes that "Wiesner

[...] reveals the 'edges' of his stage, drawing attention to the conceits of narrative fiction" (El-Tamami n.p.).

Other aims authors pursue when applying metafiction are encouraging readers to question traditional conventions of narration and, thereby, teaching them to critically evaluate what they are reading. Pantaleo writes that it is a sign of appreciating their young readers when authors believe that they are able to deal with complex metafictional devices. Moreover, she argues that being introduced to metafiction at an early age is beneficial as it helps readers deal with similar constructs in books, films, or other media (*Metafiction* 10). However, authors do not only aim at educating child readers but a substantial part of their objectives is to entertain them and to provide them with funny and engaging stories. *The Stinky Cheese Man*, for instance, contains many instances of pure nonsense that are hilarious and very entertaining to read. The highly self-conscious introduction puts the reader in a peculiar situation as the narrator repeatedly urges the reader to stop reading this useless introduction. For the reader, however, it is nearly impossible to do so. Jack writes:

In fact, you should definitely go read the stories now, because the rest of this introduction just kind of goes on and on and doesn't really say anything. I stuck it on to the end here so it would fill up the page and make it look like I really knew what I was talking about. So stop now. I mean it. Quit reading. Turn the page. If you read this last sentence, it won't tell you anything. (*Stinky Cheese Man* 2)

Indeed this last sentence does not really tell us anything but it "demonstrates that bookmaking is arbitrary and narrative is a game, and that the chaotic postmodern world can be fun to inhabit" (Stevenson 34). This scene draws makes the reader feel extremely self-conscious and highly aware of the process of reading. Moreover, it is funny that the narrator admits that he is actually just writing nonsense to fill up the pages. *The Stinky Cheese Man* features another funny instance when the narrator is telling the Giant to stop "talking in uppercase letters" as that "really messes up the page" (*Stinky Cheese Man* 12). This self-conscious text can be compared to the merging of text and illustration I discussed referring to *The Three Pigs*.

Goldstone mentions that metafictional picture books often convey that they contain a lot of hidden information that can only be found when precisely investigating the stories. Thereby, readers are also encouraged to take an active part in the meaning making of picture books (*Postmodern Experiments* 326). Hall mentions that readers

are drawn into Gravett's *Wolves* by the mise-en-abyme effect of the book being represented in the book again (140). As one of the first spreads features the cover of the actual book readers are tempted to go back to the cover of the book they are holding and checking whether it looks like the cover Rabbit is holding (see Fig 8).

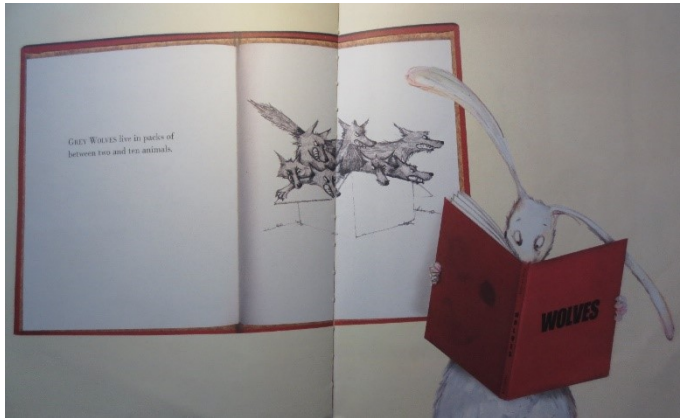


Figure 8: Metafiction (from: *Wolves* 5)

Sipe's study confirms that children enjoy discovering this hidden information as the participants of his study were having a lot of fun when trying to decode Wiesner's book (*Case Study* 236). Also Wiesner himself states that his book is intended to be entertaining. At his acceptance speech when he received the Caldecott Medal he said: "The word most often used in reviews of *The Three Pigs* has been 'postmodern.' The word most often used by me while making the book was 'fun'" (qtd. in Sipe, *Case Study* 236). However, Sipe states that the discussions about *The Three Pigs* were not only great fun but also encouraged the children to contemplate about the meaning of the term 'real' and the different dimensions of the stories in Wiesner's book (*Case Study* 234).

In *Wolves*, the fact that Rabbit is so immersed into his book that he does not even realise that the wolf escapes from the book and is planning to devour him makes readers think about their own reading processes. Most readers are familiar with this feeling of forgetting all surroundings and being completely absorbed by a thrilling book. This message is probably better understood by more experienced readers than by young children. However, Gravett, thereby, manages to make this book interesting for adults as well. Hall argues that Rabbit's reading can be interpreted in various ways. On the one hand, Rabbit is in danger because he is reading. On the other hand, only

reading about wolves' eating habits could have warned him about them. He adds that maybe Rabbit even was warned after all as the ending is not clear (141).

To conclude, it can be said that the abovementioned examples of postmodern picture books confirm that these books offer a great variety of possibilities to implement metafiction. Metafiction can be conveyed both through verbal and visual aspects of the books like framing, metanarratives, and mise-en-abyme. This makes it easier for young readers/viewers to understand this complex postmodern concept. Moreover, it is shown that the audience of picture books influences the application of metafiction. The fact that children tend to be less accustomed to traditional narrative forms might result in children being more open to metafictional strategies. Finally, concerning the effects authors of postmodern picture books intend to generate, it can be observed that authors aim at making young readers aware of the fictionality of books and, thereby, encouraging them to critically question traditional stories. Another aim picture book authors pursue is to entertain and satisfy child readers with surprising metafictional turns and complicated structures.

4.3 Intertextuality in picture books

This section focusses on intertextuality in postmodern picture books. Like in the previous section on metafiction it is intended to analyse how intertextuality is influenced by pictures in picture books. Moreover, it is investigated how intertextuality is changed by the primarily young audience of picture books. Finally, this section aims at analysing the intended effects of picture book authors using intertextual structures in their books. Although all five of my selected postmodern picture books feature intertextuality the focus in this section is on *The Stinky Cheese Man*, *Voices in the Park* and *Black and White*.

4.3.1 Effects of pictures on intertextuality

The Stinky Cheese Man is a highly intertextual book as it consists of a collection of parodied fairy tales. The whole book is, therefore, essentially intertextual. However, in several instances intertextuality is especially obvious. For example, the 'Giant story'

which is made entirely out of scraps of paper taken from other books. Not only the text but also the illustration is intertextual as it consists of tiny images from different fairy tales and other stories. The Giant's illustration should most likely depict some kind of person with three arms that is emerging from a magic lamp. The third arm features incredibly long fingernails, which could be an allusion to the tales of *Struwwelpeter* by Heinrich Hoffmann, and the magic lamp can be interpreted as a reference to the oriental fairy tale *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*. The illustration contains many more allusions to tales like *Snow White*, *Puss in Boots*, *The Gingerbread Man*, and *Pinocchio* (see. Fig. 9) This is a good example for pictures influencing the application of intertextuality. Not only the text is indicating that the stories are referring to classical fairy tales but also the illustrations made out of paper scraps clearly shows that the story alludes to other texts. Thereby, intertextuality becomes more obvious and easier to understand for children. They can actually see that the story is created from different other books.



Figure 9: Giant Story Illustration (from: *Stinky Cheese Man* 13)

McGillis refers to Scieszka and Lane as “*bricoleurs*. They have no vision of their own; they can only piece together bits from previous children’s stories and illustrations to fashion their own book. They seem to be pointing out the artificiality of bookmaking, its inherent arbitrariness” (118). McGillis’s comparison of *The Stinky Cheese Man* to a tinkered work that consists only of other texts and images and does not have any original aspect seems appropriate. Especially the fact that in the ‘Giant Story’ not only the illustration is in a collage form of paper scraps in different styles and drawing techniques but also the text is made of ripped out parts from other books permits this connection.

In Browne’s picture book *Voices in the Park* intertextuality is primarily present in his artistic illustrations which allude to famous visual art objects. Most of his pictures refer to the surrealist painter René Magritte (Dryden 293; Beckett, *Artistic Allusions* 84). Beckett observes that especially the motifs of the bowler hat, the lamppost, and conventionalised trees, which are typical for Magritte’s paintings, appear repeatedly in *Voices in the Park* (*Artistic Allusions* 84). Moreover, there is an allusion to Edward

Munch's painting *The Scream* when the mother tells from her own perspective that she screamed for her son who had suddenly disappeared. This picture, like almost all pictures of the book, also includes a reference to Magritte as the woman is wearing a red bowler hat (see Fig. 10). *The Scream* reappears at the opposite spread in the newspaper the father is reading sitting on the bench and looking for job offers. Beckett mentions that even the trees in the background appear to be screaming (*Artistic Allusions* 95). She highlights one of the illustrations that is full of allusions to Magritte. It features lampposts, trees, and clouds in the form of bowler hats (*Artistic Allusions* 84-5) (see Fig. 11). All these intertextual artistic allusions are, obviously, only possible because *Voices in the Park* is a picture book.

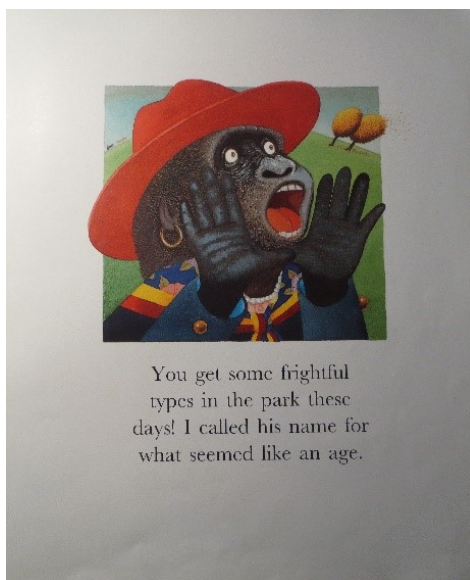


Figure 10: *The Scream* (from: *Voices in the Park* 3)

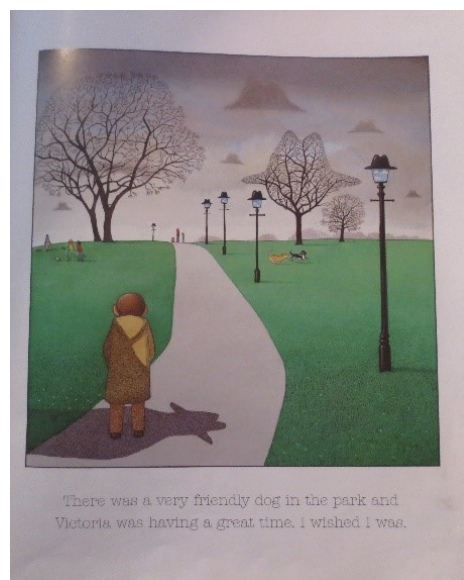


Figure 11: *Allusions to Magritte* (from: *Voices in the Park* 8)

In the story told from the father's perspective one spread shows pictures which allude to Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* and Hals's *Laughing Cavalier* both looking incredibly sad. These paintings that normally show smiling, happy figures should convey and enforce the father's depressed mood. Moreover, the reference to Santa Clause as a beggar sitting next to the street implies the low social status of father and daughter (see Fig. 12). When he goes home with his daughter after having visited the park he is in a much better mood because she managed to cheer him up.



Figure 12: *Artistic Allusions I* (from: *Voices in the Park* 5)

His changed disposition is represented in *Mona Lisa* and *Laughing Cavalier* stepping out of their pictures and starting to dance. Also Santa Clause is dancing around and the colours of the entire spread are much brighter (see Fig. 13).

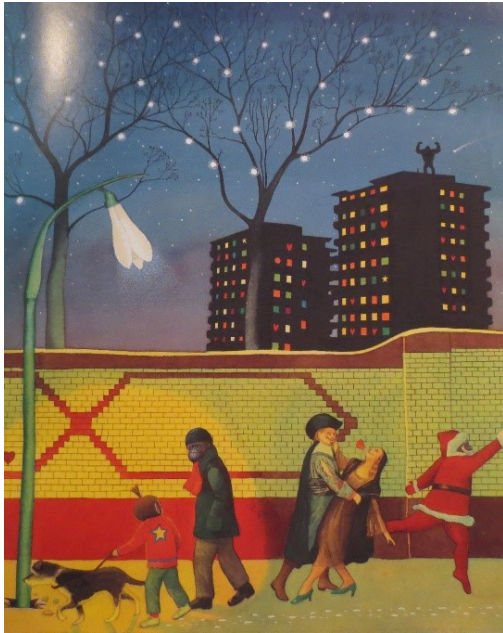


Figure 13: Artistic Allusions II (from: *Voices in the Park* 7)

Browne himself explains: “when I put jokes or details of surrealistic stuff in the background I try to make it have a point, I try to give it relevance” (Browne, qtd. in Serafini 50). Serafini agrees that these details serve as tools for highlighting the emotions of the four different characters telling the story (50). Browne applies visual intertextuality mainly in order to convey characters’ different emotional states. His narrative text, however, does not feature intertextual instances.

4.3.2 Effects of the audience on intertextuality

McGillis (115), Wilkie (133), and Nikolajeva and Scott (254) agree that the intertextuality in *The Stinky Cheese Man* is highly parodic. McGillis interprets parody as “supreme Intertextuality” (115) and, therefore, as a great tool for introducing children to the idea that all literature and art is interconnected. “Intertextuality seems tailor-made for children because it is so pedagogically useful” (115). Acknowledging McGillis’s argument Moebius’s statement that intertextuality is much more prevalent in picture books than is often assumed (316) is not surprising. McGillis, moreover, states that both children and adults love parody and refers to its “leveling force” (114) which makes it a perfect strategy for picture books. It is, therefore, likely that the usage of parody in *The Stinky Cheese Man* is influenced by the intended audience. The intertextual allusions in *The Stinky Cheese Man* refer to very popular and well-known traditional fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen and from several other sources. However, there are also several tales that do not convey which author or story they are parodying. The tale ‘Cinderumpelstiltskin’, for instance,

obviously alludes to at least two distinct fairy tales. McGillis argues that this story is a “parody of a parody” (116) as it is unclear who is parodied.

The fact that the authors decided to mainly include extremely popular fairy tales in their story book could also be a consequence of the young audience the book is targeted at. It is indispensable to be familiar with the fairy tales the picture book alludes to in order to understand the intertextual features. Nikolajeva and Scott declare that “[i]ntertextuality presupposes the reader’s active participation in the decoding process; in other words, it is the reader who makes the intertextual connection” (228). Pantaleo agrees that an intertextual text can only be understood as such if the reader/viewer is familiar with the original text (*Stinky Cheese Man* 280). In order to ensure this condition it is most feasible for authors to work with intertextual references to very popular fairy tales. Wilkie addresses a problematic issue which is connected to children being exposed to films and television. She argues that it is, nowadays, very likely for children to be familiar with film or TV adaptations of fairy tales without knowing the original written texts. Therefore, they automatically interpret the film or TV adaptation as the original version of the story (133). This can cause problems when reading *The Stinky Cheese Man* or other picture books that feature intertextuality. Children might not be able to understand the jokes and allusions to the traditional tales as the film version could have parodied the written version in a similar way. A possible solution to this problem is to assume that most children are supported by adults when engaging in picture books. Adults (if they are familiar with the original fairy tales) can explain intertextuality to the unexperienced young readers.

The fairy tales in *The Stinky Cheese Man* are parodied in many different ways. Most of them are shortened versions of the original tales, some end very abruptly or have an indeterminate ending (Pantaleo, *Stinky Cheese Man* 285). In ‘The Princess and the Bowling Ball’, for instance, the parody is quite obvious and very easy to understand for children. Only by looking at the illustration of a (rather ugly) girl lying on a number of mattresses that are piled up on a bowling ball children can already guess what the story implies. The prince who is desperately in love with a girl exchanges the pea his mother had put under the mattresses with a bowling ball in order to make sure that the girl will tell his mother that she had a very bad sleep and will, thereby, be allowed to marry the prince. ‘The Really Ugly Duckling’ and ‘The Other Frog Prince’ are similarly primitive but funny parodies. The ugly duckling turns out to become an ugly duck and

the frog tells the princess that he was just kidding after she kissed him and he does not turn into a prince. These funny parodies are equally appealing to young as well as more experienced readers. Children are simply entertained by the creative rewritings of well-known stories while adults can notice many other intertextual details that are probably not understood by children. 'The Other Frog Prince', for instance, includes a lexicon of all kinds of insects that frogs are eating. The insects are depicted on the frog's tongue and all of them are labelled with their Latin or English names. This is not only interesting information for adults but can also be explained to the children if they read the book together with an adult. The lexicon could be an allusion to the very first picture books which were illustrated encyclopaedias like, for instance, Comenius' *Orbus pictus* (see Fig. 14).

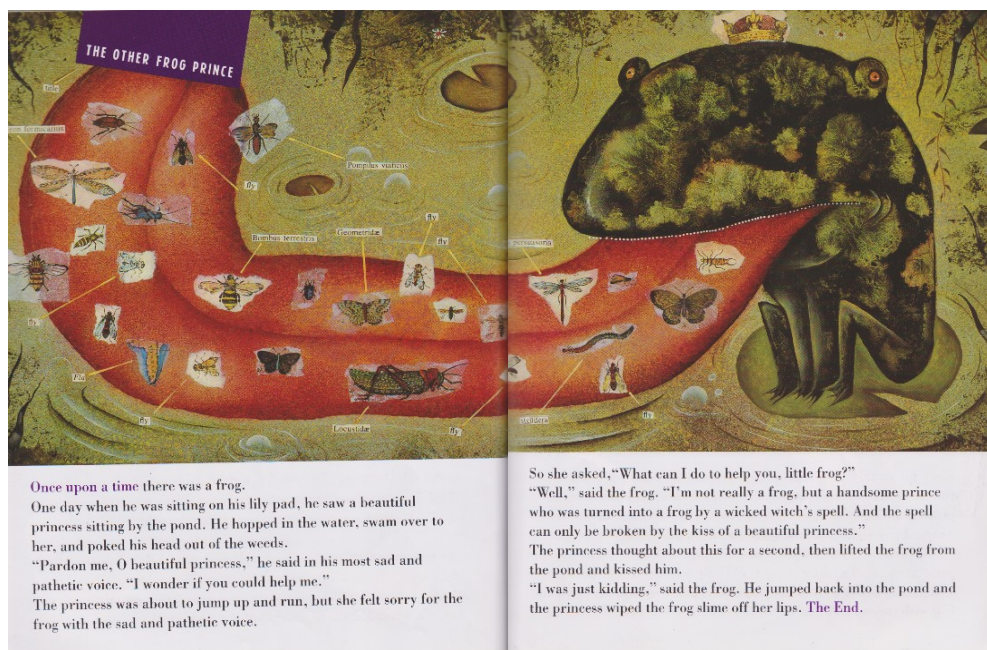


Figure 14: *The Other Frog Prince* (from: *Stinky Cheese Man* 9)

Also in other stories like, for instance, the 'Giant Story' there are lots of details to detect for both adults and children. Pantaleo reports from a study she conducted with young readers engaging with *The Stinky Cheese Man* that children especially enjoyed the 'Giant Story' because it was a combination of so many tales and they were able to find hints to so many different stories they have already been familiar with (*The Stinky Cheese Man* 286). Due to the abovementioned reasons *The Stinky Cheese Man* is a perfectly entertaining book for the young and old audience of picture books.

Concerning Browne's *Voices in the Park*, Beckett raises the justifiable concern that it is not easy for child readers to notice the visual intertextual devices (*Artistic Allusions* 94-5). She also mentions that these allusions are often interpreted as aiming at entertaining adults who often function as co-readers of picture books. Beckett does not believe that adults are much more likely to recognise or understand the artistic allusions than children. However, she argues that Browne might have chosen the allusions to *The Scream* because it has already been a popular icon in literature for children before. Moreover, young readers could be familiar with it from popular culture like the 1996 film *Scream* (*Artistic Allusions* 95). Even though it is possible that some young readers are familiar with Magritte's or Munch's paintings I argue that the majority of children will not understand these allusions. However, this does not mean that they are out of place in the picture book. Children are likely to enjoy looking out for the intertextual references and comparing them as all of them are depicted repeatedly and sometimes in different manners. The hints to art objects can, therefore, be entertaining also for children who are not familiar with the original paintings.

4.3.3 Effects authors intend to convey

McCallum writes that authors who apply intertextuality aim at showing that all stories are constructed of other stories. In order to do so authors often distance their readers from the story's actions and characters (*Metafictions* 401). McCallum's statement already hints at the fact that intertextuality is often considered an aspect of metafiction because it also emphasises the existence of other realities outside a story (Nikolajeva and Scott 227). *The Stinky Cheese Man* is a great example as this book intends to convey that all stories and books are interconnected. The author and the illustrator aim at reminding children of fairy tales they are already familiar with and highlight the fictionality of these stories by turning them completely upside down. These stories are not only referring to other texts but also encourage readers to question stories they have already read. They make readers unsure about what they think they know about the original stories (Wilkie 133). This helps young readers in their development to become sophisticated readers who are aware of the fictionality and intertextuality of all texts.

Besides its allusions to famous visual art, Browne's picture book features another intertextual aspect as it tells the same story four times from four different perspectives. The author, thereby, highlights that in order to understand one story it is necessary to

be familiar with all stories that are connected to it. Thereby, children can be acquainted to the intertextuality of all texts. Similarly, *Black and White* by David Macaulay is about the interplay of four seemingly different stories. Throughout the book, it becomes more and more obvious how closely these four stories are related to each other. This structure makes the book essentially intertextual. Seelinger Trites writes that “the story itself is about intertextuality” (234). She mentions obvious intertextual references relating to the omnipresence of newspapers and the parents singing “She’ll be coming ‘round the mountain when she comes” (234). Towards the end of the book the borders between the four stories gradually vanish. Letters from ‘Seeing Things’, for example, start ‘falling’ into ‘Problem Parents’ which is situated below. Moreover, the motif of the train becomes present in all four stories making the readers contemplate whether it is the same one in all stories (see Fig. 15).

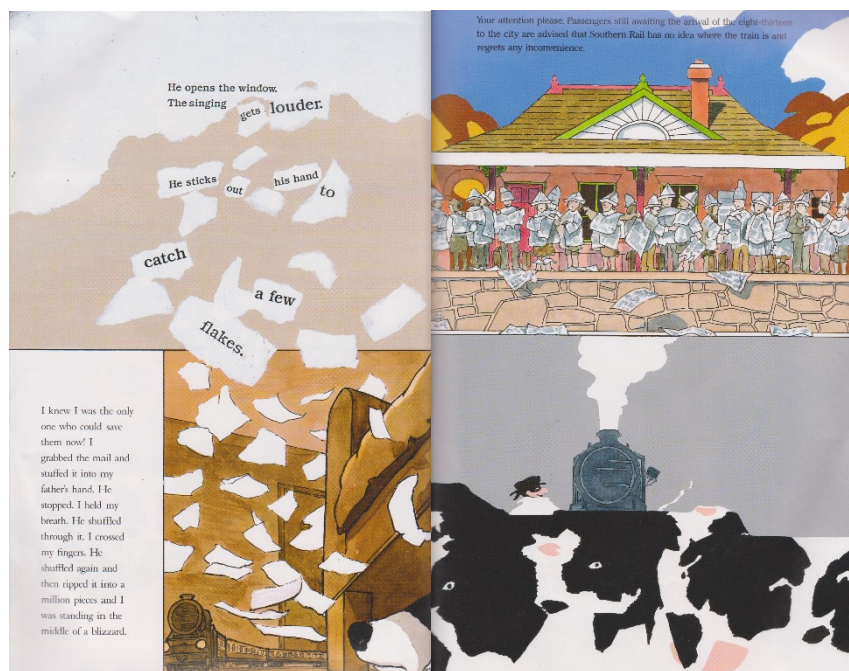


Figure 15: Blending Borders (from: *Black and White* 14)

In the penultimate double spread no borders are left at all. Moreover, Seelinger Trites states that “[b]ecause the book is about how people connect the information they know to construct meaning, the story demonstrates how the subject fuses meaning in an attempt to create cohesiveness in life” (234-5). The author could, therefore, intend to show that in order to really understand a story it is necessary to be familiar with all the stories that it is related to. Therefore, one could argue that Macaulay tries to

demonstrate Kristeva's notion of intertextuality in a way that is comprehensible for children.

Another effect that authors of intertextual picture books intend to convey is entertainment. Scieszka and Lane obviously want to delight their readers with their nonsensical rewritings. These silly parodies make fun of the traditional structures of fairy tales beginning with 'Once upon a time' and ending with a happy end of everyone living 'happily ever after'. Thereby, they raise readers' awareness of these structures which are often simply taken for granted and not discussed at all. 'The Really Ugly Duckling' for instance does not feature the happy end of the duckling turning into a beautiful swan but presenting a probably more 'realistic' outcome of the duckling turning into an ugly duck. Also the story 'Little Red Running Shorts' is very entertaining due to its nonsensical structure. McGillis calls it a "nonstory" (116) that does not have any subject it is about. The most salient intention of the authors is probably to entertain their readers. However, a similarly important aim is to encourage especially young readers to examine traditional tales with a critical eye and in succession become critical readers of all texts they encounter.

4.4 Nonlinearity in picture books

The third postmodern strategy to be discussed is nonlinearity. This section aims at investigating in how far nonlinearity is influenced by the pictorial aspects of picture books and by the intended audience of the books. Moreover, the objectives authors and illustrators are trying to reach when implementing nonlinearity in picture books for children are examined. I will mainly refer to Macaulay's *Black and White* and Browne's *Voices in the Park* as they most obviously feature nonlinearity.

4.4.1 Effects of pictures on nonlinearity

In picture books nonlinearity is often conveyed not merely by words but also to a great extent by illustrations. The nonlinearity of Macaulay's *Black and White* is already explicit on the very first double spread which is divided into four separate pictures featuring completely different situations and applying various illustrational styles and colours. McClay observes drawing techniques ranging from watercolours in 'Seeing Things' to abstract shapes in 'Udder Chaos' (92-3). The four stories of *Black and White* are distinctly separated from each other which clearly shows that the sequence of this book is not linear but consists of four parts. Nonlinearity is, therefore, immediately

visible also for young children who are not able to read. However, when taking a closer look at the first double spread a careful reader can already notice tiny connections between the first pictures of the stories. The two stories on the top ‘Seeing Things’ and ‘A Waiting Game’ feature a train and a train station respectively. In the stories at the bottom a similarity of the boy’s and the convict’s clothing can be observed. Moreover, the dog in ‘Problem Parents’ and the convict in ‘Udder Chaos’ are wearing similar masks (see Fig. 16). The four stories are blurring verbally as well as visually as the picture book proceeds. On the penultimate double spread all four quadrants are united and feature only black and white illustrations. Only at the very end of the book the original styles are reconstructed.



Figure 16: First Opening (from: *Black and White 1*)

Nonlinearity is often communicated through verbal and visual messages that contradict each other or convey slightly different information. In *Black and White*, for instance, the person who enters the boy’s compartment in ‘Seeing Things’ is verbally described as an “old woman” (*Black and White 3*). When inspecting the picture more closely a similarity with the escaped convict can be noticed which contradicts the verbal text. Dresang and McClelland call this a typical case of images changing the readers’ understanding of the words (n.p.). It is likely that children will protest and ask why the woman looks like the convict.

On the same double spread there are contradicting messages in 'Udder Chaos'. The text says that Holstein cows are very hard to find once they leave their field. However, the pictures imply that the convict is the one who is trying to hide and, therefore, hard to find. Dresang and McClelland highlight the contradiction between words and images in 'Udder Chaos' and mention that "[t]he fact that the robber is not alluded to in the text produces a situation of irony, and now there is a sort of interactive game going on between the reader and the illustrator" (n.p.). Kaplan also refers to this contradiction as ironic and highlights that the convict uses his black and white uniform which is actually meant to make him easily recognisable as a camouflage (40). *The Stinky Cheese Man* features similar contradictions between words and images. In 'Cinderumpelstiltskin', for instance, Cinderella is verbally described as "a beautiful girl" (*Stinky Cheese Man* 15) while the picture depicts a rather ugly figure with stringy hair, a patched dress, and a dull expression on her face (see Fig. 17).



Figure 17: Cinderumpelstiltskin (from: *Stinky Cheese Man* 15)

Pictures can, moreover, present subplots to the verbal main story or add additional meaning to it. Dryden observes sub-plots which take place in the visual text of *Black and White* as well as in *Voices in the Park* (197-8). In *Black and White* there is a sub-plot of a convict escaping from prison, then hiding in a cow herd, taking a train ride, and finally standing at a train station waving goodbye to somebody. This plot is not once referred to by the verbal text. A reader who focusses mainly on the verbal text of the book might not even recognise this story. In *Voices in the Park* the paintings *Mona Lisa* and *Laughing Cavalier* coming to life and starting to dance represent an example of a tiny visual sub-plot which is not mentioned in the verbal text at all. Nikolajeva refers to parallel visual narratives as a central feature of picture books. She argues that these sub-plots can even be more important than the main stories as they often critically comment on it (*Play and Playfulness* 67).

Moreover, nonlinearity is often used to tell a story from various different perspectives. This is especially feasible in picture books as a perspective can easily be conveyed

by pictures and a visual indication of perspective tends to be more obvious for children than a change of perspective that is explained verbally. Dryden mentions that postmodern picture books include not only perspectives from the front, but a mixture of perspectives from above, from the ground, from an oblique perspective (*The Three Pigs*), or perspectives of particular characters (*Voices in the Park*) (162-3). The story 'Problem Parents' in *Black and White* features several switches in perspective. Most of the story is 'seen' from the girl's point of view while several pictures show the parents' perspective. The perspectives of different characters in Browne's picture book *Voices in the Park* are mainly indicated by visual aspects of the book. Allan observes that the four characters are differentiated by their age, gender, social class, and mood (79). Although Pantaleo highlights that the verbal text does allude to these topics by using different syntax, vocabulary and font (*Metafiction* 6), the differences are much more apparent in Browne's illustrations. The father's bad temper is represented by dark colours and by the fact that the story takes place in winter. On the contrary, his daughter's happiness is conveyed through light, bright colours and the season of summer. Several other allusions to the characters' dispositions have already been mentioned in the previous section on intertextuality.

The fact that the four parts of *Voices in the Park* take place in different seasons of the year makes it a bit unclear whether the four stories really are about the exact same walk to the park. Allan argues that these shifts in seasons make the book nonlinear as they challenge the chronology of the single stories (79). Besides the seasons' effects of conveying mood it could also be argued that Browne intends to highlight the frequency and commonness of situations like the one described in *Voices in the Park*.

4.4.2 Effects of the audience on nonlinearity

When nonlinearity appears in the form of contradictive words and pictures this can be connected to the intended audience of postmodern picture books. If the child sees an image that does not fit the text the adult is reading he/she is likely to protest and point out that something cannot be right. These nonlinearities facilitate great possibilities for children and adults to discuss about what they are reading. Moreover, the fact that there are aspects of picture books that are not even mentioned in the written text is connected to the young and unexperienced audience of picture books. Due to the fact that they mainly focus on the visuals it is possible to abstain from a verbal reference of certain details. In *Voices in the Park*, for instance, the author never refers verbally

to the fact that all characters have human bodies but gorilla heads as he assumes that the readers/viewers will receive this information from the illustrations anyways.

Concerning Macaulay's *Black and White*, Anstey writes that its complexity is no reason to argue that it is too difficult or unsuitable for young readers. Instead, she states that due to its complexity the book reaches a wide variety of audiences from young children to experienced readers (455). McClay agrees with Anstey arguing that children tend to simply be pleased by the four stories while more sophisticated readers enjoy uncovering all the hidden connections between them (95). Anstey (455) and McClay (101) also agree in the assumption that it is often underestimated how many of the more complex aspects are understood by children. McClay states that this could be due to the fact that it takes adults themselves quite a while to notice all the tiny hints and allusions in Macaulay's picture book. However, referring to Macaulay's demand for "careful inspection" (*Black and White* Title Page) at the beginning of the book, it is necessary for all age groups to reread the book several times (101-2).

The nonlinearity of picture books can be compared to online hypertexts which offer a variety of different paths to choose when reading. The young audience of picture books is often already familiar with reading techniques like these and, therefore, enjoys the freedom of choosing how the story should develop. McClay (102-5) and Coles and Hall (114) agree that children tend to have better skills for decoding postmodern picture books as they do not automatically look for a linear narrative like most adults but easily accept nonlinearity. Even though most children do not like Macaulay's *Black and White* at first because they do not know how to deal with it, Anstey's study showed that after having read the book most students were glad to experience a completely new way of reading (456). Seelinger Trites's experiences with college students reading *Black and White* are quite similar. She often experiences students refusing to use the book for a project because they find it too confusing. However, once they read the book properly they enjoy finding out all the hidden connections between the four seemingly separate stories. What is usually quickly found out is the connection between the parents in 'Problem Parents' and the singing people wearing newspaper in 'A Waiting Game'. Also the connection of the boy in 'Problem Parents' and the convict in 'Udder Chaos' both wearing striped shirts and the dog wearing a similar mask as the convict, is usually detected easily (233-4).

Both *Black and White* and *Voices in the Park* do not feature a happy or conclusive ending. This is unusual for children's literature but typical for postmodern works. In most cases the author only alludes to a possible ending and the reader can assume how the story might end. However, there is usually no clear statement about how the story ends and postmodern picture book authors expect readers to make up their minds and come up with their own interpretations of the ending (Dryden 207). This aspect of nonlinearity could be interpreted as inappropriate for young readers. However, authors of nonlinear picture books often have the intention of introducing young readers to reading styles that are nowadays crucial in order to be a successful reader of modern media like hypertext. Therefore, it can be argued that children can profit from having to create their own endings to these picture books. Moreover, it needs to be considered that picture books are often read by children and adults together which provides the child with an adult supporter to explain the nature of the ending.

4.4.3 Effects authors intend to convey

The aim that is usually pursued by authors who apply nonlinearity in picture books is to introduce children to new ways of reading. Moss rightly argues that nonlinear texts allow readers to "experience multi-layered narrative, to read and write a text at the same time in that they can be entertained by a text on its simplest level as well as becoming engaged in the active pursuit of complex meaning. Such books are saying: there is not one story, one voice here, but many" (62). Dresang and McClelland refer to Macaulay's *Black and White* as "an ongoing, interactive, thought-provoking, multilayered, nonlinear experience. *Black and White* is a journey that changes the reader. It is a journey that changes the very essence of literature itself" (Dresang and McClelland n.p.). It can, therefore, be argued that *Black and White* is a great book to use when introducing young readers to new ways of engaging with books and to widen their literary horizons.

In order to support his readers Macaulay inserts a note of warning at the beginning of *Black and White* encouraging them to carefully inspect the words as well as the pictures as it is not clear whether the book consists of only one or of four stories. He, thereby, openly states his objectives. He intends to encourage his readers to be open for a new understanding of what it means to 'read' a book. His warning clearly conveys that just reading the text and browsing the pictures is not enough in order to grasp the

book's meaning. Wu (809) mentions that Macaulay's warning openly tells readers that the book might contain ambiguity. He directly tells his readers how to deal with this ambiguity by saying that "careful inspection of both words and pictures is recommended" (*Black and White* Title Page). According to Anstey, Macaulay's warning places responsibility to the readers and challenges them to decide how to approach the book (449). The readers are openly told that they need to be active as it is up to them to make sense of the book. Browne's book *Voices in the Park* also demands active readers who function as co-authors throughout the whole book. Pantaleo mentions that the intertextual allusions to art objects as well as contradicting messages in the four parts of the story are interrupting the reading process and request active interpretation from the readers (*Metafiction* 7).

Many scholars agree that it is indispensable nowadays to know how to proceed when reading online information or other media such as newspapers or reference books which demand a nonlinear reading. Coles and Hall argue that when engaging in such media "[a] linear, west to east, reading of the many texts is likely to limit the satisfactions they yield" (111). Like in newspapers or websites a linear left to right reading needs to be abandoned when engaging in *Black and White*. Cole and Hall argue that being able to deal with nonlinear texts is part of what nowadays constitutes a successful reader (111). Teaching young readers these skills is a central aim authors of nonlinear picture books intend to reach.

Another objective authors try to accomplish is to encourage young readers to question the conventional structures of traditional stories and to analyse them with a critical eye. McCallum asserts that by using nonlinear narrative techniques the narrative structures of texts are foregrounded (*Metafictions* 403). Moss agrees that young readers can be made aware of conventional narrative structures by confronting them with experimental texts that disrupt the conventions of linear, chronological texts in consistent fonts and styles (59). When starting to read *Black and White* the first challenge the reader is confronted with is to decide in what sequence to read the book. One could read one story after the other or look at all four parts of a double spread and then proceed to the next one. The fact that there are different possibilities to approach the book makes readers aware of the conventional linear way most books are read. McClay reports from her study of literate children and adults reading *Black and White* that the majority of participants of all age groups decided to read the book

in the traditional order starting with the left page top to bottom and then the right page top to bottom (96). It is, however, also possible to engage in *Black and White* without first thinking about how to proceed. It is likely that especially young children who are not yet prone to the traditional reading strategies simply look at what first catches their eyes.

The Stinky Cheese Man similarly makes use of nonlinear structures to make readers question the conventional narrative techniques. Nonlinearity is especially obvious when focussing on the nonlinear usage of paratexts such as the title page, the table of contents and the end cover of the book. The Little Red Hen, for instance, starts talking to the narrator before the title page has even appeared. The table of contents arrives only after the first story and buries the characters of this story as it is falling from the sky. Nonlinearity is, moreover, present in the 'Giant Story' which starts with "The End" and ends with "Once upon a time" (*Stinky Cheese Man* 13). Thereby, Scieszka and Lane manage to show their readers that stories do not always have to be ordered in a particular way.

Nonlinearity is entertaining as it encourages readers to make their own decisions and interpretations and helps them become active and successful readers. Macaulay provides the readers of *Black and White* with numerous little details to discover in his illustrations. Children as well as adults enjoy finding out more and more about the four stories that seem to be only one. However, not even that is obvious as after all borders have been removed in the penultimate double spread, order is restored in the last double spread. The four quarters of the spread again feature their original illustrative styles and colours. At this point readers might think that the book presents four separate stories after all. However, the page which is following the last double spread again turns everything upside down as it features a huge human hand removing the train station from 'A Waiting Game' indicating that the train station was part of the toy train the boy in 'Problem Parents' was playing with (see Fig. 18). However, this is only one way of interpreting the

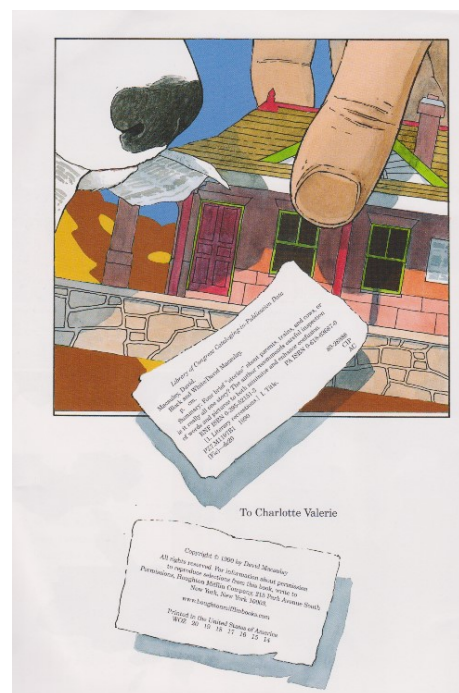


Figure 18: Ending (from: *Black and White* 16)

ending of *Black and White*. The whole book is constituted by the fact that it leaves a lot of space for readers to interpret it in their own ways. McCallum describes *Black and White* as a book that refuses to be arranged in a logical, causal, or chronological way. According to him, the four parts are obviously connected but he argues that it is impossible to describe the nature of their interconnectedness (*Metafictions* 404). Goldstone (*Postmodern Experiments* 324) as well as Seelinger Trites (235) agree that all attempts of classifying the four narratives and understanding their connections are destroyed at the latest by the final page, where the train station is picked up by a human hand. Seelinger Trites argues that this last scene implies that 'A Waiting Game' was only "part of someone else's game" (235). Her college students came up with one possible 'solution' of *Black and White*. They argue that the boy in 'Problem Parents' is playing with a train that includes a train station that looks exactly like the one in 'A Waiting Game' (see. Fig. 19) They suggest that both 'Seeing Things' and 'Udder Chaos' are imaginations of the boy playing with his train set. His thoughts could be influenced by the report about a convict he sees on TV. After all the boy sitting on the train in 'Seeing Things' looks a lot like the one in 'Problem Parents' (Seelinger Trites 235).



Figure 19: Train Station (from: *Black and White* 5)

Anstey suggests that *Black and White* can also be interpreted as a representation of the effect a delay on a commuter train has on different people's lives. (447). The cows held up the train but escaped because they were frightened by the convict. The boy on the train saw the cows and the commuters were bored and decided to play with their newspapers. Two of the commuters were the parents from 'Problem Parents' (453-4).

Whichever interpretation one considers most appropriate Macaulay definitely reaches his intention of telling his readers "that it is essential to see, not merely to look; that words and pictures can support each other; that it isn't necessary to think in a straight line to make sense; and finally that risk can be rewarded" (Macaulay n.p.).

Anthony Browne tries to make the readers of *Voices in the Park* aware of the fact that there can be so much more to a usual walk in the park than what first appears as obvious. Four characters present completely different interpretations of the same situation and, thereby, reveal their character traits and attitudes as well as their social backgrounds. This story of multiple perspectives should encourage children to question their own everyday experiences and contemplate on how people of their surroundings might perceive situations differently. According to Lehr, Browne manages to approach serious topics like differences in social class, loneliness and depression from various perspectives and, thereby, provides a thorough explanation of these issues that is appropriate for children. He manages to do so by packaging these topics into a very simple story of two families going to the park (165). Thereby, Browne does not directly educate his readers but subtly encourages them to think about the broached issues. Browne encourages his readers to think about these topics by including several instances of contradiction between the four versions of the story. The boy's mother, for instance, describes the other family's dog as a "scruffy mongrel" and a "horrible thing" (*Voices in the Park* 2) while her son perceives the exact same dog simply as "a very friendly dog" (*Voices in the Park* 8). Another example is their description of Smudge, the girl Charles meets in the park. His mother is worried because Charles was talking to "a very rough-looking child" (*Voices in the Park* 4) while Charles describes her as "quite nice" (*Voices in the Park* 11). These contradictions are of course caused by the characters' different perceptions of the situation. Nevertheless, readers can discuss which perspective is more likely to represent the 'real' mood of the situation and whether there even is such a thing as 'reality'. This again refers to a crucial aspect of postmodernism, namely the question of 'What is reality?'.

4.5 Reader interaction in picture books

As has already been mentioned in section 2.3.4 reader interaction has a slightly different status compared to the postmodern strategies which have been discussed above. In the three previous sections reader interaction and co-authoring proved to be central issues when discussing the objectives authors of postmodern picture books intend to accomplish. Metafiction, intertextuality, and nonlinearity ultimately pursue the goal of creating active readers who take co-authoring positions when engaging with

postmodern texts. The following paragraphs focus on different strategies authors apply in order to engage directly with their readers and make them part of their narratives.

4.5.1 Demand images

Many postmodern picture books that aim at including the reader into the process of meaning making apply what Dryden calls “demand images” (158). On the contrary more traditional picture books tend to feature “offer images” which are defined by the depiction of characters with averted eyes. These images allow the reader to observe what happens in the picture without being emotionally included. In demand images, however, “the character looks directly out of the illustrations at the reader and seems to address the reader directly and demand some type of response from the person observing him or her” (Dryden 158). This technique is, obviously, unique to picture books and especially effective in addressing children who focus primarily on the visual aspects of picture books. Especially in Wiesner’s *The Three Pigs* and Gravett’s *Wolves* a number of demand images can be observed. The cover of Wiesner’s book, for example, features not only one but three characters, namely the three pigs, looking directly at the reader and seemingly ‘out of’ the book (see Fig. 20). The pigs gazing at the readers demand them to commit to an interpersonal connection with the pigs (Dryden 165).

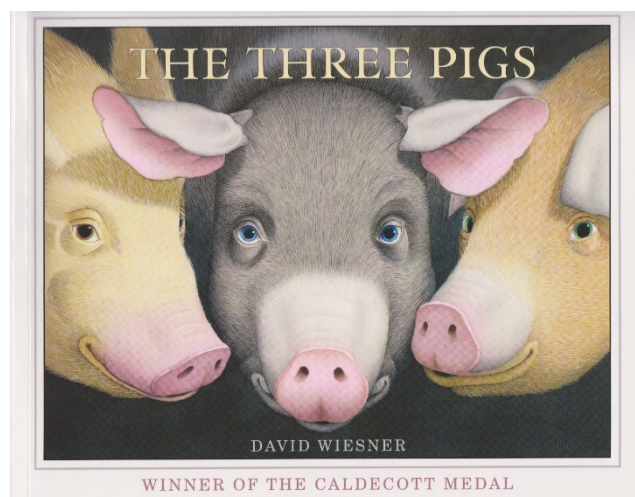


Figure 20: Demand Image I (from: *The Three Pigs* Cover)

Hornberg foregrounds the front cover as a highly effective example of a demand image. Due to the depiction of the pigs in close-up “[t]he reader is grabbed and pulled in right from the start. The scene and mood are set, the reader is ‘in’; challenged to take part and interact with the three pigs” (Hornberg n.p.).

Another instance of a demand image features one of the three pigs in close-up trying to figure out who is 'out there'. Suggesting that the pig is able to sense the reader's presence, Wiesner breaks down the border between story world and 'real' world. Slightly squinting its eyes the pig tries to recognise the reader and says, "I think...someone's out there" (*The Three Pigs* 11) (see Fig. 21).

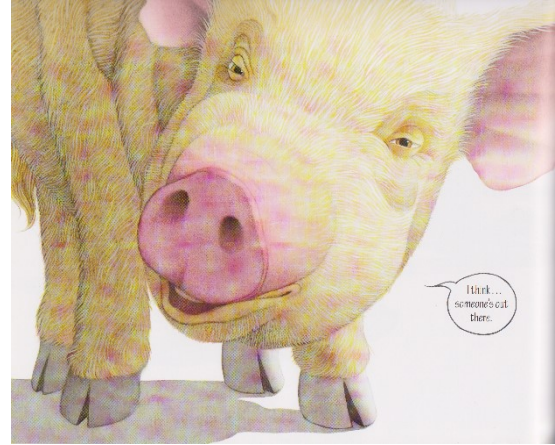


Figure 21: Demand Image II (from: *The Three Pigs* 11)

Hornberg makes the interesting observation that the reader's perspective is much more involved and less static once the three pigs have left their traditional story and moved to the "meta-story world" (Hornberg n.p.). This effect is created by working with frames. The traditional story features clear frames separating the story of the three pigs from the blank page of the book. However, when the pigs leave their story all frames vanish and the reader is able to take part in the meta-story more actively by experiencing perspectives from above, below, or oblique angles.

In Gravett's *Wolves* most of the pictures can be categorised as what Dryden defines "offer images" (158). The majority of illustrations feature Rabbit who is reading his book about wolves and does not notice that a wolf managed to escape from the story world into Rabbit's world. Rabbit is always turned towards the right and goes on walking in this direction which signifies his reading progress. Only when Rabbit understands that he is in great danger after having read that wolves also eat rabbits he stares right out of the book with a desperate and surprised expression on his face. As he is standing on the wolf's nose the wolf's threatening eyes which are focussed on Rabbit are depicted right behind him (see Fig. 22). Hall interprets Rabbit's staring at the reader as "a direct address" (140). Therefore, this instance can be interpreted as a demand image that



Figure 22: Demand Image III (from: *Wolves* 13)

involves the reader into the story (Pantaleo, *Mutinous Fiction* 20).

Browne's *Voices in the Park* also features an instance that reminds of a demand image. In an illustration of the story that is told from the girl's perspective the boy is directly staring at the reader. His gaze is highly involving and draws the reader into the story. However, when contemplating about the structure of *Voices in the Park* featuring the same story from four different perspectives it becomes clear that the boy is actually "gazing at another character in virtual picture pictorial space through whose eyes the reader is viewing the narrative events" (Dryden 166) (see Fig. 23). Moreover, the text below the picture reminds readers that they are experiencing the story from the girl's point of view. Another hint is provided when investigating the first part of the book which is told from the perspective of the boy's mother. One image features the boy looking to his right and a tiny part of the girl's red jacket and blue trousers reveals that he is actually looking at her (see Fig. 24). These two pictures represent a single situation and allow the careful reader to be immersed into the complicated structure of the book. This is a good example of the tendency of the increasing complexity of the structure of visual spaces in postmodern picture books (Dryden 172). Not only the illustrator but also the reader is increasingly responsible for interpreting the meaning of the images and their relationships to each other and to the narrative text.

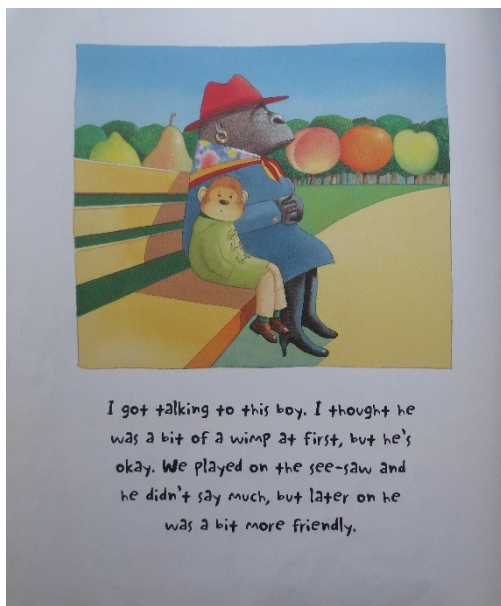


Figure 23: Visual Dimensions I (from: *Voices in the Park* 13)

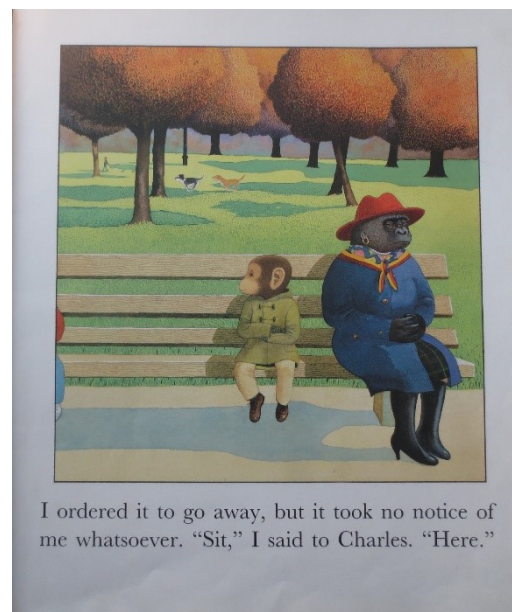


Figure 24: Visual Dimensions II (from: *Voices in the Park* 2)

4.5.2 Direct reader address

Direct reader address is not only achieved through demand images but also by applying verbal text to approach the reader. It is deeply involving for readers to be directly addressed by the author inviting them to take part in the book or instructing them how to read or interpret it. Goldstone argues that direct reader address is an invitation to intensely engage with the text. The author encourages the reader to “think about this story, relate this story to other reading experiences, manipulate the story so it makes sense. Do not be shy, be a co-author. Feel free to play with story, add to it and alter it!” (Goldstone, *Postmodern Experiments* 324). In *The Stinky Cheese Man* the narrator repeatedly addresses the audience. He comments on the fact that the information about the dedication of the book is upside down by telling the reader that he did this on purpose because “[w]ho ever looks at that dedication stuff anyhow?” (*Stinky Cheese Man* 2). In the introduction the readers are even more directly addressed as the narrator insistently tells them to stop reading this senseless introduction. This effect has already been mentioned in the section on metafiction (see section 4.2). Finally, the reader is directly addressed towards the end of the book when the narrator tries to trick the Giant into thinking that the book is already over. He gives instructions to the readers saying, “Shhh. Be very quiet. I moved the endpaper up here so the Giant would think the book is over. The big lug is finally asleep. Now I can sneak out of here. Just turn the page very quietly and that will be The...” (*Stinky Cheese Man* 23). Dresang (47) highlights that the reader is confronted with the question of whether to obey the narrator’s directions or not. This choice needs to be made by each character individually and, thereby, positions him/her in an active stance. These narrative techniques “require a high level of cognitive involvement from the reader” (Dresang 47).

4.5.3 Co-authoring

A very important aspect of reader interaction in postmodern picture books is co-authoring. This means that not only the author, illustrator, or narrator is responsible for making meaning in a book but also the reader plays a central role in this process (Dryden 242). Nikolajeva mentions that picture books often encourage co-authoring by presenting the readers with “flaps, movable parts, cutouts and other purely material features” (*Interpretative Codes* 31). Emily Gravett includes an instance of involving the reader into the story at the very last page of *Wolves* which features Rabbit’s cramped

doormat. One of the letters can be opened and read by the readers which enables them to 'enter' the story physically (Pantaleo, *Mutinous Fiction* 20). Another technique to involve the reader in the meaning making process is to offer several possible sequences or story lines. Gravett, for instance, offers two different endings to her picture book *Wolves*. She addresses her readers directly when noting at the end of the book that "no rabbits were eaten during the making of this book. It is a work of fiction. And so, for more sensitive readers, here is an alternative ending" (*Wolves* 10). Besides the fact that Gravett foregrounds the book's fictional nature she also confronts her readers with a choice between two possible endings to the story. Readers, thereby, have the chance to construct their own closings to the story. Gravett assumes that the first ending could be repellent for sensitive readers as it implies that the rabbit has been eaten by the wolf. Therefore, she offers a second more innocent ending featuring the vegetarian wolf and the rabbit sharing a sandwich, becoming friends, and living happily ever after. Even though the decision is up to the reader, the visuals of the second ending do not fully support the narrative text as the wolf, the rabbit, and the sandwich consist of paper scraps from the torn book. This implies that the first ending did happen after all (see Fig. 25).



Figure 25: Alternative Ending (from: *Wolves* 16)

Another aspect that challenges the happy ending is the very last double spread which features Rabbit's crammed doormat and a letter from the library saying that the book *Wolves* is seriously overdue. Therefrom, the reader can conclude that Rabbit has ultimately been eaten by the wolf. Bellorín and Silva-Díaz consider this last page much more convincing than the happy ending as "[i]t is also much more consistent with other

aspects such as the tone used by the narrator which invalidates the politically-correct ending” (124).

Macaulay's *Black and White* also offers a lot of freedom and choice to the readers. The most obvious decision for readers to make is whether the book consists of one or of four stories. Seelinger Trites argues that Macaulay's book is not really about what happens in the book but only about “how people draw from their external and internal experiences to create meaning. In this book, there is no such thing as a final meaning—all that matters is the process of creating the meaning” (236). Agreeing with Seelinger Trites it can be argued that there is no final ‘solution’ for the complex interconnected structure of the four stories in *Black and White*. It is much more likely that the author really intended to make his readers as active as possible by making them believe that there could be a solution to it. However, in order to encourage all readers to create their own interpretations of the book Macaulay desists from presenting one definite meaning of the picture book. Dresang and McClelland adequately state that “[j]ust as nothing is ever “black and white,” there are no wrong answers” (n.p.). Anstey argues that in order to find a well-argued interpretation of the book the readers need to answer questions like “Was the whole story just a game? Are we being shown the power of the author/illustrator in manipulating reader perceptions, or is a higher being's hand a treatise on the manipulation of life and lives? Is life itself a game?” (456).

Co-authoring is a strategy that is especially successful with today's children who grow up with the virtual world and are, unlike most adults, used to behave actively when engaging in texts or pictures (Dresang and McClelland n.p.). Dresang and McClelland even report that teachers of computer science have used Macaulay's *Black and White* to familiarise students with the programming of hypertext (n.p.). Young readers appreciate the choices postmodern picture books provide as “[t]he Internet and other digital devices have given them the opportunity to make choices they did not previously have, and they have grown accustomed to making many of their own decisions at a very young age” (Dresang 46). Moreover, postmodern picture books celebrate the diversity of responses to texts rather than demanding one indisputable interpretation (Pantaleo and Sipe 5). Pantaleo also praises the interactive nature of postmodern picture books as they encourage readers to actively co-author in meaning making. This active way of reading strengthens “critical thinking skills, visual literacy skills, and interpretative strategies” (Pantaleo, *Stinky Cheese Man* 291).

5 Conclusion

This thesis argues that postmodern strategies are highly effective in picture books for children and should by no means be banished from this genre. On the basis of theory and with reference to five concrete postmodern picture books for children I illustrated how metafiction, intertextuality, nonlinearity, and reader interaction occur in this genre and what effects they can convey. In the following I intend to summarise my insights by referring to the research questions that have been mentioned in the introduction of this thesis.

Considering the first research question about how postmodern strategies can be applied in a way that is appropriate for children, it can be summarised that although several scholars express their doubts about children's ability to understand the messages of such strategies, the majority argues that there are possibilities of making these strategies comprehensible for children. Methods like explaining postmodern strategies with pictures or verbal hints, as well as the assistance of adults definitely have the ability to make postmodern strategies adequate to children. The second research question is about in how far visual aspects and the young audience of picture books influence the application of postmodern strategies. Visual aspects of picture books influence the implementation of postmodern strategies insofar as they can explain them in a way that is more easily understood by children than a verbal text. Moreover, picture books consisting of verbal as well as visual aspects have the possibility of conveying messages through two distinct channels. Thereby, children are more likely to grasp the intended meaning. Referring to nonlinearity in specific, the interaction of words and pictures is often used to convey contradicting messages. The audience of picture books influences the application of postmodern strategies as authors need to consider that children demand more obvious explanations than adult readers. However, authors also need to keep in mind that young readers nowadays are familiar with nonlinear ways of reading and, therefore, maybe even more capable of dealing with postmodern aspects than adults who did not grow up in an online multimedia society. The third research question engages in discussing what functions and effects authors intend to convey when applying postmodern strategies in picture books for children. Reference to works of theory as well as to the five selected picture books reveal that authors on the one hand aim at entertaining their readers, and on the other hand have the intention of preparing them for our nonlinear society by

teaching them alternative ways of approaching literature. The highly appropriate nature of picture books to encourage new reading styles and to educate autonomous and successful readers is aptly summarised by Sylvia Pantaleo. She argues that postmodern picture books “augment students’ schemata of narrative structures, thus contributing to the development of cognitive flexibility. The abilities to tolerate ambiguity and to understand irregularities and complexities are fundamental to children’s growth as readers and to their future successful transactions with more sophisticated texts” (*Metafiction* 10).

To conclude, this thesis highlights the great potential of postmodern picture books to educate as well as entertain young readers. The postmodern strategies not only widen children’s horizons of what ‘reading’ and ‘literature’ means but also prepare them for dealing with complicated texts in the future. Especially the unique interaction between pictures and words makes picture books a great genre to introduce children to the complex nature of postmodern literature and to our society which is shaped by nonlinearity. Due to the abovementioned pedagogical qualities of postmodern picture books, I intend to implement these books in my future career as an English teacher.

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7 Appendix

Abstract English

This diploma thesis investigates how authors of postmodern picture books for children employ postmodern strategies like metafiction, intertextuality, nonlinearity, and reader interaction. Moreover, it explores in how far these strategies can be implemented using pictures and made accessible for the young audience of picture books. A literature review defining and describing postmodernism, characteristics of postmodern literature, and the genre of picture books serves as a theoretical foundation for the proposed investigations. Relating to five selected postmodern picture books for children it is discussed how postmodern strategies can be applied in this genre. David Macauley's *Black and White* (1990), Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith's *The Stinky Cheese Man And Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (1992), Anthony Browne's *Voices In The Park* (1998), David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* (2001), and Emily Gravett's *Wolves* (2005) serve as examples of postmodern picture books. The analysis of these picture books engages in questions concerning the influence of visual aspects and young readers/viewers to the application of postmodern strategies as well as the effects and functions authors of postmodern picture books intend to convey. It concludes that visual aspects of picture books influence the application of postmodern strategies as they can explain them in a way that is easily understood by children. Especially the unique interaction between verbal and visual aspects of picture books is crucial as it enables authors to convey their messages through two distinct channels. Thereby, children are more likely to grasp the intended meaning. Authors of postmodern picture books intend to entertain their readers as well as teach them alternative ways of approaching literature. Due to their potential of educating as well as entertaining young readers postmodern picture books are highly appropriate tools for encouraging new reading styles and educating autonomous and successful readers.

Abstract Deutsch

Diese Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich damit, wie Autoren postmoderner Bilderbücher für Kinder postmoderne Strategien wie Metafiktion, Intertextualität, Nichtlinearität und Leserinteraktion verwenden. Außerdem wird untersucht, inwiefern diese Strategien mithilfe von Bildern verwirklicht und für junge Leser zugänglich gemacht werden können. Eine Literaturobwertung, welche das Konzept der Postmoderne, Besonderheiten postmoderner Literatur und das Bilderbuchgenre definiert und erklärt, dient als theoretische Fundierung der beabsichtigten Untersuchungen. In Bezug auf fünf ausgewählte postmoderne Bilderbücher für Kinder wird erörtert, wie postmoderne Strategien in diesem Genre angewendet werden können. David Macauleys *Black and White* (1990), Jon Scieszka and Lane Smiths *The Stinky Cheese Man And Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (1992), Anthony Brownes *Voices In The Park* (1998), David Wiesners *The Three Pigs* (2001) und Emily Gravetts *Wolves* (2005) fungieren als Beispiele für postmoderne Bilderbücher. Die Analyse dieser Bilderbücher beschäftigt sich mit Fragen bezüglich des Einflusses von visuellen Aspekten und jungem Publikum auf die Anwendung postmoderner Strategien. Darüber hinaus wird analysiert, welche Effekte und Funktionen Autoren postmoderner Bilderbücher zu vermitteln beabsichtigen. Aus der Analyse kann geschlossen werden, dass visuelle Aspekte von Bilderbüchern die Verwendung postmoderner Strategien beeinflussen, da diese durch Bilder auf eine Art und Weise erklärt werden können, die für Kinder leicht verständlich ist. Vor allem das einzigartige Zusammenspiel zwischen verbalen und visuellen Aspekten ist zentral, da es Autoren erlaubt, ihre Botschaften durch zwei unterschiedliche Kanäle zu vermitteln. Dadurch sind die Informationen für Kinder leichter fassbar. Autoren postmoderner Bilderbücher streben an, ihre Leser zu unterhalten und sie mit alternativen literarischen Herangehensweisen vertraut zu machen. Aufgrund ihres Potentials, junge Leser sowohl zu bilden als auch zu unterhalten, sind Bilderbücher extrem angemessen, um neue Lesestile zu fördern und selbstständige und erfolgreiche Leser heranzubilden.