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PICTURE BOOKS OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: POWER RELATIONS IN THE WORKS OF SILVERSTEIN, GEISEL, SENDAK, MACAULAY AND BROWNE

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ABSTRACT

The central aim of the dissertation is the examination of power relations in picture books of the second half of the twentieth century. The corpus of texts discussed consists of the works of five influential American and British creators of picture books of the period; *The Cat in the Hat* by Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss), Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*, Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, David Macaulay's *Black and White* and Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park*. My object of inquiry is the synergy of the word and the image which lies at the core of all power relations examined in these books and, thus, establishes a connection among them. The exploration of the relationship between image and text is based on Lawrence Sipe's theory of intermediality, synergy being its central concept, and W. J. T. Mitchell's interpretation of the relationship between verbal and visual representation through the notion of imagetext.

My argument is that the dynamics of the word/image synergy function as an expression of the power relations in the picture book and at the same time a form of power play itself reflecting but also questioning the social and cultural practices underlying the verbal/visual text. My analysis of the five texts depends on the application of a range of critical theories because of the complexity of the social, cultural and aesthetic dimensions of the picture book. Issues of power relations are examined in the verbal text against the following conventions of children's literature: fixed narrative point of view, linearity of plot, presence of children as the main characters of the story, use of fantasy and anthropomorphic characters, conclusive and happy ending. The visual meaning-making process relies on the study of design, style and point of view and draws on the concepts of the theory of visual art and Visual Social Semiotics. The thematic points raised in the thesis concern the power play between fantasy and reality with special emphasis on anthropomorphic characters intermingling the fantastic and the realistic; the representation of the notion of childhood and childhood subjectivity and the interrogation of adult authority; the social construction of the identity of the individual through constitutive elements such as race, gender and class.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim

The central aim of this dissertation is to examine power relations in picture books of the second half of the twentieth century. Current research on picture books examines the word/image relation from various perspectives; in terms of the process readers engage in when relating the verbal and the visual text to each other; through the analysis of the taxonomies that describe the diverse ways in which words and illustrations interrelate; drawing from aesthetic criticism or through a multicultural lens. I intend to integrate and link the research questions and theoretical approaches towards the analysis of the dynamics of the text/image synergy. The originality of the dissertation lies in that it elucidates the relationship between the word and the image as an expression of the power relations in the picture book and at the same time a form of power play itself reflecting but also questioning the social and cultural practices underlying the verbal/visual text. For this purpose the dissertation discusses the works of five influential American and British creators of picture books of the period; Theodor Seuss Geisel's (Dr. Seuss) *The Cat in the Hat*, Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*, Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, David Macaulay's *Black and White* and Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park*.

Seuss, Sendak and Silverstein are brought together as writers whose works shed light on the darker, less controllable aspects of childhood and defied the notion that "children's books shouldn't be scary, silly or sophisticated" (Paul). Browne, an English writer and illustrator, is connected to the English surrealists (Browne, "A Life in Books") in whose tradition Seuss is located (Nel, "Dada Knows Best" 152), while, as the writer himself admits, Sendak has been a great influence on his work ("Small Talk"). A thread of connection can also be traced between Browne's work and Macaulay's *Black and White*. British children's literature in the 1990s signals an attempt to address issues of social, racial and cultural diversity (Grzegorczyk 1); a corresponding trend develops in the US through the publication of children's books voicing different perspectives and viewpoints (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson

244). Macaulay and Browne are joined together through their picture books which exemplify this trend as different perspectives and multiple viewpoints are provided in their respective verbal and visual text.

I choose to focus on the specific artists because as the single picture book creators, authors and illustrators, they communicate their experience and also their vision of the social and cultural context in a twofold manner, visual and verbal. Furthermore, their subversion of narrative devices employed in children's literature such as linearity of plot, fixed narrative point of view and conclusive ending establishes a connection among their picture books which creates the context for my study. My interest in the five artists also focuses on their questioning of traditional notions regarding childhood reflected in the power relations between the child character, the implied child reader and the adult author.

The research questions I wish to investigate are:

Do the language and narrative devices used in these books subvert traditional concepts of power?

Do the illustrations in the picture book support or question the meanings conveyed in the verbal text?

How does the interplay between words and images amplify the power relationships of the characters in the picture books?

What is the role assigned to the child character in the book?

How does the author's concept of childhood influence the power play between the child character in the picture book and the implied child reader?

How is the child-adult power relation represented in the verbal and visual text of the book?

How does the duality of the writer/narrator impact the power position of the adult writer and the child reader?

What is the degree of animal agency throughout the text and how does it affect the animal-human power struggle in the book?

How does the interaction between the verbal and visual mode of representation challenge the conventions of children's literature?

The dissertation argues that the analysis of the dynamic interaction of the words with the images of the picture book based on Lawrence Sipe's term "synergy" ("How Picture Books Work" 98-99; "Revisiting the Relationship Between Text and Pictures" 11-12) and W. J. T. Mitchell's concept of imagetext ("Picture Theory" 9) serves two functions; on the one hand, it illuminates the equally complex power relations of the characters of the picture book, which in turn represent the writer/illustrator's perception of social and cultural structures; on the other hand, it explores the power play between the adult author and the implied child reader. Sipe applies the term "synergy" to describe the relationship of words and images in picture books as "greater than the sum of its parts" ("Revisiting the Relationship between Text and Pictures" 12). According to Sipe the synergistic relationship between image and text relies not only on the connection of the two forms of representation but also on the interactive process of transactions between the verbal and the visual element. Mitchell's concept of imagetext is also deployed in this study in connection with Sipe's synergistic relationship of word and image. Mitchell concentrates on the dialectic relationship of the text with the image and replaces the predominantly binary theory of the picture/discourse relation with the figure of the imagetext ("Picture Theory" 9) which offers an alternative way of reading the verbal/visual text of the picture book that blurs the boundary between verbal and visual meaning. Mitchell recognizes the political dimension of the image/text relationship establishing the latter as a relation of power ("What Is an Image?" 529); he identifies its dialogic character which enables the constant change, exchange and negotiation of power positions and eventually questions considerations of the image/text relationship in binary terms. This thesis aims to examine power relations in the picture book as a field of diverse, distinct forces whose interaction and mutual effect challenge and, subsequently, expand the binary representation of their relationship.

1.2 Organization

The main body of the thesis is organized into six parts, five chapters devoted to the five selected picture books and the conclusion summarizing the points raised in the thesis in reference to its central argument. The themes developed in the five chapters concern fundamental structural aspects of the issues and ideologies encoded in the verbal and visual text under examination: the power play between fantasy and reality, the representation of the notion of childhood and childhood subjectivity, and the social construction of the identity of the individual through constitutive elements such as race, gender and class. Following a chronological order according to the publication date of each picture book, the dissertation displays the evolution of the attitudes towards children in the second half of the twentieth century, "the Century of the Child" (Thelen and Haukanes 1); from the oppressive power of convention exercised by adults on the younger generation in the 1950s to the defiance of traditional modes of authority by counterculture youth in the 1960s and the questioning of parental authority over the child as a result of the changes in family trends in the 1990s.

The first picture book I examine is *The Cat in the Hat* (1957) by Dr. Seuss with a special focus on its various interpretations as a Cold War invention (Menand); a popular cultural artifact (Mallan, "Gender Dilemmas in Children's Fiction" 4); a book of socially and racially complicated characters (Nel, "Was the Cat in the Hat Black?: Exploring Dr. Seuss's Racial Imagination" 71); an endorsement of rebellion against authority (Dreier 46). Through meticulous analysis of the verbal and visual forms of representation I attempt to reappraise the prevailing critical approaches to the power issues of *The Cat in the Hat*; I intend to show that the power play between fantasy and reality plays a crucial part in determining the power dynamics of the relationship between the child character and the implied child reader. I also explore the underpinning structures comprising the verbal and visual text in the book by examining whether Seuss's illustration of the hybrid identity of the anthropomorphic, black Cat inverts or further establishes and reinforces racial conventions and stereotypes permeating the American culture of the 1950s.

The next chapter is devoted to Sendak's iconic *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) which has inspired, perhaps, the largest amount of literary criticism of all five picture books of the thesis. The enormous attention this book has received creates a challenge for the researcher attempting a novel approach. In this chapter I will extensively discuss and question interpretations of the adventure of Max, the child protagonist, as a trip from youth to maturity. Maturity is viewed as a state of superiority which children lack the intellectual and emotional capacity to manage, or as a case study of the colonization of the child by the adult in the process of which the child gradually tames his wild instincts and conforms to the rules of the established order of things set by adults (McGillis, "Postcolonialism, Children, and their Literature" 8; Nodelman, "The Other" 30; Rose 27). My intention is to demonstrate that Max's journey into the fantasy world of the wild things is a journey of self-knowledge and celebration of his wildness that, in the end, redefines the boundaries of adult-child relationship and disrupts the power positions established in its context. I place special emphasis on the fact that the book focuses on a male child character raising questions regarding the importance of gender in the development of the story and suggesting a hypothesis that *Where the Wild Things Are* would be a different book if the protagonist were a girl. At a visual level Sendak's illustration is connected to Joseph Cornell's surrealist style (J. Jones); Max's room resembles one of Cornell's dream-like shadow boxes inviting the viewer into the boy's own private world and signifying the child character's venture into fantasy world. As Max goes deeper and deeper into the wild jungle the verbal text gradually diminishes until it is *annihilated* by the visual text whose allusions to Henri Rousseau's landscapes of tropical wildness occupy entirely several pages in the book. This tension between the verbal and the visual text forms an analogy to the antagonistic relationship between reality and fantasy which is one of the main thematic points I discuss in the chapter.

The Giving Tree (1964) is Silverstein's most ambiguous and controversial work as it has engendered conflicting interpretations including readings of the story as a glorification of the generosity of love; a critique of the alienating effect of consumer culture on modern society; a disturbing tale which, from a feminist perspective, perpetuates the myth of the self-sacrificing mother whose sole purpose of existence is to satisfy the ungrateful male child's constant demands (Spitz 46).

This thesis contends that an alternative reading of *The Giving Tree* showcases that rather than privileging patriarchal male normativity, the book pinpoints the contradictions and complications of gender representation in the fluid social and cultural context of its era. The anthropomorphic features of the fantastic character of the Tree, the Boy who grows up to become an adult and, yet, is never identified with his name in the story, and the narrator's repeated confirmations of the Tree's happiness at the end of every encounter with the Boy are some of the key elements that will be explored through the verbal and visual text of the book. The relationship connecting the image to the text alternating between complementarity and contradiction is essential to the interpretation of the story as the two mediums do not always convey similar meanings in connection to the different phases of the relationship of the Tree to the Boy with the passage of time.

The fourth picture book in the thesis is *Black and White* (1990) by Macaulay, "an incredibly complex metafictional picture book" (Pantaleo 46) which, as Macaulay explained in his Caldecott Acceptance Speech, is about connections "between pictures and between words and pictures". Prior to the beginning of the narration of the four stories Macaulay addresses the reader with a warning message directly stating that ambiguity is to be expected. The boundaries of the quadrants constituting the story are blurred and ambiguous, the border separating fantasy from reality is often indiscernible and, therefore, ambiguous, and the final ending of the stories is complicated and ambiguous, too. The multiple levels of ambiguity expressed by the linguistic and pictorial modes of representation provide the basis for the examination of the equally complex and fluid power relations of the book. In this chapter I will conduct an in-depth analysis of the core issues raised in *Black and White*; interrogation of adult authority and its paternalistic rules and principles restricting the autonomy of child agency; exploration of the "negative spaces", of what is not shown or said in the pictures and text (L. Collins 34), as a means of empowerment of the viewer/reader's imagination and capacity for unconventional, creative thinking; criticism of the power exercised by mass culture and its discourse on the individual.

Voices in the Park (1998) by Browne is the last picture book I examine. Browne's work bears the trace of influence of Sendak, Jan Pienkowski and the English Surrealists Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll (Browne, "A Life in Books").

The four characters in *Voices in the Park* describe the same visit to the park from their own perspective. Four narrative voices are invested with text and illustrations alternately bringing the characters closer or alienating them from one another and simultaneously emphasizing the individuality of each child and adult character's voice but, also, undermining their authority. In a manner similar to Sendak's illustrations of Max's journey into the jungle, Browne's depiction of a changeable landscape seems to be sharing some of the dream-like, fantastic qualities of Rousseau's painted scenes of tree-lined urban promenades (Strasser-Olson 52). This allusion to Rousseau's art which "has the potential to harbour its opposite within itself" (Strasser-Olson 52) further complicates power play in the book and unsettles conceptions of boundary breaking as a straightforward process. The question of whether and to what extent the characters of the story succeed in transgressing the social as well as the narrative boundaries constricting them remains open, therefore, the chapter examines the multiple layers of power relations defining positions of social and narrative authority.

The conclusion will summarize the main points raised in the dissertation. I will contrast and compare the analyses of the five picture books and, thus, draw connections which stress their authors' treatment of similar concerns. Through close reading and comparison, I will demonstrate that the word/image synergy functions as a site of contestation between the child and the adult, fantasy and reality, social and individual subjectivity. Furthermore, I will show that the complex interaction between the text and the illustration lies at the core of all power relations examined in the five books and deconstructs their traditional binary representation.

1.3 Method

The methodological course of the thesis is directed by the research questions under examination. I explore the relationship between image and text based on Sipe's theory of intermediality, synergy being its central concept, and Mitchell's interpretation of the relationship between verbal and visual representation through

the notion of imagetext. Issues of power relations raised in the research questions of the study are examined in the verbal text against the following conventions of children's literature: fixed narrative point of view, linearity of plot, presence of children as the main characters of the story, use of fantasy and anthropomorphic characters, conclusive and happy ending.

The analysis of children's literature depends on the application of a range of critical theories in order to explore images of the child and the child reader as "aesthetic and social constructions built by powerful interest groups" (Wojcik-Andrews 240). Because of the diversity of its form and the complexity of its social, cultural and aesthetic dimensions the picture book demands "consideration by a means of a number of different theoretical approaches at the same time" (Nodelman, "Words about Pictures" x). For the analysis of the visual text I draw on the concepts of the theory of visual art developed by Sipe, Perry Nodelman, Barbara Kiefer and William Moebius, Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, and the work of Clare Painter, James Martin and Len Unsworth on Visual Social Semiotics. I will examine the schematic codes which comprise the visual text to illuminate the interactive relationship between the producer of the image, the implied reader/viewer and the represented participants in the visual text, that is the fictional characters. I will also examine colour, line and shape which create the spatiotemporal sense and establish the mood and emotion that may emphasize or contradict meanings expressed in the verbal text. The consideration of the author/illustrator's style also plays a significant part in the process of image analysis involving the examination of each artist's personal style as well as references to historical and cultural conventions rendered visible in the artist's work. My study of point of view, the position from which the audience experiences the image, is informed by Kress and Van Leeuwen's analysis of interactive meanings conveyed by the visual components of the picture ("Reading Images (2nd ed.)" 148-149). Kress and Van Leeuwen pinpoint the importance of the interpersonal aspects of images, such as direct gaze of the character at the viewer, angle and distance from which the viewer sees the image, in shaping the power position of the viewer assigned by the illustrator.

Moving from image-text to adult-child relations and the link between power and age norm I use Maria Nikolajeva's theory of aetonormativity. According to Nikolajeva, children's texts are basically aetonormative as they are based on the

assumption that adulthood is the norm while children represent "the other" defined against adult normativity. The theory of aetonormativity also depends on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque ("Rabelais and His World" 10), that is the use of fantasy as a space of temporary liberation for childhood subjectivity from adulthood normativity, for the analysis of the child-adult power play. My analysis also employs Bakhtin's concept of the literary chronotope, this "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships" ("The Forms of Time and Chronotope" 84) towards the elucidation of the spatiotemporal character of the fictional child's transition from the home/reality chronotope to the fantasy chronotope. These theoretical approaches support my argument that the picture books under discussion defy the binary opposition between adult and child; they create the space for empowerment of childhood subjectivity and interrogation of adult authority by challenging absolute authorial control of the meaning of the text and, consequently, the power of the adult author as incontestable authority.

Furthermore, I deploy poststructuralist theory with special reference to Michel Foucault's concept of power ("Power/Knowledge" 89) to investigate the ideological practices and assumptions that determine the power relations developed in the social context of the verbal and visual texts and uncover their writers' beliefs and ideological stance. Through the deployment of Foucault's definition of power as a force which circulates and which is exerted and contested ("Power/Knowledge" 98) and whose omnipresence is affirmed "because it comes from everywhere" ("The History of Sexuality" 93) I substantiate my argument regarding the fluidity of the network of relationships connecting the characters in each story; the characters and the writer/illustrator, the writer/illustrator and the reader/viewer, the reader/viewer and the fictional characters create a network in which all parties simultaneously exert and resist dominance and control constantly negotiating their position in an unstable game of power. Foucault's concept of heterotopia as a place of coexisting multiplicities creating chaos and disorder and giving rise to "a sort of mixed, joint experience" ("Of Other Spaces" 24) has proved extremely helpful in my investigation of liminal spaces in the picture books where fantasy and reality coexist. I see these blurred spaces "where one has the potential to experience multiple places at once within the same physical space" (Radford, Radford, and Lingel 736) as the context in which image and discourse boundaries break down.

The power of social and cultural conventions to define the identity of hybrid, anthropomorphic characters, such as the Wild Things and the Cat in the Hat, child characters that grow into adults, as in *The Giving Tree,* and adults that revert to childhood, as in *Black and White*, is proved insufficient.

Another important part of my argument is the examination of the anthropomorphic characters hybridizing fantasy with reality. My analysis of the device of anthropomorphism is not limited to its function in facilitating the child reader to understand complex or difficult topics. I also address the use of anthropomorphic entities through the posthuman lens which conceptualizes these figures as active participants in networks of relationships expanding among human and non-human beings. Rosi Braidotti and Francesca Ferrando deconstruct anthropocentric perceptions of the human based on oppositional schemata and offer, instead, a vision of the human subject as a relational being thinking through connections to others and embracing the otherness which defines it (Braidotti xii; Ferrando, "Philosophical Posthumanism" 5). In a posthuman framework of analysis, the complicated nature of the power play between human and non-human is accentuated, thus, the division between the human and the non-human is distorted. The hybridity of the anthropomorphic characters openly challenges the power hierarchies positioning humanity above all other species and points out the need to conceptualize relations among beings in different ways.

Moreover, my analysis focuses on the child reader-(adult) writer power relation through the examination of the verbal and visual techniques which enable the reader to construct meaning and make sense of the text. Macaulay and Browne share the narrative strategy of providing multiple perspectives on the same events through diverse verbal and visual viewpoints. Both picture books exemplify key features of postmodernism with a greater focus on metafiction and intertextuality. While I draw on the theories developed by critics of children's literature in the field of postmodernism such as Bette Goldstone and Linda Labbo, I do not agree with their claim that postmodern narratives overtly surrender power to the reader to construct new stories (199). As I will show, the deployment of metafiction and intertextuality does not automatically amount to the empowerment of the capacity of the individual to become an active participant in the meaning-making process. Rather, it motivates the readers to reflect on the fictional status of the text and,

paraphrasing Macaulay's own words, question what they believe they see and what they actually see. Because of the repeated use of parody in the visual text in *Voices in the Park* my reading also relies on Linda Hutcheon's extensive writings on postmodernism and, more specifically, the connection which the critic establishes between the notion of intertextuality to parody as a particular case of intertextuality paradoxically marking both "continuity and change, both authority and transgression" ("The Politics of Postmodernism" 204).

Finally, this research is informed by the critical multicultural analysis of children's literature, which according to Maria Botelho and Masha Rudman sees literary texts as social constructs told from a particular perspective and, subsequently, challenges the domination of hierarchical power relations of class, race, gender that privileges some groups and discriminates against others (8-9). The key issues that I address through the deployment of critical multicultural analysis include the power position of female characters in relation to males; verbal and visual representation of stereotypes related to race, as in the case of the black Cat in Dr. Seuss's book, and class, as with the poor, unemployed father in *Voices in the Park*; the effect of consumer culture on the development of the subjectivity of the individual.

1.4. Literature Review

1.4.1 *Children's literature*

Books specifically aimed at children appeared in the eighteenth century and flourished in the second half of the nineteenth century (Shavit 135). Beginning in the mid-1800s, the rise of the middle class, an increase in the levels of literacy, an expansion of the publishing industry and a nostalgic pursuit of an idealized childhood built the foundations for what came to be referred to as the golden age of children's books (Coats, "The Bloomsbury Introduction to Children's and Young

Adult Literature" 27). During that period, children's literature emerged as a distinct genre and became a recognized cultural field which occupied its own significant space within the publishing establishment (Shavit 133). Recent criticism has made it clear that it is important to consider the development of children's literature as an area of study (Cadden, "Introduction" xiii). Critics such as Nodelman, John Stephens and Peter Hunt focus their analysis of children's texts on issues of history, culture, ideology, intertextuality and literacy (Wojcik-Andrews 238); children's literature is recognized as an integral part of culture dynamically interacting with social, literary and educational norms (Shavit 177). Mike Cadden explains that children's literature achieved its "theoretical and critical self-consciousness" in the 1980s ("Introduction" xix) and, as Seth Lerer maintains, it has its forms, genres and techniques (11); nevertheless, it is often studied in opposition to adult fiction which accounts for its inferior status as a less evolved form of fiction (Shavit 179).

The complex matter of the identity of children's literature can be summarized in the essential question "Just what *is* children's literature?" which remains unresolved (Cadden, "Introduction" xvii). As Roger Sale aptly points out, "Everyone knows what children's literature is until asked to define it" (1). According to Nodelman, it is hard to come up with a definition for children's literature because of the multiplicity of literary forms and genres it contains ("The Hidden Adult" 137). Sebastien Chapleau describes it as an ambivalent subject which has acquired a variety of meanings placing it at "the cross-roads of different definitions of discourses" (10).

Alternatively, critics who attempt to define children's fiction in less ambiguous terms identify recurrent features and characteristics specific to the genre. Following a long tradition of fantasy novels such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), the use of the fantastic in a combination with reality is one of the most important features of children's fiction as the development of the story does not require a "real-world setting" (Knowles & Malmkjaer 16). Anthropomorphism as an element of the use of fantasy is also a significant characteristic attributed to children's literature. In fact, the presence of characters, such as animals but also other forms of natural life, with anthropomorphic features is prevalent in children's books (Cadden, "Introduction" xxi). Actual human characters in children's books

are in most cases either children or childlike rendering their presence as protagonists of the story a common feature of children's fiction (Nodelman, "The Hidden Adult" 189). Nodelman refers to several texts of children's literature ranging from E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952) and Betsy Byars's *Summer of the Swans* (1970) to Ursula Le Guin's *A Visit from Dr. Katz* (1988) and *Steering the Craft* (1998) which commonly display a didactic nature; through the moral message implicit within their discourse these stories teach their audience about cultural values more than any other literary genre ("The Hidden Child" 272; Rata, "Children's Literature" 240). The point of view of innocence and the optimistic happy ending providing the inevitable narrative closure are among the main characteristics associated with older classic children's books such as *Black Beauty* (1877) by Anna Sewell and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1901) by Beatrix Potter as well as newer books such as the *Henry Huggins* series (1950-1964) and *Weetzie Bat* (1989) by Francesca Lia Block (Nodelman, "Pleasure and Genre" 1; "The Hidden Adult" 233; Webb 80). One strand of theory argues that children's literature can be described as simple, its aspects of simplicity involving both story and discourse. The clearly delineated plot, the chronologically ordered narration, the fixed point of view and distinct narrative voice are some of the main criteria of conventional children's literature (Nikolajeva, "Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature" xiv).

However, twentieth-century children's literature has been strongly influenced by the aesthetics of modernism and postmodernism which "in children's texts, as elsewhere, is about all kinds of change" promoting the use of innovative storytelling techniques and devices (Meek-Spencer 199). During the last decades of the twentieth century the traditional conventions of the genre were challenged through experimentation with language as a revolutionary alternative to the conventional uses of language and the application of complex and innovative narrative strategies (Beckett, "Transcending Boundaries" xvii). Metafiction and intertextuality are common postmodern features which undermine and disrupt the inherent simplicity of children's books and the apparent stability of their language. Indicative cases of metafictional children's books of the second half of the twentieth century include Crockett Johnson's *Harold and the Purple Crayon* (1955) whose titular character draws with his purple crayon the entire setting of the book; Seuss and Roy McKie's *My Book about Me by Me Myself* (1969) which encourages

readers to write and draw their own biography; *The Monster at the End of This Book* (1971) by Jon Stone in which Grover the monster directly addresses the reader at every turn of the page. Babette Cole's *Prince Cinders* (1987), a gender-reversed Cinderella story, *Amazing Grace* (1991) by Mary Hoffman and Caroline Binch, closely linked with J. M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1911), and *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* (1995), Gregory McGuire's alternative version of L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), demonstrate the significance of intertextuality in the production of children's books. As Nodelman points out, texts of children's literature possess an unconscious understanding of the world that remains sublimated beyond the surface but at the same time implies the presence of something more complicated; playful uses of language profoundly upset traditional representations of innocence and simplicity and redefine children's literature as being "a complex literature in the context of its essential simplicity" ("The Possibility of Growing Wiser" 232). Echoing theorists such as Foucault and Raymond Williams, Nodelman refers to the hidden complexity of children's literature emerging from an effort to hide or disguise more complex matters; the critic identifies children's books as the settings where the circumstances of their creation are replicated in the final product ("The Possibility of Growing Wiser" 233).

Furthermore, the relationship between the text and the audience it addresses is fundamental to the discussion of the characteristics of children's fiction. Karin Westman emphasizes the role of adults in children's literature, arguing that "often written by adults for child and adult readers, children's literature from the start serves at least two audiences: even if younger readers are the intended addressees, adults are not far away" (466). Jacqueline Rose in *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984) affirms the position of power of the adult author who builds an image of the child character inside the book and an image of the child reader, who is outside the book, according to the adult assumption of what a child is or ought to be (1-2). Didactic or pleasurable, children's literature encourages children to behave in socially acceptable ways and persuades them to embrace conceptions of themselves as less sensible and, therefore, less powerful than adults (Nodelman, "Decoding the Images" 134-135). Critics of children's literature, either supporting or contesting conventional collective notions of

childhood, engage in a critical debate on the power dynamics of the adult author, the child character and the implied child reader which complicates the child-adult duality (Cadden, "The Irony of Narration in the Young Adult Novel" 146; Nikolajeva, "Imprints of the Mind" 173; Plourde 103). British and American authors of the post war period write children's texts which in response to the discourses of the societies that have produced them often attempt to interrogate the established power structures and promote acceptance of diversity. This trend is overtly visible in texts such as *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* (1968) by Judith Kerr in which Sophie and her mother receive an unexpected guest, an anthropomorphic tiger, and share their afternoon with him; Sendak's *In the Night Kitchen* (1970) beautifully intermingling imagination and social reality to create a surreal setting; Dr. Seuss's *The Butter Battle Book* (1984) in which the conflict between the Yooks and the Zooks alludes to the Second World War as well as the Cold War. As it will be demonstrated, the picture books examined in the thesis exemplify some of the basic features of children's literature, such as the presence of anthropomorphic figures and the positioning of the child character as the protagonist in the story; nevertheless, they abstain from the deployment of other devices such as the conclusive, happy ending, in an attempt to evoke the child reader's ability to interpret the text in defiance of the condescending adult's practice of manipulation and overt didacticism.

1.4.2 *Picture books*

The evolution of the picture as a storytelling medium can be traced as far back as the mid-1800s when new printing technologies motivated renowned illustrators of the period to get involved with illustrating children's books (Coats, "The Bloomsbury Introduction to Children's and Young Adult Literature" 28). However, it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that the picture book was fully formed (Lewis, "Reading Contemporary Picturebooks" xiii). As Karen Brown, Camille Fort and Laurence Petit point out, with printing techniques becoming more diversified "images came to fill more space and use a wider range of media, and, as a result, grew more autonomous. No longer relegated to the top or

bottom of the page, their osmosis with the text became more forceful and interactive" (2). Words and pictures in a picture book do not always tell the same story as images may not correspond exactly with the text they illustrate (Sipe, "Learning from Illustrations in Picturebooks" 133; Wolfenbarger and Sipe 274). It is that quality which renders the genre of picture books a unique form of art (Nikolajeva and Scott 1) and which has motivated my interest in researching the complications of the text-image relationship in picture books. Contrary to the common assumption that the picture book is a simple form of literature, a high level of complexity and poetic sophistication underlies the relationship formed between words and images and the codes, conventions and distinctions that operate in them and which we take for granted (Nodelman, "Decoding the Images" 135; Op de Beeck 118; Roche 84). In Hunt's own words, picture books are "children's literature's one genuinely original contribution to literature" because of their "polyphonic form that embodies many codes, styles, textual devices and intertextual references, and which frequently pushes at the boundaries of convention" ("Inspecting the Foundations" 128).

The investigation of the dynamics of the relationship between texts and images is of primary importance in the study of picture books. This line of enquiry is based on an understanding of the image as a "changing collective conceit", culturally specific and situated in time and place which cannot narrate without context (Op de Beeck 120). Criticism of the image-text relationship poses the question of whether the role assigned to the picture in a picture book is that of an interpretation, an illustration or a silencing of the word and explores the visual and verbal formulations mutually participating in the construction of the picture book (Moebius, "Picture Book" 173). Critics such as Miriam Martinez, Junko Yokota and Charles Temple stress the importance of pictures in developing the setting, character and plot of the picture book and their interpretation, or rather decoding, constitutes an issue of equal importance and complexity (43). Moebius in his *Introduction to Picturebook Codes* (1986) proposes the use of graphic codes, which he defines as "judging picture books by what we *know* rather than what we *see*" (148), as a means of analysis of the implied meaning of the image. Codes of position, size, perspective, frame, line and colour are employed to identify the status or power of the characters, interpret representations of the characters' feelings towards the

situations they experience and locate conflicts and contradictions in the messages the image sends. As Moebius suggests, images and text form an interactive relationship but not necessarily one of harmonious collaboration as they may often contradict one another ("Introduction to Picturebook Codes" 142-143).

In the course of this thesis I relied on the works of several theorists of picture books such as Sipe, Nikolajeva and Scott, John Bateman, Margaret Meek and Charles Suhor who have sought to develop concepts and terms that can be used to describe and analyze the complex relationship of the verbal and visual codes. Gabriele Rippl argues that these concepts allow for "a reading of literary texts against the backdrop of their cultural and medial contexts from systematic and historical perspectives" (2). Transmediation theory (Suhor 250), the theory of juxtaposition (Bateman 77) and of interanimation (Meek 176-177) refer to the process of interaction or transaction underlying the construction of a conversation between the text and the image and have indirectly informed my research. *How Picturebooks Work* (2001) by Nikolajeva and Scott gave me valuable insights into the text-image relation; the critics developed a scale of five taxonomies that reflect the ways images and text interact while shaping the plot, setting, characterization and perspective of the picture book: symmetry, complementarity, enhancement, counterpoint and contradiction. My analysis is essentially triggered by Sipe who utilizes the term synergy to describe the new literary/visual format in picture books where the text and the picture render one incomplete without the other ("How Picture Books Work" 98-99).

Focusing on picture books of the second half of the twentieth century, theorists such as Cherie Allan and David Lewis have approached the works of writers and illustrators of the period as significant texts employing narrative techniques and sensibilities that reflect the aesthetics of postmodernism (Allan 2; Lewis, "Reading Contemporary Picturebooks" 87). The main characteristics are playfulness of language in the form of puns, jokes and irony, multiplicity of storylines following a nonlinear development, intertextuality often taking the form of pastiche, self-referentiality offering readers a metafictional stance, complex image/text relationship, subversion and the blurring of distinctions between high and popular culture (Allan 9; Goldstone 363-364; Hellman 7-8; Pantaleo and Sipe 2-

4; Sipe and McGuire, "The *Stinky Cheese Man* and Other Fairly Postmodern Picturebooks" 276; Trites, "Manifold Narratives" 225; Wolfenbarger and Sipe 273).

The notion of syllepses*,* parallel visual narratives, is crucial in the study of postmodern picture books as intertextuality includes intervisuality with references to well-known works of classic or popular art, earlier picture books or other well-known stories forming interpictorial links (Beckett, "Crossover Picturebooks" 147; Nikolajeva and Scott 12; Serafini, "Paths to Interpretation" 124). For example, *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book* (2002) by Lauren Child draws on classic fairy tales like *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, *Cinderella* and *Puss in Boots*. *The Three Pigs* (2001) by David Wiesner employs the style of comics and cartoons to allude to the visual text in the classic fairy tale. *Willy the Dreamer* (1997) by Browne creates interpictorial links by paying homage to the works of famous surrealists like René Magritte and Salvador Dali.

Intertextuality along with other devices employed in the picture book ranging from parody and inversion to "playing with editorial conventions and blurring of ontological levels" are used to expose, destabilize and disrupt the narrative framing structures on which the organization and presentation of experience is traditionally founded (Allan 63-64). *Beware of the Storybook Wolves* (2000) by Lauren Child is an indicative case of children's literature subverting the convention of the linear narrative structure as the focalizing character constantly reminds readers that the text they are reading is only a partial reflection of reality (Allan 64). *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (1992) by Jon Scieszka exposes the arbitrariness of the "Once upon a time" conventional beginning of children's stories by drawing attention to it through the use of irony (Allan 64). My reading of the respective picture books by Browne and Macaulay draws on their postmodern features ranging from metafiction to intertextuality; nevertheless, my scope of investigation is not limited to the disruptive effect of these devices on the reader/writer relationship; rather, it expands towards the connection between the deployment of such devices to the complexity in the word/image transaction, the tension between reality and imagination and the complications in the roles assumed by the fictional parents and children.

1.4.3 *Power relations*

All texts are ideological and children's literature, produced by adults for children, is inherently ideological and, thus, anchored within the field of power theory (Beauvais, "The Problem of 'Power'" 75; "The Mighty Child" 3; Kelley 31; Ni Bhroin and Kennon 1; Nodelman, "The Hidden Adult" 92). The adult author writes for the fictional child, the representation of the adult's projection of a child in order to influence the child reader (Lesnik-Oberstein, "Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child" 146). Therefore, as Ciara Ni Bhroin and Patricia Kennon point out, children's literature becomes a means of controlling children's behaviour and interaction with their surrounding social and cultural environment (2) while the child may be identified as "the other", precisely due to its lack of power (McGillis, "Getting What We Want" 7).

Nikolajeva utilizes the concept of heterology to examine the power balance in the relationship between the adult author and the implied child reader ("Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 16). According to the heterological approach, otherness is generated by difference in terms of age, nationality, race and gender. In her study of power tensions between adult and child the critic also proposes the use of the concept of aetonormativity, viewing the adult normativity as the controlling factor in the production of children's literature so far ("Power, Voice and Subjectivity" 8; 20). Aetonormative theory demonstrates the perpetual change of power position in children's literature with today's children becoming tomorrow's adults and, inevitably, oppressors. A strand of theorists have interpreted aetonormativity as merely reinforcing "existing socio-political hierarchies with regard to age" (Abate 147). However, Clementine Beauvais sees this shift in power as the demonstration of the complexity of the concept of aetonormativity and the fluidity of power relations it addresses, highlighting the complication of attributing empowerment or disempowerment to either party of the adult-child relationship ("The Problem of 'Power'" 75-76). In agreement with Beauvais, this research reads the child-adult relation through the aetonormative lens and contends that the question of whether power structures are confirmed or subverted in children's texts remains open.

Furthermore, Nikolajeva's analyses of power in children's literature depend on Bakhtin's carnival theory. Carnival reverses the existing order and "elevates the fictional child to a position superior to adults" ("Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 17) as with the use of the carnivalesque device of fantasy the child is empowered acquiring magical forces that make possible the exploration of the world and the child's independence. The presence of anthropomorphic animals is a typical feature of children's literature (Nodelman, "Decoding the Images" 135) bearing the carnival effect ("Theory, Post-Theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 19). One interpretation of the transformation of animals into talking, anthropomorphic characters living with the human child of the story is that the wilderness of the animal is replaced by domesticity which provides the necessary opportunity for the child to emerge as more powerful (Marriott 178-179; Nikolajeva, "Theory, Post-Theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 19). On the other hand, animals bearing anthropomorphic characteristics can be interpreted as a metaphor for the state of childhood in which children reduced to the inferior "other" are taught to repress their animal-like instincts and wild desires and conform to behavioural patterns approved by adults (Nodelman, "Decoding the Images" 135). From the point of view of this thesis, the hybridity of the anthropomorphic characters in the picture books blurs the boundaries separating the human from the elusive "other" and, thus, redefines the terms of the power struggle between the child, as the inferior "other", and the dominant adult.

Drawing attention to picture books, Nikolajeva argues that there is great potential for subversion of adult power and of the established order as the dynamic interaction of the two levels of verbal and visual representation provides the space for contradiction between power structures presented by text and illustration ("Power Voice and Subjectivity" 10). The understanding of the relation between words and images as a territorial struggle reflects the "fundamental contradictions of our culture into the heart of theoretical discourse itself" (Mitchell, "What Is an Image?" 530). The split between words and images disturbs the position of the all-knowing adult authority; it constitutes adult agency an "eminently ambiguous agency" (Beauvais, "The Mighty Child" 4) questioned by the "might" of the implied child reader who might interpret the verbal/visual texts and might, eventually, learn something that the adult does not expect.

Encouraging the reader to actively participate in the process of constructing the meanings of the text the function of the picture book is defined in accordance with the social context that has produced it and in which it is consumed (Paugh 97). Therefore, as Jane Kelley suggests, it is important to identify the ideology that the author, consciously or unconsciously, promotes in the verbal and the visual context of the picture book. (31). Kimberley Reynolds proposes the examination of children's literature as a cultural space simultaneously alternative and conventional, subversive and didactic, in which writers and illustrators experiment with ideas, voices and formats, play with conventions and contest cultural norms (3). Viewed in this light, the text (visual and verbal) is positioned within its socio political context and regarded as a "social transcript of the power relations of class, race and gender" (Botelho and Rudman 71). As it will be demonstrated, children's texts connected with the contemporary social, political and economic ideologies significantly contribute to the extensive and ongoing discussion of power relations in children's literature.

1.5 Rationale and significance of the study

The rationale of the thesis is primarily to demonstrate that the word/image synergy is central to the picture books under examination and highlight its multiple functions as a form of power play but also a site of contestation and power struggle between the child and the adult, individual and social subjectivity, the real and the fantastic and, subsequently, the basis on which I conduct my research. My exploration of the relationship between the verbal and visual representation relies on the integration of a range of critical theories; when deployed on their own, these theories create a useful framework for the analysis of different aspects of the picture book but when combined together illuminate the entire network of power relations in the picture book at the centre of which lies the word/image interplay. The theory of intermediality which examines the connection of the text with the illustration, the theory of visual art which focuses exclusively on the image, the theory of

aetonormativity which specifically addresses the power relation between the child and the adult in children's literature and the rest of the critical theories on which the dissertation draws contribute to the point of view from which I analyze the five picture books. Thus, the approach I employ is part of the originality of my thesis as I provide a new angle of studying and understanding the text/image relationship from which the particular picture books have not been examined before.

The works of the five authors which provide the context for the exploration of the image/text relationship and power issues inherent in it display a number of features which attracted my interest and motivated my research. The writers' double capacity as illustrators of the picture books played an important part in determining my research material. Nikolajeva and Scott emphasize the role of the single author/illustrator in *How Picturebooks Work*. The relationship between a text produced by a writer and the picture created by a different illustrator is determined as an "imperfect collaboration" of the text which is "read and apprehended independently" and the illustration accompanying it. On the contrary, according to Nikolajeva and Scott "the most exciting examples of counterpoint between picture and text are encountered in books created by a single writer/illustrator "who is completely free to choose either of the two aspects of the iconotext to carry the main load of the narrative" (17). I find that the works of the five writers/illustrators most effectively demonstrate the complicated character of the word/image power relation which I intend to investigate.

Another point which motivated my research was that these picture books challenge particular conventions that underpin the traditional genre of children's literature. Going against the oppressive function of children's literature in its representation of the adult/child relationship from the adult point of view, according to the theory of aetonormativity, Seuss negotiates the construction of a non-fixed, complex notion of childhood; in the presence of the Cat, the child is positioned as a source of power contesting the invincibility of the parental authority, thus, the power relation between the child and the adult is viewed as neither stable nor unified. Sendak also contradicts the romanticized view of childhood innocence depriving children of their right to deal with the real, dark, incontrollable aspects of youth; through the antagonistic relationship between the text and the image during Max's journey to the wild land the artist emphasizes the ongoing power struggle

among the contradictory forces which shape the individual identity of the child and constructs a concept of childhood inclusive of conflicting, heterogeneous features. Focusing on *The Giving Tree*, the subversive factor is that the central child character grows up and continues his relationship with the tree as an adult. It is precisely the young Boy's confrontation with his adult self that complicates childhood representation in the verbal and the visual text and renders the relationship between the young Boy and his adult self unresolved. *Black and White* also breaks a tradition in children's literature regarding the child-adult power struggle. In the majority of children's books the subversion of adult normativity is achieved through the child character's rebellious attitude; however, in Macaulay's text it is the parents' transgressive behaviour that disrupts the serenity of the household and destabilizes the power balance in the child-adult relationship. Browne, in alliance with his predecessors, undermines the constant privileging of the adult over the child and complicates the traditional child-adult oppositional binary by addressing issues of gender representation and social inequality which bring out adults' vulnerability and compromise their power position.

Although the works of these innovative writers have received ample attention and have been analyzed individually by a lot of critics throughout the years, rarely has anyone addressed the authors' mutual non-didactic vision of children's literature and the depiction of the conflicting features shaping the child's identity as the connecting threads bringing their respective works together. As I have already suggested, Seuss, Sendak and Silverstein have been related as writers who challenge the conception of what a children's book should be, or what a child's proper behaviour should be I would add, and Browne himself has acknowledged Sendak as one of his greatest literary influences. However, nobody has analyzed systematically the narrative and visual devices deployed by the five authors towards the representation of the themes consistently raised in their respective picture books; the comparison of the five writers is original adding to the scholarship of the twentieth-century picture book.

2. *THE CAT IN THE HAT*: FANTASY GAMES AND POWER PLAY
"ON THIS WET, WET, WET DAY"

2.1 Introduction

When John Hersey published in 1954 his article in *Time* magazine criticizing the predictable, unrealistic primer books of the 1950s (Saunders 39), he posed a challenge of inventive and radical storytelling to which Theodor Seuss Geisel, most commonly known as Dr. Seuss,[1] responded by writing and illustrating *The Cat in the Hat*. The picture book was a reaction to the uniformity of the uneventful and boring tales of Dick, Jane and their younger sister Sally, the child characters featuring in the reading series which dominated in American public schools from the 1940s through the early 1960s (Saunders 39; Yang 328). Dr. Seuss's story of Sally and her brother begins in a manner similar to that of their less intriguing counterparts but that is the extent of the commonality of *The Cat in the Hat* with the Dick and Jane books (Saunders 40). Two small children, Sally and her brother, with nothing to do at home on a rainy day but wait for the return of their mother, wish for a diversion. The children's uneventful world is turned upside down by the unexpected appearance of the Cat in the Hat who promises a lot of fun to the two kids. Ignoring the commands issued by the fish in the bowl, the family pet, the Cat proceeds to display his tricks to the dumbfounded children and demolish the order of the house. Chaos reaches a climactic point when the Cat brings along Thing One and Thing Two, two wild creatures resembling small children. Anarchy and chaos come to a stop when the fish announces the imminent return of the mother and the ruined house is restored to its former orderly state.

Dr. Seuss was deeply influenced by the emergence of youth culture and the modern civil rights movement which was already on its way in the mid1950s. He set about to create *The Cat in the Hat* with the aim to empower the significance of individual subjectivity and raise the question of the identity of the child as determined by the conventions of domestic life through the deployment of the

bizarre characters, the use of humor and the imaginative illustrations in the book. According to Philip Nel *The Cat in the Hat* is the embodiment of Dr. Seuss's "energetic, calligraphic style of cartoon art" ("Was the Cat in the Hat Black? Exploring Dr. Seuss's Racial Imagination" 77), in the context of which words and illustrations cooperate to serve the purpose of conveying the meaning and mood of the story as well as the personality and feelings of the characters. It is the illustrator's personal stylistic choice to ensure that "words and illustrations of this book do not separate or wander" (Saunders 45) and that the two modes of representation directly interrelate in expressing content and meaning in the verbal and visual text. Close examination of the interactive relationship and the dialogic tension between the verbal and the visual text in the book will amplify the main area of focus in this chapter which is the relationship of the child and the adult in the context of the 1950s family. The power of the imagination as opposed to realism, the significance of the presence of the anthropomorphic animals in the story, issues of race and gender affecting the interpretation of the characters and their actions will be analyzed as the parameters amplifying and at the same time defining the exchange of power between the child and the adult. This chapter argues that Dr. Seuss wrote and illustrated a picture book which acknowledged the adult-child relationship as a field of power contest and defied cultural assumptions taking for granted the position of the child as fixed, therefore powerless or disempowered, in the course of establishing self-identity within the family context.

2.2 "Something went BUMP!" and a chronotope of fantasy ruptured reality

A fervent negator of all forms of limitations and restrictions Dr. Seuss makes consistent use of framing devices that break down the image/text boundaries throughout *The Cat in the Hat* bringing the word and the picture in close spatial proximity (Clement 58). This shifting, blurred space which is created takes up the form of a heterotopia (Foucault, "The Order of Things" xix) where multiplicities coexist and produce a kind of troubling disorder. The chaos which is created manifests the fragility and arbitrariness of dominant perceptions of language

resonating the surrealist attitude to language as a world of fluidity and instability, bound to change depending on the social and cultural circumstances of the time. As it will be exemplified in the following pages of this section, the influence of the surrealists on Dr. Seuss's subversive personal artistic style is present both in the verbal and the visual aspects of *The Cat in the Hat*; furthermore, I will highlight its significant contribution to the cultural and ideological background underpinning the intriguing relationship of the text and the image in the book.

2.2.1 *The subversive power of imagination*

The employment of fantasy as the realization of the impossible is strongly associated with children's literature promoting an ongoing negotiation of power among the characters in the book, the author and the reader (Levy and Mendlesohn 3). According to Nikolajeva the use of fantasy creates the space for the interrogation of adult normativity and the empowerment of the fictional child ("Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 17). In agreement with this statement, Gary Schmidt recognizes the importance of the theme of the struggle for subordination of the ordinary to the fantastic in Seuss's picture books (42). The conflict between imagination and physical reality is a central motif in Dr. Seuss's works such as *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, *There's a Wocket in My Pocket!* and *The King's Stilts*. In *Mulberry Street*, the conflicting relationship between reality and fantasy underpins the relationship between Marco and his father; throughout the book the disapproving rational parent rejects the imagination of the child and the rebellious aspect of the child it represents (T. Wolf 137). The child character, a young boy, in *There's a Wocket in My Pocket!* describes all the exciting imaginary creatures with whom he shares his home and blatantly declares his indifference as to whether the audience believes him or not. Eric, a boy in the service of the King in *The King's Stilts*, employs his imagination to fight off the villain Lord Droon, who hates games and fun, and restore the harmony of the kingdom.

Betty Mensch and Alan Freeman refer to Dr. Seuss as "a smasher of conventional boundaries" who reaches out to the powerless (34); indeed, in the case

of *The Cat in the Hat* the empowering message that the Cat carries smashes the serious/absurd binary and by appealing to the children challenges adult authority. The Cat pushes the children into action by presenting them with the exciting and equally daunting option of redefining their individual identity and power position in the family through transgression of the limits imposed on them. The thematic core issues of the challenge of adult authority and the questioning of the power position of the child establish a connection between *The Cat in the Hat* and contemporary picture books such as *A Very Special House* (1953) by Ruth Krauss and Johnson's *Harold and the Purple Crayon*. Contrarily to the vast majority of the 1950s children's texts, these books encourage children to think and act independently or even against adult rules and regulations. Responding to the political movement of American progressivism which highlights the significance of liberty, equality and individual subjectivity, *The Cat in the Hat* functions as the site where important social, cultural and ideological issues are displayed and negotiated.

Closely related to the use of fantasy as a means of power negotiation and a concept highly relevant for children's literature is Bakhtin's notion of carnival which he discusses in his emblematic *Rabelais and His World* (1968/1984). Bakhtin describes the carnival as an "orgiastic time of liberating freedom" during which the established system of normal social order and hierarchy was "disrupted, inverted and parodied" and "dominant discourses were brought down to earth" (McKenzie 85). According to Catherine Elick the carnival provides the context for elaborating on the process of destabilization of hierarchies of power depending on class, social status or species (9-10). The notion of carnival as defined by Bakhtin and researchers of his work can also function as a framework of analysis of core issues in children's literature in general, and Dr. Seuss's work in particular, i.e. the child/adult power relationship and its connection to the unbalancing factor of fantasy as a force of liberation from the oppressive reality imposed by the adult on the child.

Following in the footsteps of iconic authors of nonsense literature like Lear, Carroll and P. L. Travers, Seuss is inevitably located in the realm of literary nonsense (Nel, "Dr. Seuss: American Icon" 14; Shortsleeve 192; Yang 327); his employment of fantasy as "the most carnivalesque device" (Nikolajeva, "Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 17) establishes a link between the world of

fantasy in *The Cat in the Hat* and the Bakhtinian notion of the carnivalesque. The whimsical, fantastic character of the Cat plays with the imagination by juggling everyday household items and literally bringing them "down to earth" and the hierarchical laws of order along with them.

> "I can hold up the cup
>
> And the milk and the cake!
>
> I can hold up these books
>
> And the fish on the rake!
>
> …
>
> And look! With my tail
>
> I can hold a red fan!
>
> I can fan with the fan
>
> As I hop on the ball!" (18)

In his pursuit of fun the Cat becomes an agent of chaos and anarchy and provides the context for nonsensical fun, a "play" chronotope within the home chronotope (Yang 330) in which he invites the children to participate. It is customary in fantasy narratives for the child characters to be physically distorted and transported to a magical world where they are allowed to subvert the existing order of things by acquiring powers elevating them to a position superior to that of the adults (Nikolajeva, "Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 17). *The Cat in the Hat* departs from convention and alternatively locates the magical world of subversion within the boundaries of the orderly home chronotope creating a state of suspension, a space of playful relativity where the binaries of order and chaos, adult and child, good and evil are negotiated and whose borders, no longer clearly defined, waver.

The Bakhtinian concept of the carnivalesque is carefully depicted in the visual text in the book highlighting the disruption of the balance between fantasy and reality that lies in its heart. The appearance of the Cat signals a change in the

form of the shapes of character outlines, objects and surfaces. The Cat's object-balancing game, which takes up the largest part of the pictures throughout pages 13 to 21, establishes the prevalence of vertical shapes. The round shapes of the ball and the fish bowl are pushed to the margins of the page as the picture becomes saturated with the Cat's pointy umbrella, the children's toy ship with its erect mast and a toy man standing on top of it. The Cat's outline is drawn vertically, although slightly slanted in such a way that his hat and body are never lined up (Saunders 44). The Cat's game involves the alignment from bottom to top of a variety of objects including rectangle-shaped books, cake candles and a red, thorny-edged folding fan; the effect created is that of a vertical shape gradually gaining height from one page to the next enhancing the escalation of excitement for the fictional child character as well as the implied child reader. The point when the Cat's vertical tower of things falls to pieces and the first signs of anarchy emerge, pointed and diagonal shapes begin to enter the visual text such as the rake with its sharp, pointed tines, which becomes a regular feature of the pictures from page 19 to 26. The change in the shape of the objects in the pictures highlights the tension created by the power play between the Cat's subversive energy as a figure representative of the force of fantasy and the child character's oscillation between rejection or endorsement of the Cat's rebellious act and the prospect of individual liberty it promises.

The representation of the fictional child's subjectivity within the domain of carnivalesque fluidity becomes a rather complex matter as the child characters in the story are neither directly nor magically empowered to invert adult values and be, eventually, liberated from their influence. While the grotesque Cat embodies a carnival figure displaying the transgressive behaviour expressive of the profanity associated with the carnival practice (Mallan, "The Cat's Back!" 9), Sally and her brother maintain an attitude of ambivalence towards "the feast of becoming, change and renewal" that the carnival is (Bakhtin, "Rabelais and His World" 10). Considering Foucault's argument that children absorb the basic knowledge of language and power simultaneously, Nel points out that the child learns how society works while learning to speak and argues that Seussian satire having its premises in language itself offers an ideal occasion to interrogate power ("Dada Knows Best" 164). The use of the satirical technique of reduction is best exemplified in the

illustration of the fish as a poor substitute of adult authority degraded by the Cat in his game of ultimate humiliation:

> "Why, we can have
>
> Lots of good fun, if you wish,
>
> With a game that I call
>
> UP-UP-UP with a fish!" (12)

The technique of caricature which Dr. Seuss used extensively in his political cartoons in the 1940s during World War II is also present in his picture books. A good example of the ridiculous exaggerations in the use of language marking the discrepancy between the words and actions of the characters is the case of Thing One and Thing Two; they make their entrance dancing out of a red box, with a bulk of blue hair on their heads, wearing red pyjamas with "THING 1" and "THING 2" written on them and their first utterance being:

> "How do you do?
>
> Would you like to shake hands
>
> With Thing One and Thing Two?" (33)

The Cat in the Hat, a primer reader on the one hand, and a text imbued with the "subtle charm of the carnivalesque atmosphere" (Shortsleeve 190) on the other hand, provides the perfect setting for the critique of adult power. Nevertheless, the child characters in the book appear to be reluctant to endorse the Cat's fantastical fun because of their inability to escape parental control and the authoritarian structures related to it. According to Nikolajeva writers of children's books often choose to empower the fictional child by placing their young protagonists in extreme situations urging them to become "strong, brave, rich, powerful and independent" ("Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 17).[2] However, for Sally and her brother the acquisition of the power of independence is a precarious process swayed under the burden of the two children's self-doubt. The character of the Cat bearing signs of an instinctive connection to the children's inner thoughts and fears, having already fulfilled their wish for some excitement by showing up at

their doorstep, responds to their feelings of insecurity and confidently, though falsely, reassures them that there is nothing disconcerting in his actions.

> A lot of good tricks.
>
> I will show them to you.
>
> Your mother
>
> Will not mind at all if I do. (8)

"In a carnivalesque story, the lowest in societal hierarchy- in the medieval carnival a fool, in children's books a child- is allowed to change places with the highest" (Nikolajeva, "From Mythic to Linear" 7). In the Seussian version of the carnival it is the anthropomorphic animal character of the Cat that becomes the dynamic agent of reversal rather than the child characters in the story. In fact, the empowerment of the child is indirectly achieved through the effect of the Cat's rebellious attitude that exposes and, thus, challenges the arbitrariness of the adult rules imposed on the child; the Cat will not have the children "Sit! Sit! Sit!" as they are expected to do when staying indoors; the Cat will not limit the children to playing games that do not bump, hit or damage; the Cat will not accept the mother's bedroom as restricted area when it comes to the children having fun in the house. The realm of parental authority is disrupted with the invasion of the dream/imagination chronotope; the audience, the fictional child and the child reading the book, is inspired to join in the emancipating laughter making a parody of the dominant discourses, that is the collection of expectations regarding children's behaviour and position in the family power spectrum which are taken for granted by the decision-making adults.

The relationship of coexistence established between the carnivalesque chronotope of fantastical characters and action and the home chronotope dominated by the authority of parental rule serves a double function. One the one hand, it is symbolic of the author's perception of fantasy as the counterpart of adult social and political reality; on the other hand, it underlines the author's refusal to acknowledge the representation of childhood in isolation and alienation from the adult world. Critics like Kevin Shortsleeve, Henry Jenkins and Nel have recognized the political dimensions of Seuss's artistic products highlighting the connection of his work to

the ideological conflicts of his time. Seussian fantasy as an expression of the desire for change and renewal constantly interacts with the authority of the institution of the 1950s family it seeks to subvert and politicizes the identity of the child and adult character as agents of power in its context. A reading of *The Cat in the Hat* through the lens of cultural developments in the 1950s and 1960s allows for its interpretation as "a text that resonates subtly with the emerging discontent that will come to represent sixties youth" (Shortsleeve 197).

One strand of theorists, ranging from Beauvais and Roberta Trites to Nikolajeva, Amanda Jones and Trish Reid, state that the use of fantasy in children's literature as a means of carnivalesque has the potential for interrogation of adult normativity, but its power only goes as far as exposing the limits and arbitrariness of social convention (Beauvais, "The Problem of 'Power'" 77; A. Jones 45-46; Nikolajeva, "Theory, Post-Theory, Aetonormative Theory" 22; Reid 66; Trites 45). The carnival, Nikolajeva argues, only lasts for a limited amount of time and always ends up in the reestablishment of the original order of things revealing the temporary nature of the empowerment of the child and, consequently, the prescriptive rather than subversive role of children's fiction. In alignment with this argument, Wolosky claims that the subversive force of the Cat is neutralized as soon as the imaginative break from reality is over, thus, reaffirming the order and stability of burgeois life (174). However, the fact remains that the Cat, the fish and Thing One and Thing Two as the anthropomorphic embodiments of the carnival indulge in the celebration of freedom from the dominant discourse of authority, even if it lasts only for a short time. The temporality of this celebration pinpoints its disruptive effect on the continuity of the idealized American nuclear family and underlines the fragmentation of established social norms and beliefs. Addressing the reader of *The Cat in the Hat* the carnival effect of the construct of anthropomorphism activates the individual's critical faculty fortifying the potential for reconsideration and challenge of dominant ideologies.

2.2.2 *Hybrid identities and anthropomorphic characters*

"Animals are pervasive in children's literature" (Elick 7) and the construct of anthropomorphism, that is the use of real or imaginary animals and other non-human creatures that display the ability to talk and act like humans, is a crucial device. On the one hand, it emphasizes and amplifies the carnivalesque effect of the fantastic element in the story. On the other hand, it serves the purpose of addressing complex and socially controversial topics in a non-didactic manner that renders them easier to approach (Barry 128; Burke and Copenhaver 6).

As a dedicated supporter of civil rights, democracy, cooperation and collaboration, Dr. Seuss used anthropomorphic animals in his works such as *The Lorax*, *Yertle the Turtle*, *Horton Hears a Who!* and *The Cat in the Hat* to make these issues less complicated for the implied child reader to consider. David and Lauren Krueger's description of very young children who "have not yet evolved to abstract abilities, and operate at the level of instinct and feeling, closer to the unconscious than they will ever try again" (128) readily applies to the young audience that primer readers like *The Cat in the Hat* address. Anthropomorphic animals in children's stories representing essential human instincts and emotions simultaneously appeal to the conscious and the unconscious and enhance children's natural response to their archetypal characters. The construction of selfhood and achievement of self-identity and autonomy are core issues to children's fiction and Dr. Seuss's work in particular in which pursuit of creative invention of the individual forms the structural framework. The endorsement of the imagination through the centrality of the actions and reactions of the Cat, the fish and Thing One and Two for the development of the plot of the story extends the experience of the disruption of adult reality and realism into the domain of hybridity of animal/human and human/non-human identity, hence, challenging prevailing ideologies about the exclusiveness of human subjectivity.

The deployment of anthropomorphism in Seuss's work foregrounds a late-twentieth century reaction to an anthropocentric, humanist ontology that established delineated borders segregating humans from all forms of non-human otherness. According to Christine Doyle the capacity for language is the key element that

allows the anthropomorphic character to develop agency and acquire subjectivity (428). The Cat's ability to respond verbally to all situations is his most powerful feature. Unlike the child characters that "did not know what to say" in most circumstances the Cat has an answer for everything and rightfully establishes his verbal omnipresence in the text. Articulating the change in the attitudes which Elick describes as accompanying "the evolution from animal-welfare to animal-rights advocacy that began in the twentieth century" (7), *The Cat in the Hat* promotes Bakhtin's concept of dialogism ("Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics" 18). The deployment of dialogism provides the framework for the interpretation of the dialogic relationship among the implied child reader, the fictional child and the anthropomorphic animal as the stimulant of critique and subversion of the limitations imposed by the systemical perception of animal as non-human, therefore, inferior "other".

The representation of the character of the fish as the substitute for the parental authority figure (Saunders 49) is also dependent on the power of the fish to vocalize his agency. At first, the fish adopts the role of the supervisor of the children covering up for the absence of adults in the house (Yang 330).

> Make that Cat go away!
>
> Tell that Cat in the Hat
>
> You do NOT want to play.
>
> …
>
> He should not be here
>
> When your mother is out! (11)

Then, as the events unfold and the Cat verbally and physically immobilizes the admittedly inadequate surrogate parent, the fish directly attacks the Cat for the inappropriateness of his games and the effect of anarchy they bring about and orders him to leave.

> Now look at this house!
>
> …

> You shook up our house
>
> …
>
> You SHOULD NOT be here
>
> When our mother is not. (25)

Reference to the mother figure as "our mother" signifies, according to Saunders, a shift in the focus of the fish, now addressing the Cat and not the children, which also reveals a shift from the role of the authority representative to that of the authoritarian (40). I believe that a shift in the subjectivity of the fish is, indeed, witnessed here causing the reader to think and pose questions about the position of this hybrid character in the power hierarchy of the family but I am not in line with Saunders's approach. The implication of the use of the phrase "our mother" is that the fish, whose name is never capitalized as with the Cat and Thing One and Two, admits his failure as the adult representative; consequently, he gives up his position of authority and relocates himself among the younger, and weaker, members of the family who are in need of their mother's guidance and protection. At this point the writer is making a statement regarding the power position of the anthropomorphic animals in the book; the empowerment of the anthropomorphic, hybrid characters of the fish, the Cat and his Things is made possible only through challenging authority not conforming or identifying with it.

The presence of Thing One and Thing Two accentuates the complicated nature of the power play between human and non-human in the book. Thing One and Two are evidently endowed with the ability to walk and talk but these two features are not sufficient for what, as Nikolajeva points out, "we typically recognize as sentience" ("Recent Trends in Children's Literature" 137). Their quintessentially hybrid identity blurs the lines separating human from animal and real from fantastical (Saunders 47). The existential paradox defining the identity of Thing One and Thing Two is evident in the dramatic contrast between the way that the Cat presents them to the children in a box and blatantly refers to them as "two things" and their display of excellent command of good manners when formally introducing themselves to the children. The irony behind the use of formal introductions gradually becomes evident as Thing One and Two proceed to

demolish all rules of acceptable, rational behaviour. The reader is motivated to wonder whether this overstatement of their hybrid identity through the extravagance of their actions signifies a release from conventional perceptions about the uniformity of identity and engenders new concepts of selfhood based on acceptance and inclusion of difference and diversity. Brian Boyd describes Dr. Seuss as a writer who "twists and plays with words in sense, sound, syntax, word formation, names, rhythm, and rhyme" (332); the gradual transition towards transgression of all boundaries of order and discipline is effectively communicated through the literary practices employed by Dr. Seuss who throughout the book defies the language/nonsense boundary.

> We saw those two Things
>
> Bump their kites on the wall!
>
> Bump! Thump! Thump! Bump!
>
> Down the wall in the hall. (40)

Alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia in combination with the fast-paced rhythm of the verbal text, on the one hand, build up the tension and enhance the acceleration of the development of the plot; on the other hand, they underscore the discursive basis of power relations between anarchy and order, imagination and reality, rationality and nonsense.

In terms of the visual representation of the two highly ambiguous characters their illustration relies on the use of contour lines to create the effect of animation pointing to their catalytic part in accelerating the development of the story. The contour lines of Thing One and Two emphatically indicate swiftness of motion and high levels of energy which on pages 38 and 39 are rendered out of the Cat's or any other fictional character's control. As the two anthropomorphic, childlike characters stretch the dissecting lines of the ropes holding the kites, their hair outline takes up a pointed, rough form making literally visible the culmination of wildness and anarchy they have caused. Lewis analyzes the use of "the lines, dashes and scorings of hatching and cross-hatching" [in order] "to darken individual colours to suggest shadows and textures and to model features" ("Reading Contemporary Picturebooks" 103). The diminished figures of Sally and her brother are almost

rendered invisible as they merge in the thick, hatched black lines of the rear background on page 40 creating a contrast to the visibly free, wild images of Thing One and Two and making tangible the tension caused by the power play of realism versus fantasy. Towards the end of the story, when the Cat has departed and the house returns in a state of order, "some of the natural lines resume their original posture, but others do not" [because] "minute remnants show that something, did, in fact, happen" (Saunders 44).

Colour is also an important feature of the visual text as a resource of meaning in relation to the extent to which it singles out objects in the visual text in order for the viewer to notice and study for more detail (Nodelman, "Eye and the I" 1). Shortsleeve notes that there is a link between the house of the two children and the box in which Thing One and Two were kept captive (204). Elaborating on that observation, the illustrator's choice to colour the box containing Thing One and Two on page 27 in red can be interpreted in relation to the use of the colour red for the house on page 1 as an attempt to establish a connection between the two areas of confinement; both the box and the house are figuratively and literally opened up by the Cat who releases the children from the restriction of their home and Thing One and Two from their prison-like box. The illustrator directs the viewer's attention through the use of red towards the two objects/symbols of social repression and physical limitation which are being overturned in the story. The viewer is left with the thought of potential reversal of social conventions dictating normative behaviour demonstrated through children's submission to the adult world and adults' compromise with the conservative values in the USA of the Cold War Era.

2.2.3 *A chronotope of surrealist ambiguity*

A reflection of the myth of childhood as a "state existing outside of the exigencies and injustices of changing social orders" (Bullen 4), the conventional happy ending in children's fiction and especially fantasy tales (Gopalakrishnan 175) serves the didactic purpose of rewarding children's good behaviour and abstinence from subversive practices. Nodelman and Reimer in *The Pleasures of Children's*

Literature (2003) examine the use of the convention of the happy ending as a factor aiming at persuading the child reader that the world is idyllic and, therefore, unnecessary to change; in that respect, the critics continue, optimistic children's books with a happy ending "imply a symbolic defiance of a more complicated knowledge of the constrictions of reality" (210). A dedicated proponent of imagination and its capacity to highlight a more radical version of reality (Jellenik 4), Dr. Seuss pushes beyond conventions to construct an argument against "providing the comfort of a right answer or an ethical directive" (Mason).

Remaining faithful to the typology of the carnivalesque story, *The Cat in the Hat* ends with the return of normality and the reestablishment of orderly and acceptable modes of behaviour (Nikolajeva, "From Mythic to Linear" 7; McKenzie 84). The carnivalesque character of the Cat succumbs to the power of parental authority that even from a distance still holds control over the fictional child, and withdraws from the position of temporary power that he held as the central figure of the carnival chronotope. The fictional child seems to be fully acknowledging the potential dangers of the disruption of domestic peace and quiet by the provocative power of fantasy that the Cat represents and makes a choice to return to the safety of adult-manipulated, orderly life. However, constantly sceptical of the power of authority Dr. Seuss proceeds to create one last chronotope of ambiguity through the deployment of the narrative technique of aperture.

When the fish announces that mother is on her way, the power balance is shifted, yet, again as the Cat and his sinister Things are turned out of the house. The Cat obediently follows the child's orders to pack up his Things and leave and proceeds to eliminate all traces of carnivalesque pleasure and upheaval.

"Have no fear of this mess",

Said the Cat in the Hat.

"I always pick up all my playthings

And so …

I will show you another

Good trick that I know!" (57)

The visual text works in perfect balance and collaboration with the verbal text to verify outward restoration of normality and external order. Illustrations on the last double spread of the book appear comparatively sparse with few shapes taking up significantly less space giving "the impression of calm or quiet" (Sipe, "Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects" 30). The illustrator's choice to omit the elements of the scattered round toys, the bike with the round-shaped wheels and the round-headed racket which are present in the double spread at the beginning of the book is highly important; it indicates the disruption of "the continuity and the eternal" (Kiefer 80) that the round, circular shapes symbolize and underlines the factor of change that has exposed the vulnerability of adult authority. The absence of visible proof that defiance of authority did take place does not automatically erase memory of the experience of childhood empowerment which transforms the fictional child irreversibly and leaves its mark on the child reader/viewer.

Following the tradition of the historical avant-garde Dr. Seuss tries to "shake his audience out of their habits of thought and cause them to rethink their assumptions" (Nel, "Dada Knows Best" 151). Nel in *Dada Knows Best* highlights the similarities between the works of the twentieth-century avant-garde and Dr. Seuss's texts and illustrations and argues that his books resonate the surrealists' critical stance towards the social and cultural establishment. Nel illustrates Seuss's use of ambiguity in the ending of *The Butter Battle Book* in comparison to René Magritte's creation of an image of ambiguity resisting explication in his painting *The Human Condition I* (1933). That picture book comes to an end without clarifying whether the impeding nuclear annihilation will be avoided or not forcing the reader through the refusal of providing an answer and the consequent resolution to step up and deal with the tension (161). Dr. Seuss's deliberate resistance to closure fosters an atmosphere within which the fragility of a conventional happy ending is exposed and encourages the representation of the world as a construction built on shaky foundations bound to be challenged. Based on the assumption that the traditional happy ending and the consequent resolution of all issues discussed in the text is an expression of endorsement of conventional rules of children's literature set in a context of subordination to dominant cultural norms, the open-ended psychological closure of *The Cat in the Hat* produces a profound effect; it creates a narrative void that irreversibly fractures the setting of reestablished order in the

family household and makes a statement about the author's ideology opposing the world of adult normativity as arbitrary and artificial. Shortsleeve points out that "the clean-up sequence is *not* the conclusion to *The Cat in the Hat,* and if there is a "message" to this book, it comes in the final pages, after the clean-up" (199). Alternatively, it could argued that the "clean-up sequence" that the Cat undertakes functions as the structural closure which deliberately fails to coincide with the psychological closure of the ending. This practice reveals the author's surrealist influence of thought and ideology and allows for the empowerment and encouragement of the implied child reader "to see beyond the mental limits" imposed by society (Mason).

Viewed from a different perspective, the child character's hesitation in the last scene of the story to answer the mother's inquiry discloses the existence of a void in the communication among the family members which eventually undermines parental authority. The boy appears reluctant to reveal the means employed by the two children to keep themselves busy during their mother's absence and, perhaps, the extent to which their chosen entertainment was confined to the boundaries of appropriate behaviour. According to Shortsleeve, the implication is that the fictional child identifies the parent as incompetent to understand either the events that transpired or the power of imagination embodied by the Cat that put them in motion (199). The element of conflict that comes to light through the vagueness of the ending of the book suggests the resonance of the text with "the emerging discontent that will come to represent sixties youth" (Shortsleeve 197). I would add that this emphasis on the imagination/realism tension not only underlines the inevitability of the interaction between reality and imagination but also motivates the reader to use imagination and its potential for power in the meaning-making process.

2.3 "A person's a person no matter how small": the empowerment of childhood subjectivity

A central topic in Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is the complexity of the reciprocal function of discourse and of the image in terms of the political effects of the power play between language and the visual modality (Foucault 38) that characterizes a culture in a moment of its history (Fornacciari). Situating Dr. Seuss's work in the historical context of the second half of the twentieth century, *The Cat in the Hat* is viewed as a response to the primer book crisis in the 1950s American schools. It was one of the first children's books which followed "the conventional primers the wrong way" (Yang 326) and simultaneously engaged with the polemic of the generation gap "between the nonsense of youth and an uncomprehending authority figure" (Shortsleeve 199). Seuss revolts against the arbitrary limits imposed by conventional primers representing a stable reality of an orderly world dictated by adult authority. Choosing to empower the young audience of his picture books, Seuss creates a narration of verbal and visual modalities whose interaction stimulates imagination and disrupts the boundaries separating art and everyday experience, fantasy and reality, the adult author/illustrator and the child reader/viewer (Clement 58).

2.3.1 *Child character, childhood subjectivity and agency*

Nowhere else is the child/adult power imbalance as obviously manifested as in the cultural products created by those in authority for the powerless (Nikolajeva, "Power, Voice and Subjectivity" 8). As Nikolajeva and Hunt have argued, exploration of children's literature reflects the ideas and concepts attached to the notion of childhood and its status in the society that produced it; exploration of children's texts highlights the importance of the role of the fictional child in the book and securely anchors the process of interpretation of the child character's subjectivity within the field of power theory (Hunt, "Introduction" 1; Nikolajeva, "Theory, Post-Theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 21). *The Cat in the Hat* functions as the bearer of a social ideology reacting against the cultural and historical conditions of the late 1950s. Family conservatism is a central feature of the period and, as Lewis Menand points out, it constitutes the domestic sphere of oppression showcasing Dr. Seuss's concern over the power of convention exercised

by adult authority on the younger generations through culture, home and education (n. pag.).

Sally and her brother, the two central child characters in the story, are allowed no activity other than sitting within the suffocating, safe space of their house, even though the two children do not like it, "not one little bit". Passive obedience to the rules of conformity set by the absent, yet, powerful adult is the only option available to the two siblings. This state of immobility that the children have succumbed to is in accordance with the fixed notion of childhood as a stable and unproblematic category (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 78) constructed and objectified by the power that the adult exerts in the context of the family relations. However, power cannot be owned by those in authority; power is circulated, exerted and contested (Foucault, "Power/Knowledge" 98), therefore, power is "coextensive with resistance" (Kelley 38). The arrival of the Cat in the Hat signifies the beginning of a rebellion against the limits of the domestic rule. A recurrent feature in children's literature is the transportation of the protagonist to a new, often, imaginary world away from adult supervision (Nikolajeva, "Beyond the Grammar of Story" 6). According to Nikolajeva the device of defamiliarization or estrangement employed by the writer places the child character in an extraordinary situation that tests the boundaries of the character's subjectivity and, hence, allows the implied reader to adopt a subjectivity outside and beyond the limits of real life ("Beyond the Grammar of Story" 9; "Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 17). As the children protagonists of the story can not break their domestic boundaries, it is the mischievous character of the Cat in the Hat that turns logic into play and activates resistance against authority. The familiar setting of the quiet house where the two children patiently wait for their mother is disrupted by the unexpected presence of the Cat and the child characters are transported into a situation unfamiliar and therefore full of exciting potential for the child protagonists as well as the young readers.

Seuss's illustrations highlight the intermodal relationship or "'coupling'" (Painter, Martin, and Unsworth 143) of the verbal and the visual text through the balance between verbal and visual representation of the child characters' complex subjectivity. As a result, the images vividly demonstrate the two children's repressed need to extend the boundaries of their agency in a world directed by adults

from the very first pages in the book. The gloomy landscape illustrated on the first page of *The Cat in the Hat* where the rain is drawn in thick, diagonal, short lines conveys, on the one hand, the weight of the effect of confinement on the children's mood as well as the great extent of their hidden desire for action, and, on the other hand, foreshadows the *com-motion* that is about to take place. The picture of the children's house is coloured in a vibrant red reflecting the children's intense desire to break free from the boredom of their home. It also provides a contrast to the image of the interior of the house on the second page which is minimally decorated with few pale-coloured objects; the only exception is that of the red chairs, highlighted through the use of red as objects representing parental restriction, all against a white background which literally makes the silence of the house visible. The white backdrops provide space for the verbal text in the book (Saunders 44) and are combined with the use of blue to form the background for the characters' action. Universal associations seem to relate blue with calmness, detachment, serenity and melancholy while red is related to more passionate emotions such as anger (Sipe, "Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects" 28). The blue colour seems to be, indeed, denoting the severe, yet, melancholic, from the children's perspective, atmosphere of the adult-ruled house until the entrance of the cat and the powerful effect of the red colour accompanying the arrival of the subversive animal character. As the story progresses the visual text gradually changes with most blue surfaces turning red indicating the changes in the atmosphere of the house which is no longer governed by the cool, austere authority of the adult parent; instead, the house slowly passes under the control of the Cat, whose controversial figure ironically represents abolishment of every sense of control and authority. Changes of colour depict changes of mood (Sipe, "Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects" 28) as the children's faces "register delight and fascination" (Shortsleeve 197) at the Cat's acts and, thus, declare their inner desire for reversal of the orderly adult-driven domestic universe.

The Cat in the Hat subverts the traditional concept of the child character in children's texts as an embodiment of passivity and innocence (Mensch and Freeman 32; Saunders 47). The book negotiates the construction of a non-fixed, complex notion of childhood, a paradoxical combination of power and powerlessness which, according to Nodelman in *Pleasure and Genre*, "children are both in and detached from, part of and superior to" (13). Going against the oppressive function of

children's literature in its representation of the adult/child relationship from the adult point of view (Beauvois 75; Nikolajeva, "Power, Voice and Subjectivity" 8) *The Cat in the Hat* refrains from automatically attributing empowerment or deprivation of power to either party of the child/adult relationship. Resonating Foucault's description of power as omnipresent "not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, "The History of Sexuality" 93), the power relation between the child and the adult in *The Cat in the Hat* is neither stable nor unified. The adult is by no means a constant source of sovereignty imposed on the child and the child character, in the presence of the Cat, experiences, even temporarily, the power of disobedience and is positioned as a source of power contesting the invincibility of the parental authority.

The power of language to express childhood identity and agency is not clearly conveyed through the verbal text in the book. One of the rare occasions that the boy employs his own voice to actually speak in the story is at the beginning of the narration when he expresses his wish for something to happen, something that himself and Sally could be involved in. His wish is immediately granted when a loud "BUMP!" announces the arrival of the Cat and the consequent disruption of their state of boredom and inaction. One would assume that the use of direct speech would function as a means of empowerment of the subjectivity of the fictional child and would simultaneously facilitate the interpretation of the character by the implied reader, however a more complicated process seems to be at work. As the narrator of the story, the boy uses his voice to relate the events but as an actual character in the story he only speaks once at the beginning and, then, not for another forty-three pages, when he expresses his disapproval of the "bad tricks" of Thing One and Two. The power that he exerts as the narrator of the events which took place is contradicted by his reluctance to take action on things and powerfully construct child agency in the text. The subjectivity of the fictional child can only be implicitly identified as for the most part of the story the interpretation of the character's traits is made possible through his few verbal reactions to events rather than his emphatic involvement in them. His protest against the subversive tricks of Thing One and Two is derived from his anxiety that the parental figure of authority, the absent mother, would not tolerate the abnormality of the situation in which he is involved. Emphasis on his sense of responsibility not only of his own conduct but, most

importantly, of what was entrusted to him by the controlling parent further complicates the mental representation of his agency (Saunders 41). As a constant reminder of the adult authority, the fish repeatedly asserts the mother's disapproval of the disruptive actions of the Cat, consequently, highlighting the boundaries that the parent/child relationship imposes on the fictional child's subjectivity. Mensch and Freeman outline the situation as a reflection of the "core childhood dilemma of identity and authority within the family" (31); the question of whether the child character is willing or prepared, for that matter, to break away from the authority of the parent and indulge in or resist the temptation of liberation from the prescribed conventional norms that the Cat offers is persistently raised throughout the story.

The child character's experience of the dilemma posed by the binary of mobility and stasis (Moebius, "Introduction to Picturebook Codes" 150-151) as a representation of rebellion against rules is depicted with equal intensity in the visual text in the book. Thick, black lines form the background against which the two children stand on the right page of the double spread in most cases throughout the book, a visual reminder of the power of the adult parent who continues to set the rules of behaviour and define the subjectivity of childhood regardless of her physical absence. As Moebius suggests, "a character shown on the left page is likely to be in a more secure, albeit potentially confined space than the one shown on the right, who is likely to be moving into a situation of risk or adventure" ("Introduction to Picturebook Codes" 149). The surfaces against which first the fish and then the children are drawn on the right page of the double spread for the most part of the book indicate the increasing fear and anxiety (Sipe, "Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects" 30) caused to the characters by the mounting chaos that the Cat has created. The children have entered the realm of fantasy where the rules, prohibitions and warnings of adults have no power. Determination of the child character's subject position in this adventurous world detached from parental precaution and liberated from adult normativity requires a certain amount of risk that the child is invited to take.

The examination of the power play manifested in the relationship between the adult and the child character in the text also reveals the power structures defining the relationship between the adult author of the book and the child focalizing character as well as the power balance between the adult author and the

implied child reader. Adopting a heterological approach to children's literature, Nikolajeva proposes the concept of "aetonormativity" which she defines as "adult normativity that governs the way children's literature has been patterned from its emergence until the present day" ("Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 16). Using the heterological analytical tools to discuss a number of examples of children's books from *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) by Maurice Sendak to *Hey! Get Off our Train* (1989) by John Burningham, Nikolajeva maintains that contemporary children's literature attempts to interrogate the established power structures but without overthrowing them ("Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 22), thus, confirming eventually adult normativity. Turning our attention to the male child character in *The Cat in the Hat*, it could be stated that the evolution of the events confirms the domination of adult authority which finds expression in the boy's choice to overtly confront the Cat and his Things as soon as the fish informs the children of the mother's return.

> Then I said to the cat, "Now you do as I say.
>
> You pack up those Things
>
> And you take them away!" (52)

However, it would be an oversight not to take into consideration that Dr. Seuss is a writer who was always for the children and, in fact, made it his cause to protect the child from the corrupting influence of adult authoritarian institutions (Jenkins 253). Experimenting with the social concepts of the domestic sphere, Dr. Seuss displaces both literally and metaphorically the adult figure of authority and creates the space where the child character and the implied child reader "learn to exercise power" (Jenkins 257).

> And Sally and I did not know
>
> What to say.
>
> Should we tell her
>
> The things that went on there that day? (60)

The child character's ambivalence as to whether the mother should be initiated into the mystery of the two kids' experience and his final act of turning to the audience and directly involving the implied child reader in the decision-making process strongly suggests the possibility of a reversal of conventional power hierarchies controlling the adult/child relationship inside and outside the text.

2.3.2 *Multiple perspectives, complicated identities*

An inevitable dilemma of children's literature is the discrepancy between the cognitive and emotional level of the adult author, who most often occupies the role of the narrator, and that of the child character and the child reader of the book (Nikolajeva, "Aesthetic Approaches" 186). The use of the first-person child narrator adopted by children's writers such as Krauss in *A Very Special House*, Kay Thompson in *Eloise: A Book for Precocious Grown-Ups* and Chris Van Allsburg in *The Polar Express* is an attempt to resolve the aforementioned dilemma. The narrative voice in *The Cat in the Hat* belongs to the male child character in the book, Sally's brother, whose name is never revealed in the story despite his additional role as the narrator. The child character's voice is also the narrator's voice in the book as the literal or perceptual point of view (Nikolajeva, "Beyond the Grammar of Story" 11) is also the point of view adopted by the child character.

That is what the cat said…

Then he fell on his head!

…

And Sally and I,

We saw ALL the things fall! (21)

The implications of the coexistence and cooperation of the narrative voice and the point of view in the story for the reader's perception and processing of the narrative require a thorough examination of the question of the narrative perspective which is one of the key issues addressed by the narratological theoretical approach. The

process of fixed internal focalization (Genette 188-189) which is at work in *The Cat in the Hat* permits the manipulation of the implied reader by the narrator (Bal 79; Song 96) into empathizing with the protagonist child character as events are rendered through the eyes and mind of a single focal character, Sally's brother. The perception of the child character determines the subject position offered by the text and, consequently, the position that the reader adopts in relation to the events of the story; the reader of *The Cat in the Hat* is encouraged to adopt the child character's subjectivity whose point of view directs the presentation of events.

> Then those Things ran about
>
> With big bumps, jumps and kicks
>
> …
>
> And all kinds of bad tricks.
>
> And I said,
>
> "I do NOT like the way that they play!" (45)

The notion of focalization is strongly connected to the issue of power relations developed in the narrative focusing attention on "the identity of the voice that is verbalizing" (Bal 143), the vision through which the events of the story are presented. As Angela Yannicopoulou points out, internal focalization increases the readers' tendency to accept the focalizer's understanding of reality (76). In the case of *The Cat in the Hat* the dominant perspective of the focalizing character works to reinforce the focalizer's interpretation of reality and, consequently, the focal character's ideological commitments. Sally's brother's presentation of the evolution of the story events relies on the construction of pairs of oppositional terms such as boredom versus excitement, reality versus fantasy and good versus bad.

> So all we could do was to
>
> Sit!
>
>   Sit!
>
>   Sit!

Sit!

And then

Something went BUMP!

How that bump made us jump! (5)

The initial situation of inaction and boredom, as experienced by the focal character, is suddenly reverted into the condition of unexpected turmoil and, unavoidably, action and suspense. The power of excitement and fantastic chaos that the Cat represents is constantly contrasted to the prudent, sensible behaviour of the children whose proper upbringing makes them refrain from directly responding to the Cat's playful disposition.

"I know some new tricks,"

Said the Cat in the Hat.

…

Then Sally and I

Did not know what to say.

Our mother was out of the house

For the day. (8)

According to Karen Coats, the child character in children's fiction is traditionally related to a condition of powerlessness, innocence and naivety ("The Bloomsbury Introduction to Children's and Young Adult Literature" 11). However, the focal character in *The Cat in the Hat* seems to be adopting the adult parent's more suspicious and sceptical attitude towards what is strange and unknown. Empowered by the privileged position of the focalizer that the child character occupies, his point of view becomes the evaluating factor of all actions and events that the focalized character of the Cat is responsible for and directly expresses and embraces the adult parent's rejection of the subversive element in fantasy.

Then those Things ran about

…

And with hops and big thumps

And all kinds of bad tricks.

And I said,

"I do NOT like the way that they play!

If Mother could see this,

Oh, what would she say!" (45)

Foucault defines the relationship between an author and a text as "the manner in which a text apparently points to this figure who is outside and precedes it" ("What is An Author?" 300). Expanding Foucault's definition to describe the relationship between the author of *The Cat in the Hat* and the focal character in the book, I interpret the author's choice of internal focalization in a first-person narration as his statement of opposition to the conventional viewpoint of the focal character. Questioning the reliability of the focal character's point of view as a means of imposition of the ideology of the contemporary adult authority the author maintains his distance from it and in a way remains outside the text.

The verbal text in *The Cat in the Hat* is narrated in the first person through an internal, fixed point of view with the same fictional character occupying the position of both the narrator and the focalizer in the story. Nonetheless, a different choice is made by the writer/illustrator in the visual text as the events of the story are presented from an external point of view, establishing a relationship of interplay between the words and the pictures which offer different perspectives of the same events. Throughout the sequence of images constructing the visual text in the book the viewer observes the events of the story unfold from an external point of view from a distance and refrains from empathizing with the child protagonist/focalizer in the written text. In this case the visual text functions as, what Yannikopoulou has termed, a second focalization (77) enabling the implied child reader/viewer to shift perspectives in the meaning-making process and accept or resist identification with the fictional child's subjectivity. Nodelman in *The Hidden Adult* (2008) argues that the assumption behind the element of change in the viewer's perspective is "not

only that child-readers can change but they must since the ability and inevitability of change is part of what defines them as children" (31). I maintain that the difference between the verbal and visual point of view in *The Cat in the Hat* is associated with the writer/illustrator's perception of childhood as a condition liable to change and open to ideological influences that may, also, shift in the course of time; the possibility, or rather inevitability, of change and evolution during childhood is suggestive of the multiple social and cultural forces which shape the growing child's personality and which may either affirm or interrogate dominant social and cultural conventions.

The deployment of the technique of multiple perspectives (Clement 58) through the different choices regarding focalization in the textual and visual narration in *The Cat in the Hat* establishes a dynamic interplay between text and image. At the same time, it also undermines the validity of the focalizer/speaking subject over the externally focalized visual image, thus, acknowledging what Mitchell refers to as the gulf between the words and the pictures ("What Is an Image" 529), and compelling the audience to "work hard to forge the relationship between them" (Lewis, "The Constructedness of Texts" 141). *The Cat in the Hat* embraces the Bakhtinian concept of the dialogical word (Bakhtin, "Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics" 18), "always in an intense relationship with another's word, being addressed to a listener and anticipating a response" (Robinson). The book simultaneously echoes and subverts the "look-say" method practiced in the Dick and Jane primers, which featured a very limited vocabulary with clear illustrations demonstrating the content of the page, by addressing the readers/viewers and demanding their engagement in the meaning-making process (Yang 333). Having grown accustomed to- and, possibly, weary of- the mellow portrayal of Dick and Jane's idle lives, the child reading the book is literally awakened by the cat's admittedly dramatic tone of, "Look at me now!" (16), which foreshadows a performance that steps outside the cautiously bordered concept of fun in the 50s readers. The Cat's direct contact with the reader in the picture of the balancing game on page 19 and his simultaneous imperative demand to be looked at, as recorded in the written text on the left page of the double spread, allow for the interpretation of the Cat's utterance as an answerable act; its purpose is to stimulate the audience's

response to the non-linear character of the interplay of word and image that underlies the reading game (Yang 333; Pease 110).

The choice of the particular angle from which the viewer sees the situation depicted in the illustrations, also, affects the way in which the viewer understands the events as well as the interactive relationship formed between the viewer and the represented participants, that is, the fictional characters, in the visual text (Moya-Guijarro, "Engaging Readers through Language and Pictures" 2984). The frontal or oblique horizontal angle reflects the emotional response of the viewer towards the fictional characters while the low or high vertical angle showcases the power play between the viewer and the fictional character (Moya-Guijarro, "Engaging Readers through Language and Pictures" 2984). When action reaches a point of culmination as in the double spread on pages 20 and 21, 44 and 45, 50 and 51, the high vertical angle enables the viewer to adopt a position of power over the protagonists of the story and take up the responsibility of identifying with either the forces of anarchy and rebellion dissolving the house order or the representatives of adult normativity sticking to the conventional perceptions of powerless childhood subjectivity. A frontal horizontal angle is maintained on the first five pages in the book implying the fictional child's emotions of frustration and anticipation for excitement shared by the child reader/viewer. At the same time, the adoption of oblique horizontal angle as on pages 8 and 9, 14 and 15, 20 and 21 is suggestive of the complex interpersonal meaning that the image evokes destabilizing the relationship between the viewer and the protagonists in the visual text.

The complexity of the relationship of the viewer to the fictional characters depicted in the visual text is accentuated by Seuss's unframed illustrations which allow the spectator to step inside the fictional space and fully experience the world inside the story (Al-Yaqout and Nikolajeva 4; Moebius, "Introduction to Picturebook Codes" 150); on the other hand, his full-bleed page designs crossing the gutter, as in the double spreads from page 28 to 45, abolish the borderline separating fiction from reality. As Megan Lambert points out, absence of borderlines increases "awareness of the perceptual line between the reader's reality and the world of the book, thus creating a greater sense of intimacy in the reading" (32). Dr Seuss's art of illustration establishes a relationship of simultaneous distance and proximity between the reader and the depicted characters; thus, it creates a "contact system"

founded on a dialogic exchange (Kress and Van Leeuwen, "Reading Images (2nd ed.)" 133) that challenges the borders separating reality and imagination, order and anarchy, adult authority and childhood, the implied child reader and the image creator.

Focalization as an extension of Kress and Van Leeuwen's contact system interprets "gaze" as a significant factor contributing to the understanding of the relationship between the viewer and the fictional character (Painter, Martin, and Unsworth 130). The intent gaze of the fish in the last scene of the book is firmly fixed on the viewer/reader who is invited once more to cross the boundaries separating the fictional world from reality and make a personal contribution to the negotiation of the unconventional, open-ended closure of *The Cat in the Hat*. The image of the fish staring at the reader combined with the direct question of "What would you do/If your mother asked YOU?" (61) firmly engages the reader in the meaning-making process and disrupts the continuity of the child/character/child reader relationship as it is the reader who becomes the object of focalization. Seuss breaks the boundary between the fictional world and reality transferring the responsibility of the closure of the story to the child reader and, thus, indicating a shift of power to the latter. Instead of conveniently providing a straightforward answer that would settle the matter in a finite manner the fictional child turns to the audience and places the resolution of the emerging dilemma in the hands of the implied child reader.

2.4 The girl, the mother and the Cat: ambiguous heterotopias of identity

Timothy Cook in his 1983 article in *The Western Political Quarterly* points out the importance of children's books in shaping children's understanding of the concept of political authority. In his article Cook brings together L. Frank Baum and Dr. Seuss as two writers whose stories may be placed in the realm of imagination but whose books, nevertheless, engage in depicting the gloomier features of authority (327). Dr. Seuss's liberal political thinking was underlined in several of

his books like *Yertle the Turtle* and *The Butter Battle*. However, the issue of gender and race representation and its implications for interpreting political behaviour and thought in his works is not as straightforward; *The Cat in the Hat* portrays contradictory figures of a conflicting nature and ambiguous identity personifying and at the same time ridiculing social and cultural stereotypes. The political message in *The Cat in the Hat* renders the text receptive to a critical multicultural approach which would draw attention to the gender and racial issues reflected in the representation of the female characters and the Cat respectively in the book.

2.4.1 *Sally and her mother: powerful figures or silenced female characters?*

Gender normativity in the 1950s, that is gender-appropriate behaviour conforming to the contemporary dominant gender ideology, relied on the assumption that women were or, in any case, should be content with their roles as housewives and mothers. The stereotypical representation of women as homemakers serving the Cold War ideal of the nuclear family was at the core of the mid-twentieth-century American culture. Jessamyn Neuhaus argues that there were limitations to the uniformity of the repressive gender and domestic ideology of the 1950s; many American women resisted the powerful gender stereotypes of the time that subjected them to inequality by either choosing to pursue their studies and careers or becoming actively involved in social and political causes (529). However, advertizing, films and other types of cultural discourses insisted on promoting the domestic role of women as the only acceptable and morally secure expression of female subjectivity (Chiang 112-113; Young and Young 10).

Children's books in the US in the 1950s used normative images in their representation of male and female subjectivity reasserting the dominance of the contemporary cultural mores condemning women, and consequently girls, to the invisibility of the domestic sphere. *The 13 Clocks* (1950) and *Danny Dunn and the anti-Gravity Paint* (1956), the first novel in the Danny Dunn juvenile science fiction series, are only some examples of the 1950s children's books reflecting a specific vision of male subjectivity through illustrations of male characters as energetic, adventurous, brave and even heroic. The archetypal Prince in *The 13 Clocks* takes

up the mission of saving the damsel in distress, while Danny Dunn embarks on his own journey into the world of science and outer space. These books had their female counterparts such as *Eloise: A Book for Precocious Grown-Ups* (1955) and *The Hidden Window Mystery* (1956), one of the *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* series, which embodied unconventional ideas about female subjectivity and granted their respective female characters, cheeky Eloise and inquisitive Nancy, with the power to define the plot and its development through their actions. Nevertheless, according to Elisabeth Grauerholz and Bernice Pescosolido's analysis of trends in the presence and centrality of males and females in American children's literature between 1900 and 1984, a significant inequity in gender representation is displayed in the 1950s (117).

Focusing on gender representation in Dr. Seuss's picture books, the 2011 study, *Gender in Twentieth-Century Children's Books*, categorizes *The Cat in the Hat* as one of the thousands of children's books published between 1900 and 2000 in the United States which are dominated by male central characters and point to the symbolic annihilation of girls and women (McCabe et al. 198). In her review of Seuss's postwar work Alison Lurie points out a significant if not total lack of female protagonists as the typical Seuss hero is a small boy or a male animal while little girls only play secondary, often silent, roles (75). This failure to include more powerful female characters or represent them in a more flattering light is extended to the representation of adult female characters in his books. Sylvia Henneberg's article on the figure of dead or absent mother in literary classics refers to the mother in *The Cat in the Hat* as an authority figure whose presence would be an impediment to the Cat's anarchical games, an obstacle to the development of the plot and, thus, had to be annihilated (127). Criticism of *The Cat in the Hat* referring both to Sally and the mother interprets female subjectivity as silenced, therefore, disempowered. However, in this section I intend to establish that such an equation oversimplifies the issue of gender representation in the book and cannot capture the complexity and fluidity of the female characters in it.

According to Bronwyn Davies children's stories introduce their young readers into perceiving themselves "as bipolar males or females with the appropriate patterns of power and desire" (49). The exploration of the concept of gender in *The Cat in the Hat* would mean that the critic would be examining the text for strategies

either reinforcing or questioning gender normativity. The disclosure or silencing of the characters' non-normative desires, the presence or absence of non-stereotypical aspects of behaviour illustrate the artist's choice to either confirm and reinforce gender roles as powerful social and cultural constructs, or expose and question their dominance in the social and historical structure of the 1950s.

The representation of non-normative desires in the narrative text is rendered rather problematic as the reader is offered no verbal clues to decipher Sally's feelings, desires or inner thoughts. Sally is a silent figure, a bystander watching the events unfold rather than participating in their development. Her brother, despite his anonymity, occupies a central role as the narrator and the focalizing character in the story and, in that context, frequently speaks on behalf of his voiceless sister.

Then Sally and I

Did not know what to say.

Our mother was out of the house

For the day. (8)

…

And Sally and I

Did not know what to do. (34)

Turning to the visual text, attention is drawn to one particular feature of Sally that offers the audience an unexpected glimpse into Sally's thoughts and emotions. Sally and the Cat are visually linked together by the red colour of the bow and bow tie each wears, the redness contrasting the black and white depiction of the brother (Nel, "The Annotated Cat" 82; Shortsleeve 203). One interpretation of the visual bonding established between the two characters through the use of red colour could be that, on a psychological level, the two characters are the "reverse mirror images of one another" (Shortsleeve 203). The Cat has opened up a world of fantasy, anarchy and, most importantly, potential for change and subversion of all that is considered appropriate for the two children. In this light, the Cat represents Sally's non-normative repressed desire for liberation from the passive role assigned to the

female child of the family. Furthermore, considering that the mother's dress is also coloured in red, a part of her dress and a marching leg being the only visible features of the mother figure on page 46 and the last page of the book, the "universal association" that Sipe mentions of red with passion and energy takes on a new meaning ("Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects" 28); it associates both female characters in the book with the Cat's power of reversal of order and, hence, disengages the representation of female identity from notions of passivity, inaction and, eventually, powerlessness.

In his analysis of gender roles in *The Cat in the Hat* Shortsleeve refers to Sally as a rather laid-back female character (203) who unlike the panic-stricken fish or her confused, to the point of paralysis, brother consciously chooses to abstain from the drama that the Cat's presence has caused. From that perspective, Sally is not represented as a passive character confined within her restrictive gender role but as the impersonation of the emerging, cool, female youth of the 1960s. Although Shortsleeve's argument discourages a patriarchal reading of the text, it still does not provide a satisfactory interpretation of Sally's speechless role circumventing the issue of the relationship between female gender representation and language in the book.

The representation of Sally's character does not overcome the problem of female empowerment as Dr. Seuss does not endow Sally with the power and influence of a central female character in the story, but neither does he conform to the "system's acceptance of the word as male" (Myers 72). The binaristic and oppositional model of gender promoted in the contemporary cultural context is directly rejected in the verbal and visual text in the book. The power of the male narrator/focalizer's voice is questioned through the technique of external focalization in the visual text allowing the boys and the girls of the audience to interpret the book employing their own voice and, consequently, develop their understanding of gender identity. Furthermore, careful observation of the two child characters throughout the story confirms that neither Sally's nor her brother's behaviour bear stereotypical gender characteristics that would privilege the position of the one over the other. Sally's subjectivity remains emphatically voiceless not as the silent, powerless subaltern of her male counterpart but as a symbolic representation of the unfixed, undefined potential of her gender role. Sally is the

embodiment of the ambiguous female subjectivity, a girl growing to become a woman of the upcoming decade when a new, radically different portrayal of female identity will be constructed in the domestic and public sphere.

Shifting focus to the adult characters in the book, the notable absence of the father from the text and the illustrations signifies the complete absence of a male character whose gender identity would bear all the traits stereotypically attributed to the male parent of the 1950s American nuclear family. On the other hand, the character of the mother, though removed from the actual events taking place during the visit of the Cat, is constantly present in the narration through the numerous references that the child character, the fish and the Cat make to her as a figure of parental authority and, consequently, adult normativity. The visual representation of the mother when she finally comes back home rests on the rather minimal depiction of her shoe, part of her leg and arm and a red coat. By the time the story comes to an end and the mother shows up the audience has probably become eager to find out what the mother looks like and if her image is radiant of the power of authority she is assumed to exert. Refusing to satisfy the audience's expectations, Seuss deliberately gives only a few hints of the mother's appearance in his illustration which in accordance with the verbal text does not fully reveal her presence and, therefore, can only imply her identity.

Menand in his *New Yorker* article (2002) interprets the absence of the mother as an act of abandonment by a woman who having succumbed to her private desires ventures far from home and family; Kerry Mallan also reads the figure of the absent mother as a symbol of maternal irresponsibility and adult hypocrisy ("Gender Dilemmas in Children's Fiction" 3). As far as the symbolic meaning behind the absence of the mother is concerned, Henneberg adopts a different approach and proposes the theory of "the dead mother plot" according to which classic children's books such as *The Cat in the Hat* and *Where the Wild Things Are* are populated by child characters whose lives are marked by the loss or absence of one or both parents (126). According to Henneberg women and especially mothers are berated and, eventually, annihilated either by dying or retaining a minimal presence, thus, being reduced to marginal authority figures whose agency is depicted as practically non-existent.

Criticism of the absence of a strong female figure in the text is based on the assumption that the book reflects the mainstream gender ideology of the time and that the writer/illustrator punishes the female character who acts outside the boundaries of her domestic role by undermining her representation. However, I believe that such an interpretation fails to acknowledge the powerful impact of the character of the mother on the children and the fish who never cease to bring her in the foreground as a point of reference for the security and stability of their lives.

> "Your mother is on her way home!
>
> Do you hear?
>
> Oh, what will she do to us?
>
> What will she say?
>
> Oh, she will not like it
>
> To find us this way!" (47)

Even the anarchical Cat implicitly recognizes the influence that the mother exerts on the rest of the family members when he mockingly reassures his audience that his show has her approval.

> "A lot of good tricks.
>
> I will show them to you.
>
> Your mother
>
> Will not mind at all if I do." (8)

Furthermore, the deficient representation of the mother in the verbal and visual text rather than confirming the authority of the mainstream gender ideology of the 1950s, emphasizes the inadequacy of dominant discourses to express and voice female subjectivity once a woman is viewed, literally and figuratively, outside the domestic context. The mother's presence is constantly felt but she is not actually there; her authority at home is taken for granted by the children and the fish but consistently subverted by the Cat; when the mother returns, we can *hear* her speak but not see her. If discourse is to be viewed "as 'subject positioning' people"

(Sunderland 35), the verbal and visual representation of the mother appears to be a serious challenge because the insights provided into her identity in the text are not enough to define her position in the story and render this rather fluid and enigmatic character completely understood.

2.4.2 *The Cat in the Hat: a black caricature or a transgression of racial stereotypes?*

Children's picture books subtly influence children's understanding of social and cultural boundaries and power, status arrangements and the ideologies on which they are founded (Pescosolido, Grauerholz, and Milkie 444). The idea of childhood innocence dominating children's books has mystified racial ideology and discreetly held it hidden "under the light cover of children's culture" and its half-shadow of racial innocence (Bernstein 18). Resilient, easily adaptable and embedded in culture, racism is most successfully hidden and disguised in children's literature which is also "one of the best places to oppose it" (Nel, "Was the Cat in the Hat Black?: The Hidden Racism" 1).

In the recent years, Dr. Seuss's work as a cartoonist during World War II as well as his literary production before and after the war have come under severe criticism for having roots in racism (Quinn 148). The Cat in the Hat was inspired by "an actual person of colour, Houghton Mifflin elevator operator Annie Williams, an African American who wore white gloves and a secret smile" (Strauss). His iconic character has been linked to the depiction of a minstrel (Kim and Augsburger 45), a blackface performance reinforcing racial stereotypes and trivializing the African American subject. The depiction of the Cat emerges from the influence of minstrelsy on Dr. Seuss and indicates that even though the artist was dedicated to challenging prejudice through his artistic creations, he was never entirely liberated from the influence of the cultural assumptions he grew up with (Nel, "Was the Cat in the Hat Black?: Exploring Dr. Seuss's Racial Imagination" 76). Katie Ishizuka-Stephens's criticism regarding the author's illustration of Black culture is particularly vigorous equating the Cat's performance in the picture book to

blackface performers in minstrel shows exploiting Black stereotypes and mocking African Americans through mimicry of white perceptions of the Blacks as "ignorant", "subservient" and "buffoonish" (9). The role of the performing Cat in the book is viewed as a form of entertainment of the white children serving the pleasures and profit of the whites.

In defence of Dr. Seuss's classic cartoon character Nel argues that there is a redeeming aspect to the Cat as a performer and that is the fact that the Cat's racial identity is not his defining feature (Nel "Was The Cat in the Hat Black? Exploring Dr. Seuss's Racial Imagination" 80). According to Nel's interpretation of the character, the Cat is a creature belonging to the realm of fantasy floating free from "any specific race, ethnicity, or nationality" (80). Nel's argument showcases the idea that an ambiguous form of sublimated racism is deployed in *The Cat in the Hat*, which is not intended to promote racial segregation; the importance of the use of stereotypes at the representation of the Cat is downplayed and, consequently, viewed as unremarkable ("Children's Literature Goes to War" 485).

Admittedly, the Cat's blackness is not the character's fundamental feature of identity, in fact, there is no reference in the verbal text to the Cat's black colour. However, the visual text in the book illustrates the Cat as a white-faced, black-bodied human-like character who walks with an umbrella that he uses as a cane and wears a red bow, a red-and-white-striped hat and white gloves covering his three-fingered hands. His costume, the posture of his body, his juggling hands and the grotesque minstrel performance allude to racial stereotypes related to blackness (Nel, "Was the Cat in the Hat Black?: Exploring Dr. Seuss's Racial Imagination" 78; Ngai 116). The use of such schematic codes visually representing members of a culture in a fixed, even predictable manner romanticizes and, eventually, blocks the evolution of cultural representation (Albers 189).

From a different viewpoint, the depiction of the Cat as a white-faced, black-bodied, anthropomorphic animal enables the possibility for resistance to the cultural stereotypes deployed for the construction of this character. The Cat's figure is illustrated as part-black, part-white making it impossible to positively identify the Cat as either black or white. The hybridity of the Cat at a visual level directly alludes to the equally mixed effect of his actions which is not restricted to the

amusement of the audience but also distorts the discipline in the children's life at home. In his performing act the Cat merrily balances various objects for the sake of entertainment but at the same time assures his audience that fun is not the sole purpose of his game.

> "It is fun to have fun
>
> …
>
> But that is not all.
>
> Oh, no.
>
> That is not all…" (18)

The Cat represents the unsettling power of transgression blurring the boundaries between reality and imagination, tempting the children into subversion of their conventional mode of living and leaving the house and its inhabitants with clearly depicted physical evidence of his disruptive presence and long-standing influence. *The Cat in the Hat* may not be a book about racial segregation and the rights of black people but it is a book which reflects and responds to a period of social uncertainty and change, the years of rising Black revolution from World War II to the 1960s (Pescosolido, Grauerholz, and Milkie 445). A consideration of the Cat's depiction as a character whose ambiguous subjectivity is demonstrated through mastering the power of subversive anarchy underlines the importance of investigating the existence of racial stereotypes in the book as a rather remarkable issue.

The Cat is an exciting but at the same time strange and puzzling character defined by the unpredictable, possibly hazardous, games and activities he performs. At the peak of these games the Cat's image simultaneously occupies the space in the book assigned to the verbal and the visual text, breaks down the boundaries that keep the word and the image separated and gradually fuses one into the other creating the imagetext that literally embodies the Cat's hybrid and ambiguous identity. This co-existence of the textual in the visual and the visual in the textual can be seen in parallel with Foucault's concept of heterotopia, the counter-site which has the power to embrace different spaces that are incompatible with each

other (Foucault and Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces" 25). Throughout pages 20 to 23 we witness the text and the image become interrelated under the force of resistance against boundaries that the Cat exerts through his performance; the process of constructing the Cat's spatial identity is at work and defines the Cat as a contradictory figure simultaneously occupying and dismantling the visual and verbal spaces in the book, representing but also contesting the cultural stereotypes on which this character is founded.

The concept of performance which is essential to the construction of the Cat's identity suggests a multiplicity of roles that the Cat's performed acts at times make visible and accessible to the observing audience, while at other moments conceal, changing the projected image of the Cat's complicated identity. The Cat is an animal but acts and speaks like a human; the Cat has come to entertain the children dressed in the blackface minstrel costume but in defiance of all racial stereotypes proceeds to undermine and subvert the power of authority as arbitrary; the Cat is a figure belonging to fantasy and reality at the same time, eventually disrupting both spaces and constantly negotiating his identity. Stuart Hall refers to the carnival as "creating, not simply the triumph of one aesthetic over another, but those impure and hybrid forms of the 'grotesque'" revealing "the inextricable mixed and ambivalent nature of all cultural life" (8); the Cat in the Hat is the embodiment of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque whose essence lies in the transgression of the purity of all binaries of cultural forms, limits and traditions.

The Cat's bodily and discursive performance aimed at disrupting dominant social and cultural concepts as represented in the orderly, white, middle-class household in the story is directly related to the role of challenging convention that the genre of performance has had in avant-garde art throughout the twentieth century. Seuss's style of visual imagery populated by contradictory figures like the Cat resisting unitary meaning illustrated through conventional visual schematic codes can be interpreted as indication of the author's formal rejection of the stereotypes of racial ideology embedded in dominant social and cultural practices. Nevertheless, constantly subversive and impossible to pin down the Cat's character transgresses the limitations of the power of performance. According to Robin Bernstein performance is "by definition, always in the act of disappearing … paradoxically present only through [its] impeding absence" (23); the Cat's

performance is bound to come to an end eventually but the Cat does not conform to the rules of temporality that run his performing act.

"I will NOT go away.

I do NOT wish to go!" (27)

When the Cat does go away, his departure is clearly stated in the verbal text on the double page spread 54-55 with the fish admitting that the mess his performance left behind is not easy to dispose.

"That is good," said the fish.

"He has gone away. Yes.

…

And this mess is so big

And so deep and so tall,

We can not pick it up.

There is no way at all!" (55)

The visual text accentuates the enduring power of the Cat's performance; the Cat is seen in the act of disappearing on one page but the ruined remnants of his performing tricks on the facing page paradoxically maintain the impact of his presence very much alive. Although at the arrival of the mother the Cat disappears from the domestic setting of the story taking away all physical evidence of his performance, the impact of his act still resonates with the child characters and the audience of the book unmasking all illusions of racial innocence and promising significant change in dominant racial ideologies in the years to come.

2.5 Concluding remarks

Mother is at home at last, Sally and her brother are back in their chairs and the Cat has returned to the mysterious, fantastical place he came from originally. Order is restored and all is well, or is it? The pressing questions challenging adult authority and the child's obedience to parental rule which Seuss relentlessly posed in the book still resonate in the readers' minds making the "happily ever after" ending, and closure for that matter, an impossibility.

As the artist himself remarks in his 1983 interview to Jonathan Cott: "*The Cat in the Hat* is a revolt against authority, but it is ameliorated by the fact that the Cat cleans up everything at the end" (28). However, the actual end of the story does not come until the final question of the mother to the siblings and their turning to the audience for a response. The ongoing negotiation of power among the child characters in the book, the writer and the implied child reader until the very last page manifests that the power struggle between the child and the adult remains open-ended. The writer chooses to reach out to his young audience for answers and, thus, remove the child from the sphere of influence of the adult who is reading, and, probably, interpreting, the story. The relationship between the image and the text throughout the book decisively contributes to the process of empowerment of the child reader as the flexible limits of the complementarity of the word and the image permit the recurrent presence of illustrations with features and details not mentioned in the verbal text. It may be the adult who is reading the story to the child but it is the child who is invited to closely observe the images and with the use of imagination fill in the gap between what is said and what is seen in the book.

The Cat may be gone but the effect of *The Cat in the Hat* as an act of defiance of adult authority and a revolt against the didactic, patronizing practices of contemporary children's literature reinforcing the domestic ideology is still powerful. Decades after its first publication *The Cat in the Hat* remains in the spotlight not only as an iconic picture book of the 1950s but as a subversive children's book raising social and cultural issues which are of consequence over time.

Notes

¹ As the chief editor of Dartmouth College humor magazine *Jack-O-Lantern*, he adopted the pen name "Seuss", which he changed to the mock-scholarly title of "Dr. Theophrastus Seuss" and, eventually, shortened to "Dr. Seuss" in 1928 (Pease 27). Apart from an evident expression of his love for satire, the "Dr." in his name is also a subtle tribute to his father who hoped his son would practice medicine.

² In "Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 17 Nikolajeva analyzes Harry Potter's books as an example of the empowerment of the fictional child.

3. LET THE WILD EXPLORATION OF FANTASY START AT THE LAND
WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

3.1 Introduction

Sendak in his 1964 Caldecott Medal Acceptance Speech for *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) made extensive reference to his infatuation with the musical quality of the contrapuntal relationship between words and images. "Sketching to music is a marvellous stimulant to my imagination" (146) Sendak admits and confirms the significant influence of art in writing and illustrating his picture books. Music was not Sendak's sole source of inspiration; the visual text in his picture books alludes to a variety of works of art ranging from Ralph Caldecott's illustrations of children's books ("Caldecott Medal Acceptance" 149-150) to Walter Crane, Arthur Hughes (Bodmer 122) and Rousseau (J. Jones); the verbal text draws upon archetypes and motifs central to literary works of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century literature and poetry such as William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (Sasser 235-236). His work constantly questions and undermines the idealized version of the blissfully innocent childhood which became influential in the mid-eighteenth and nineteenth century. Sendak's picture books address issues of children's rage, feelings of misery, the experience of disappointment and isolation and pose the question that Richard Gottlieb defines as "the question of resilience: How do children surmount and transform in order to prosper and create?" ("Where the Wild Things Are" 849).

In *Where the Wild Things Are* the protagonist, a little boy named Max dressed in a wolf-suit, having caused all sorts of trouble in his pursuit of happiness and exhausting the patience of his mother, receives the punishment of being grounded in his room without supper. Max's escape from the state of rage and disillusionment he is experiencing is achieved through the transformation of his room into a thick, tropical forest at the end of which he finds a boat and sails to the land of the Wild Things. When he reaches the land of the Wild Things, he deftly becomes their king

and joins them in their wild rumpus. Eventually, Max seems to have gotten tired and, probably, homesick, too, so he abandons his wild subjects, crosses the sea in his boat one last time and returns to his room and a desirable "still hot" meal. Critics have interpreted Max's journey to the place where the Wild Things are as an imaginary journey to the world of fantasy, a child's escape from the reality under the control of adults, a psychoanalytic exploration of the realm of dreams, and as an adventure story based on the ideological premises of colonialism. This chapter discusses the interpretations of the underlying ideas regarding fantasy and childhood in the book on the basis of a detailed analysis of the verbal and the visual text. The main argument of the chapter is that Max's journey ending with the return to the reality of his room signals the inauguration of a process of maturity established on the complexity of the relationship of fantasy and wildness to realism, reason and socially accepted forms of behaviour rather than abandonment, rejection or repression of the darker, wilder, less controllable aspects of childhood. The equally complicated relationship of the word and the image in the book underlines the ongoing power struggle among the contradictory forces shaping the individual identity of the child and constructing a concept of childhood inclusive of conflicting, heterogeneous features.

3.2 The night fantasy went wild and "became the world all around"

Maurice Sendak regarded *Where the Wild Things Are*, *In the Night Kitchen* (1970) and *Outside Over There* (1981) as a trilogy by virtue of the central theme of the child hero/heroine embarking on an existential quest as well as the deployment of fantasy and imagination as the answer to the agonizing dilemmas of childhood in all three books. Being the first picture book of the trilogy, *Where the Wild Things Are* makes a bold statement about the power of fantasy in shaping childhood through the visual and textual illustration of Max's unruly, mischievous behaviour in relation to the monstrous wildness of the anthropomorphic creatures inhabiting the fantastical land of Wild Things. Depicting the darker aspects of the children's inner world, dreams and imagination, Sendak remains faithful to his principle of "truthfulness to

life- both fantasy life and factual life" ("Caldecott Medal Acceptance" 149); as the artist simply put it in his 2004 interview with Bill Moyers, "if I've done anything, I've had kids express themselves as they are" (Sendak).

3.2.1 *"Sweet dreams are made of this" untamed power of imagination*

Sendak confesses that "the picture book is where I put down those fantasies that have been with me all my life… where I fight all my battles and where, hopefully, I win my wars" (Lanes, "Through the Looking Glass" 91). The artist's definition of the picture book establishes the significance of fantasy and imagination in the interactive relationship between the verbal and the visual text in the book; simultaneously, it highlights the intensity of the power struggle among the conflicting forces of fantasy and realism, emotion and reason, wilderness and civilization. The questioning of these traditional binaries of Western culture in *Where the Wild Things Are* constitutes the ideological framework of the book.

The story begins with the wolf-suited Max acting mischievously followed on the opposite page by the picture of the boy having climbed a stack of books, banging the wall with a hammer in order to hang a rope with a blanket and a teddy bear, probably, as part of the imaginary setting for his games. The first illustration with its shallow stage background and faded colours oscillating between the real and the illusive clearly bears the mark of Crane's Victorian toy books for children (Bodmer 122). Throughout the next four pages the text and its facing images collaborate in the narration of Max's feats of wildness culminating in the boy's punishment by his mother to go to bed without supper. At this point Max's story enters a new phase in the context of which a major shift occurs in the balance between the word and the image in the book.

That very night in Max's room a forest grew

and grew-

and grew until his ceiling hung with vines

and the walls became the world all around (n. pag.)

The transformation of the familiar, domestic space into a new, marginal realm, as well as the child protagonist's imminent transportation to an unknown fantastical setting are recurrent elements in both adventure and fantasy children's books (Nikolajeva, "Beyond Grammar" 6; "Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 17). Max's journey to the land of the Wild Things is Sendak's homage to the writers, artists and picture book illustrators of the eighteenth and nineteenth century he has admired. Several critics ranging from Gregory Maguire and Jonathan Jones to Marvin Sasser and Rachel Singer have identified and extensively analyzed the various influences in *Where the Wild Things Are*; the tribute to Rousseau, the artist of wild nature, in Sendak's depiction of the jungle setting; the artistic influence of Caldecott and Hughes in Sendak's use of the cross-hatching technique; Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, as sources of inspiration for the reinforcement of imagination and its rebellious force against social and cultural constraints (J. Jones; Maguire 5; Sasser 234; Singer 20). Verbal and visual intertexts convey the power of dream and fantasy as an "act of artistic creation", in Gottliebb's terms ("Where the Wild Things Are" 847), releasing Max from the bondage of maternal control and enhancing the expression of his enraged, wild inner self.

Max's transportation to the realm of fantasy is ensued by a significant change in the power balance of the relationship of "complementarity" and "enhancement" of meaning generated by the text and the image in the book (Sipe, "Young Children's Visual Meaning Making" 383). As the boy's bedroom gradually turns into a forest of wild flowers, thick, tall trees and other exotic jungle vegetation, the borders of the white space framing the initial illustrations are becoming smaller and smaller; eventually, the contents of the image spill beyond the frame on page 10, extend to full bleed on page 12 and literally invade the space so far exclusively allocated to the text on the double spread of pages 13 and 14. The device of breaking the frame influences both the reader's perception of the text and the text/image relationship. On the one hand, it "intensifies the feeling of an expanding world" (Sipe, "Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects" 34) offering the experience of what William Moebius calls "view from within" ("Introduction to Picturebook Codes" 150). On the other hand, it affects the interaction of the picture and the text and exemplifies the argument proposed by W.J.T. Mitchell in *Picture Theory* regarding the heterogeneous nature of verbal and

visual representation and their intermingled relationship. According to Mitchell, literature and the visual arts are mixed media, like all media, as they do not necessarily convey purely textual or visual meaning. The hybridity of the media affects the interaction between the word and the image, which are heterogeneous like all representations, but whose relationship also becomes hybrid and intermingled (5). The concept of the intermingled image/text interaction can be adopted to describe the complicated relationship of fantasy and reality as represented in the verbal and the visual text respectively in *Where the Wild Things Are.* In reference to Sendak's technique of making "a very clear distinction between the verbal narrative and the illustration" (235), Nikolajeva and Scott point out the absence of intraiconic text in *Outside Over There* and *Where the Wild Things Are*, with the exception of the appearance of Max's name on his drawing by the staircase and his boat sailing to the wild land. However, the device of frame-breaking which allows the visual text to advance towards the space occupied by the verbal text renders impossible the maintenance of clear-cut boundaries between the two media of representation and, therefore, questions their distinct character.

The effect of the frame-breaking device on the relationship between the word and the image is accentuated by the choices Sendak has made regarding the use of colour, lines and shapes. Sipe argues that Sendak makes use of colours of low intensity and dark tone, a choice "predicated on his illustrating a story that is a dream or fantasy, taking place at night or twilight" ("Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects" 28). Observation of the first illustrations in the story affirms Sipe's view; all domestic scenes as well as the transformation of Max's bedroom into a jungle are coloured in dark, dull tones which convey a brooding, dismal mood underscored by the heavily cross-hatched objects in them. However, as Paul Arakelian points out, Sendak, uses, in fact, "a richer pallet of colours which corresponds, as every other aspect of his style, to the structure of the story" (126). As the story goes on,

> and an ocean tumbled by with a private boat for Max
>
> and he sailed off through night and day (n. pag.)

illustrations become brighter, more colourful, openly expressing Max's happier mood, while application of the cross-hatching technique is limited to the palm tree on the

shore of the wild land and the mythic monster that emerges from the sea in front of Max foreshadowing the adventurous, potentially dangerous, situations lying ahead.

Max's arrival at the land Where the Wild Things Are signals, yet, another change in the visual text. The setting is once again depicted in dark, brooding colours making the wild monsters' land seem an uninviting, even hostile place for little Max; the monsters themselves are illustrated as menacing, oversized creatures with their yellow eyes set on Max's diminished figure, their fists raised in the air and their claws seemingly ready to tear him apart. According to Kiefer, line and shape are fundamental elements of the art of picture books contributing to the construction of meaning (79-80). Adopting Kiefer's interpretation, the cross-hatched lines on the monstrous creatures, the pointed shape of their horns, their sharp teeth and sharp-edged claws are perceived to be complementing their description in the verbal text roaring their terrible roars and gnashing their terrible teeth in order to create a sense of tension, anxiety, fear and, even, imminent pain. The narrative text emphasizes the creatures' monstrosity, nevertheless, close examination of the monsters' illustration reveals a paradox; their claws, teeth, horns, hair and body hairs are rough-looking, pointed and sharp, but their bodies are actually round-shaped with squashy, large bellies. These round, curving lines alleviate the harshness of their image and produce a more peaceful effect. The relationship of the verbal to the visual text is on the verge of counterpoint, while the arrangement of text and image is, also, shifted, as narration and illustration, no longer restricted to the right and left page of the double spread respectively, share the space of both pages. In her analysis of Sendak's trilogy *Where the Wild Things Are*, *In the Night Kitchen* and *Outside Over There* Aparna Gollapudi states that "words and images retain a fairly stable relationship throughout the entire story" (113). Yet, Sipe's view is more accurate. The critic argues, and this thesis agrees, that the text and the illustration have a synergistic relation whose balance does not remain fixed or stable because of its dependence not only on the union of the two forms of representation "but also on the perceived interactions or transactions between the two elements" ("How Picture Books Work" 99).

The synergistic relationship between the text and the illustrations is further complicated in the double spreads following Max's arrival at the land of the wild. As Ellen Spitz observes, the verbal text gradually shrinks while the illustrations expand in a manner analogous to the amplification of the power of fantasy which "completely

overtakes reality" ("Inside Picture Books" 125). Spitz's analysis is in accordance with the point raised by Singer regarding the structural tension between the text and the image portraying the contrast between reality, the civilized world Max has left behind, and the wild, fantasy land he has been transported to through dream or imagination (20). Singer also remarks on Blake's influence on Sendak's work which draws upon Blake's practice of creating a gap between the words and their accompanying dreamlike illustrations intended to present imagination as an active force in the creation of the world. This brings to mind Mitchell's reflection on "the redemption of imagination" through acceptance of the notion that the creation of our world is in many ways the result of the dialogue between language and image with nature being a vital part of this dialectic ("What Is an Image" 531-532). As soon as Max magically tames the Wild Things and is crowned their king, he announces the beginning of the wild rumpus. The scenes of the monsters' parade unfold in three consecutive double spreads whose entire space is filled with illustrations; completely devoid of words, these scenes are capturing what Debbie Hindle refers to as "something of the magical aspect of imagination, perhaps best depicted in visual and musical imagery, like dreams" (59). Brittany Jacobs recognizes in Sendak's illustrations the influence of Henri Rousseau's luscious, fantastical landscapes which allude to Jan-Jacques Rousseau, the eighteenth century philosopher praising the value of naturalness and spontaneity (Jacobs). In this exuberant natural landscape Max is represented as the ultimate wild child embracing his natural instincts in the performance of a ritual glorifying the power of an omnipresent nature.

The domestic sphere of Max's world comprises his mother's endless rules, scolding and punishment, a world of verbal authority aiming at controlling Max's wild games, actions and ideas. On the other hand, the land of Where the Wild Things Are belongs to the sphere of dream and fantasy, it is potentially Max's ideal version of the world experienced through imagination. In their study of the notion of dream in Foucault's essay "Dream, Imagination and Existence" Steven Watson and David Vessey show the correlation between dream and imagination. Echoing Lacan's concept of the symbolic, dream is the source of imagination and entails a symbolic structure which reflects the lived experience, reality, and participates in its perceptual analysis (243). Max's experience of the world oscillates between the domestic sphere of rules and civilized behaviour and his dream world of fantasy, wild nature and

untamed monsters. The boy's understanding of reality filtered through imagination places Max in a space of otherness which is represented in the three double spreads illustrating the wild rumpus and its raw power of fantasy, literally and figuratively, beyond words. As soon as Max exclaims, "Now stop!" language intervenes and the wild rumpus is ended and so is the absolute domination of the visual authority of fantasy and its whimsical creatures over the verbal text with words and images gradually resuming their former position on the page. From the perspective of the word/image power struggle, Max's nostalgia for home and his mother can be interpreted as the representation of a balancing act in the synergistic relationship of language and image and their respective influence in the construction of Max's world.

Once again Max boards his private boat and sails back into the night of his own room with his supper waiting for him. Michael Reed maintains that Max can return to his bedroom because he has been released from his disruptive behaviour through commanding the energy of the wild rumpus and making use of this newly found form of power to control reality, as well (20). In this light, Max's transportation from the world of the imagination to the reality of his bedroom, which is also transformed into its original, non-magical state, suggests the reconciliation between the opposing forces of imagination and realism; Max's journey back to reality is underpinned by the perception of fantasy and realism as two distinct notions coexisting in a collaborative relationship. However, the concluding text and image which integrate the ending of the story are rather subversive of a clear-cut, balanced relationship of complementarity between fantasy and reality. Unlike the pictures of Max's bedroom at the beginning of the story, the last picture has no frame, but, instead, occupies the entire right page of the double spread reinforcing the powerful presence of the visual text over the seemingly minimal effect of the two lines of verbal text printed on the blank left page.

Nevertheless, not quite having said its last word, the verbal text does not come to the finite end until the statement "and it was still hot" standing on its own at the very last page which concludes the story. According to Nikolajeva and Scott (180), these last five words imply that Max's experience was imaginary, since it only had a short duration as, his supper still being hot, is in contrast to the detail of the moon in the preceding picture. Questioning the linear notion of time, the half moon at the initial illustration is now full, therefore, it is inferred that Max's journey lasted for a

considerable amount of time rendering his experience real. The ambiguity caused by the "indeterminacy concerning both what has actually happened and what might still happen" (Nikolajeva, "Beyond Grammar" 7) creates an open-ended closure inviting a multiplicity of interpretations regarding the relationship of dream and reality, fantasy and realism, imagination and sensibility as constituent parts of the world.

3.2.2 *Sailing off through time and space in Max's private boat*

Max's departure from home to the land of the Wild Things establishes a pattern of what Moseley describes as "the physical directional movement in *Where the Wild Things Are* (88) which is consistently followed in the other two books of Sendak's trilogy, *In the Night Kitchen* and *Outside Over There*. Max takes off to explore the unknown wild land, Mickey leaves his bedroom to experience the thrills of the big city and Ida goes away from home to search for her missing sibling. As Moseley observes, the three children travel from inside, that is the familiar space of their home or private bedroom, to a place of fantasy located "outside over there" (88-89). The notion of the chronotope (Bakhtin, "The Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" 84), the spatiotemporal relations of the recognizable world inhabited by the child protagonist to the magical world in which the character is transported (Nikolajeva, "Aesthetic Approaches" 140), clearly emerges. According to Genette's narrative theory (34), the traditional conceptualization of space and time in literature defines "space as a particular space, and time as narrated events order" (Rata, "The Importance of Space and Time" 102). Transcendence of this conventional perception of time and space highlights the spatiotemporal character of the transition of the child character from the home chronotope, belonging to the realm of reality, to the fantasy chronotope. The conceptualization of time and space as constituent elements of fantasy and reality destabilizes established interpretations of language and image and their respective function in the picture book.

This chapter's analysis of the relationship between time and space in *Where the Wild Things Are* draws on the theories proposed by a strand of other theorists ranging from Arakelian, Moseley and Nikolajeva to Nodelman and Riita Oittinen

pointing out the connectedness of time and space, word and image and the overcoming of their respective restrictions in the book (Arakelian 125; Moseley 86-88; Nikolajeva, "Aesthetic Approaches" 140; Nodelman, "Words about Pictures" 262-263; Oittinen 136). Sendak himself underlines the complicated nature of time/space and word/image relations in his work by stating that the writer/illustrator "must leave space in the text" for the picture to perform its role in the meaning-making process and contribute to the unfolding of narrative time ("Interview with Walter Lorraine" 326).

The illustration of Max's bedroom in the third double spread of the book functions in a twofold manner as it not only provides a depiction of the confined space of Max's domestic reality but also participates in the representation of temporal evolution in the story. On the one hand, the existence of the white frame which constrains the picture alludes to the restrictive limitations Max's mother has imposed on her son in an attempt to contain and control his behaviour. Breaking the frame in the next pictures of Max's room as he enters his dreamland of wildness manifests the breakdown of the boundaries enhancing the binary opposition between time and space, fantasy and reality. The distinction between the aforementioned concepts is even further undermined when the transformation of Max's bedroom into a forest is complete and the picture occupies the entire page setting the ground for the subsequent picture of Max's journey in a boat which crosses the gutter of the double spread. As Lambert remarks, the technique of crossing the gutter creates the sense of the expansion of "a given moment in time" with the picture appearing to be "taking a long time (occupying a lot of space) to convey what it needs to say" (29). Lambert's point is taken up by Oittinen's reading of the punctuation in the verbal text accompanying the picture. In Oittinen's analysis, the length of the sentence narrating the growth of the forest and the subsequent departure of Max in the equally magically appearing ocean, indeed, depicts a "never-ending time" stretching until Max's arrival in the land of the wild things (136). Oittinen's reasoning underlines the interconnectedness of the representation of time and space leading back to Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope. On the other hand, returning to the picture of Max's bedroom before the transformation, the image of the moon visible from the open window plays an important part in determining or rather subverting a rational explanation of the passing of time in the story.

This is a case of the picture contributing "to the unfolding of narrative time", in Sendak's words, as the space in the picture serves the purpose of denoting time evolution in the story. The moon, which is initially only half, gradually fills up until, in the climax of the wild rumpus, becomes full and is seen as such in the last picture of Max's return to his room. The issue of the representation of time through the picture of the moon has been at the centre of theoretical discussions of *Where the Wild Things Are* for several decades. Singer resonates Kiefer's assertion regarding the setting of a book in time and place as a reflection of the cultural and historical conventions influencing the artist's choice (86-87); also, in agreement with Moseley, she interprets Sendak's use of the cosmological element in terms of a symbol of Max's emotional change and psychological growth (24). Singer's approach is directly related to the influence of Freudian psychoanalytic theory on twentieth century thought.

Assuming a different viewpoint, Nikolajeva identifies in the book the illustration of the difference between adults and children in terms of their perception of time and interprets the fullness of the moon as the visual sign questioning a realistic representation of time signified by the mother's "objective time" ("Children's Literature Comes of Age" 133). I contend that this point can also be applied to the analysis of the textual representation of the notion of time. A close examination of the final lines of the narrative text accompanying the last picture in the book reveals a corresponding disruption of the verbal signification of time:

and into the night of his very own room

where he found his supper waiting for him (n. pag.)

Having sailed in and out of weeks now Max steps into the night as if the nocturnal time zone is actually a threshold, a part of the space of his private bedroom, which he enters, and in the context of which he brings his adventure to an end. If the space of the picture illustrates temporality, the narrative text illuminates the spatial aspect of time. The disruption of the representation of time and space in the verbal and the visual text in *Where the Wild Things Are* is indicative of the underlying power struggle between the picture and the word. The open-ended closure of the story as a direct outcome of the complex experience of spatiotemporality accentuates the effect

of the dynamic asymmetry of power in the fluid text/image relationship bound to remain unresolved until the very end of the book.

3.2.3 Hybrid monsters and wild things: the Griffin, the Minotaur and the wolf-suited child

In their analysis of *Where the Wild Things Are*, a strand of theorists ranging from Jennifer Shaddock and John Ball to Michelle Abate and Sarah Fletcher have underscored the "obligation of criticism to tease out the historical and ideological roots of the book" (Shaddock 155). Abate and Fletcher examine the verbal and the visual text of the book against the backdrop of the Vietnam War in which the U.S. intervened. In this perspective, Max is viewed as the colonist who yearns to rebel against the constraints of the civilized Western world. Following in the footsteps of Defoe's and Kipling's imperialist heroes or the U.S. military leaders attacking the Vietnamese, Max seizes control of the inferior, non-white, non-human actually, inhabitants of the wild land. The logic of binary opposition that permeates this argumentation is obvious as the Wild Things are depicted as Max's complete opposite; the primitive, mentally inferior, racial "other" that the white explorer Max instantly tames with his magic tricks (Abate and Fletcher 66). Shaddock and Ball present the picture book as a classic example of fiction based on the imperial-colonial model of the nineteenth century adventure story according to which the "indigenous Other" operates as the exotic rival power against whom the imperialist defines himself (Shaddock 157); the "*colonial* grotesques" whose "generic quality" emphasizes their inferiority as they remain unnamed and unindividualized (J. Ball 170). Having elaborately expanded on the colonial motif of the binary opposition between the civilized self and the wild "other", Shaddock acknowledges that Sendak does not partake "wholeheartedly of the jingoist ideology of the nineteenth-century adventure" (157). The critic proceeds to argue that Max subverts the adventure motif by depicting the wild as "a healthy part of the domestic order" demanding expression "from within that order". Ball also points out a temporary breakdown of the binary distinctions between Max and the Wild Things during the performance of the wild rumpus (174). The sequence of the three wordless, frameless double spreads illustrating Max and the

monsters ecstatically dancing amidst the wild plantation of the forest in the darkness of the night, convey, according to Ball, the disruption of the conventional colonial boundaries separating the self from the "other" (175). Still, the critic insists on his interpretation of the book as a "paradigmatically colonial story" (177) and Max as "the ambivalent imperialist [who] is also a child still very much on an object-relations continuum" (178).

In alignment with the aforementioned critics' historical contextualization of *Where the Wild Things Are*, this study argues that the book, indeed, bears the influence of the nineteenth century adventure narrative; however, at the same time, it reflects the culturally rebellious context of the 1960s subverting the self/other colonial convention attached to the genre. Throughout the book Sendak consistently undermines the binary opposition between Max and the Wild Things, while his representation of the wildness of the archetypal monster is neither straightforward and uncomplicated, as Shaddock's interpretation maintains, nor healthily and happily expressed through an ending that resolves the conflict of power between the wild and the orderly.

From the beginning of the book Sendak establishes Max's relation to the Wild Things both in the text and the illustrations; Max is depicted wearing a wolf suit attempting to imitate a monster's attitude by chasing the dog around the house his claws reaching out to grab the poor pet; Max's mother calls him "WILD THING" to which Max replies "I'LL EAT YOU UP!" as if to confirm the uncontrollable wild instincts gradually taking over the child protagonist even before his journey to the Wild Land has begun. Drawing parallels between the wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood* and Max as having wolfish characteristics, Debra Mitts-Smith views the wolf's shape as the visible means of the child's expression of negative and potentially dangerous emotions remaining beyond the power of social restrictions as the wolf resides the forest beyond the boundaries of the domestic order (137). Rebecca Adams and Eric Rabkin highlight the importance of clothing and its symbolic connotations in their commentary of *In the Night Kitchen* through reference to Mickey who slipped out of his pyjamas getting rid of "a formal construct that creates a barrier between our skin and the world around us" (236). As the story of *Where the Wild Things Are* evolves and Max progressively enters the world of fantasy, eventually reaching the wild land, the clothes he is wearing, his wolf suit, rather than keeping him aloof, allow him to

form a connection with the wild monsters which he resembles so much. As K. A. Nuzum points out, Max's wolf suit enables him to take on lupine characteristics which transform him into a monster occupying the liminal space and time of creatures bearing human and animal traits alike (211). The moment Max is sentenced to the exile of his bedroom deprived of the comfort of a hot meal associated with the privileges of life in the orderly domestic sphere, his intense resentment and anger literally take over his existence. In reaction to his mother's disapproval and rejection of his wild spirit, page after page, image after image, Max enters the state of a wild monster whose existence lingers on the border of reality and fantasy; at the same time, Max's room, his own private space separating and protecting him from the adult world, in correspondence to the boy's transformation, slowly turns into a jungle.

Max's journey into the unknown leads him to the land of the Wild Things where once again binary oppositions are subverted as his dominion over the wild monsters is attributed to his own excessive wildness.

> …Max said "BE STILL!"
>
> and tamed them with the magic trick
>
> of staring into all their yellow eyes without blinking once
>
> and they were frightened and called him the most wild thing of all
>
> and made him king of all wild things. (n. pag.)

The Wild Things recognize him as their own because they share with Max what Nuzum refers to as "the liminal morphology of monster" (211). A close examination of the Wild Things confirms the hybridity of their anthropomorphic, non-human bodies. The representation of the Wild Things in the text and the images in the book illuminates the liminal quality of their existence exhibiting elements which are both human and monstrous, scary and grotesque, brutal and reassuring. The Wild Things welcome Max with their clawed fists raised at him, bulgy yellow eyes staring at the curious newcomer, roaring "their terrible roars" and gnashing "their terrible teeth". The verbal text repeatedly refers to their "terrible" features iterating their brutal, non-human existence; on the other hand, as the illustrations reveal, the posture of their bodies resembles that of humans; the look on their hairy faces betrays confusion and

amazement rather than hostility towards the wolf-suited boy. Despite the repetition of the word "terrible", the illustrations of the monsters are aesthetically pleasing and not at all terror-inspiring to the child reader. Further down in the narration it is revealed that the Wild Things possess the human ability to speak and so they do in order to coronate Max as their king and, later, stop him from going away.

> But the wild things cried, "Oh please don't go-
>
> We'll eat you up- we love you so!" (n. pag.)

Among the Wild Things, as Singer observes, there can be detected allusions to the multifaceted, hybrid creatures of mythology like the eagle-headed Griffin and the part-man, part-bull Minotaur (25). Viewed through the posthuman lens, the fictional animal simultaneously delineates and questions the binary opposition of the human body to the non-human body (Berger 5; Nikolajeva, "Recent Trends in Children's Literature Research" 135); consequently, Sendak's reference to the mythological, archetypal hybrid monster emphatically demonstrates the complicated nature of the Wild Things. These hybrid wild creatures blur the distinctions between the human and the elusive "other" and redefine the terms of the power struggle between the child character and the monsters in the book.

The wild rumpus scene, though wordless, is highly expressive of the fluidity of boundaries separating Max from the monsters, as well as the fragility of the power Max the conqueror supposedly exercises over his wild subjects. Max may be the new king, the one to declare the inauguration of the wild ritual, but the portrayal of his actions, look and facial expressions manifests beyond doubt that he has become a Wild Thing himself; hence, his position of power over the beasts is undermined as it is the beastly aspect of his selfhood that seems to have taken control of him. If, as Charles Sarland points out (63), learning the boundaries of the cultural order is achieved by stepping beyond them, Max has definitely reached a culminating point in his exploration of the cultural "other" by identifying with it. Furthermore, according to Moebius's code of size ("Introduction to Picturebook Codes" 149), Max may be the highest character in the last double spread of the wild rumpus, proudly wearing his crown and raising his sceptre, yet the monsters appear seriously larger and stronger than him as they occupy the largest part of the illustration. The implication is that the self/other opposition has been overturned and Max's attempt to control the Wild

Things is actually an attempt to control a part of himself. Several theorists have analyzed the Wild Things as the monsters representing a part of Max's existence, the wild, uncivilized, emotional aspect of his individuality that cannot be repressed but must be acknowledged and embraced (Cech, "From Humbaba to the Wild Things"; Hindle 62; Nuzum 211). If "anthropomorphizing is the learning brain's strategy to make sense of the world" (Nikolajeva "Recent Trends" 135), then, the anthropomorphic, monstrous Wild Things are Max's way of realizing his own identity which is still in the process of formation and, thus, his way of recognizing the limits of humanity.

Max's eventual return to the reality of his bedroom far away from the monsters he confronted in his adventure could be considered a satisfactory resolution of the tension between reason and fantasy, the civil self and the dangerous "other". However, the suspension of boundaries between real and imaginary time as a result of the impossibility to determine the duration and, thus, the reality of Max's experience, also obliterates the distance separating Max from the Wild Things because, as John Cech insightfully comments, "you can't have one, without the Other" (Cech, "From Humbaba to the Wild Things").

3.3 Max's journey in and out of wildness and through maturity

The tumultuous social changes taking place in the US during the 1960s impacted family values and perceptions of childhood. Paula Fass explains in *Children, Technology, and Family in the Postwar World* (2007) how politicians used the image of the child to support their positions on family planning, schooling, pedagogical methods and measures for child protection against abuse but they did not see the child "as part of a fundamental social contract". "We had created a new childhood", Fass remarks, "but we were still using the images of the past" (102). Sendak's view of childhood reflected his deep understanding of the conflicting aspects of the contemporary child-centred discourse and its consequences on the child's ambivalent power status in the domestic and the wider social context. This was

a time of crisis and, as Selma Lanes asserts, "Sendak has always been drawn to stories of children at various moments of crisis" ("Through the Looking Glass" 99) probably because such extreme moments trigger unexpected reactions which can change the course of one's life. As a writer and an illustrator of children's stories, Sendak persistently searched for the connecting threads between childhood and adulthood which would eliminate the emerging "generation gap" and, thus, alleviate the child's painful transition to adulthood. Significantly influenced by the Romantic ideology which privileged the child and had a direct impact on the 1960s culture Sendak emphasized the importance of dreams and creative imaginings of childhood in shaping the child's identity in the process towards maturation (Gottlieb, "Maurice Sendak's Trilogy" 186). In the case of *Where the Wild Things* Are Max's aggravated revolt against his mother functions as the stimulant of his imaginative faculty becoming the stepping stone to his journey towards maturity and into the unknown territory of his spiritual, inner self.

3.3.1 *Staring into the yellow eyes of childhood anxieties and becoming their king*

"How will the child's wildness, her impulsive, chaotic otherness be acknowledged and accommodated?" Cech wonders in his analysis of the child character in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* ("Angels and Wild Things" 132). In doing so, Cech pinpoints the fundamental question regarding the representation of childhood in children's literature. Sendak's response to the problematic of the depiction of childhood in *Where the Wild Things Are* entails addressing the child character's monumental problem of being rejected by the parental figure and having to deal with the ensuing feelings of anger and disappointment.

The night Max wore his wolf suit and made mischief of one kind

…

his mother called him "WILD THING"

and Max said "I'LL EAT YOU UP!"

so he was sent to bed without eating anything. (n. pag.)

Max's wolf-suited image, the sequence of acts of misdemeanour he endeavours, his cannibalistic threat in reaction to his mother's reprimands establish the child hero's mutinous nature; Max's representation also draws upon his rather problematic position due to his apparent unwillingness to refrain from resisting parental authority but also his incapability of coping with the disillusionment of parental rejection. Oppressed, frustrated and isolated from his mother, Max ends up punished in his bedroom, feeling alone and misunderstood. Gottliebb remarks, "Sendak's art addresses our deepest, frequently repressed, often unspeakable concerns" ("Where the Wild Things Are" 847), hence, it voices the awkward, more agonizing aspects of the child's inner world. A genuine successor of Lewis Carroll in the act of undermining the Victorian didacticism in relation to childhood, as Robert Everett-Green points out, Sendak rescues Max from the horrific consequences of his rebellious attitude by transporting him to the land of the Wild Things (n. pag.). Lewis Tyson discusses the function of the wild rumpus as the imaginative setting for the child's play, a site of "pure potentiality" where Max can experiment with the boundaries of the socially acceptable and the improper which have caused him so much trouble (290). In this context, the child character can develop his personal mechanism of coping with the demands imposed on him by adult rules and social conformities. Transportation to the wild land acquires a more profound meaning than the mere escape from parental disciplinary measures and becomes inextricably linked to the process of psychological maturation. Viewed from this perspective, the ritual of the wild rumpus operates as a rite of passage marking the transitional space for the construction of the child's subjectivity.

The inhabitants of the wild land, the Wild Things themselves, play a crucial part in Max's exploration of self-identity. Sendak often explained in his interviews that the yellow-teethed monsters were designed after his Jewish relatives on his mother's side whom, as a child, he found scary and detestable (Lanes, "The Art of Maurice Sendak" 88). In Max's first encounter with one of the Wild Things, the dragon-like sea monster, welcoming him as his boat reaches the shore of the wild land, fear is written all over Max's face and defensive bodily posture alluding to those dark feelings of Sendak's childhood towards his monstrous relatives. Right from the beginning of Max's quest in the wild land it is established that the Wild Things are

very much a part of this exploration as they embody the strange, menacing "other" which Max has to confront, figure out and, eventually, reject or embrace.

The notion of childhood as a period of the development of individual consciousness based on perceiving and acting upon the concepts of inclusion and exclusion of the "other" are central in Cech's *From Humbaba to the Wild Things* and Spitz's *Empathy, Sympathy, Aesthetics and Childhood*. Spitz argues that during childhood the individual develops "a self for which inside and outside have no stable referents" as it "expands to include objects and others" (549). Cech's slightly differentiated point revolves around the child's choice, as consciousness slowly evolves, to include or exclude parts of the external world in "the process of ego formation" ("From Humbaba to the Wild Things"). Cech argues that it is up to the child to decide which concepts and influences will be included in the process of the formation of self-identity; the critic attributes power to the child and creates the foundation for the construction of childhood agency. At his arrival at the wild land, having gotten over the initial shock of coming up against the sea monster, Max rushes to secure his position of power over the Wild Things and chooses to tame them and become their crowned king. Spitz's remark on the absence of fixed boundaries between the concepts of inside and outside in a child's consciousness, in juxtaposition with the point analyzed earlier in this chapter regarding the interpretation of Wild Things as an aspect of Max's individuality, raise a number of challenging questions; since the Wild Things are not only the occupants of Max's external reality which is in turn a figment of his imagination, but also projections of his own feelings and inner state of things, is the power he exerts over them the power of his consciousness over his suppressed subconscious? As the Wild Things themselves have proclaimed Max their king "the most wild thing of all", is Max bound to be consumed by his innermost feelings and desires in which case his power over them is virtually non-existent? How is Max to determine the individual features of his identity if he cannot determine the boundaries between the self and the "other"?

Spitz's comparative analysis of the representation of childhood in William Steig's and Sendak's picture books indirectly addresses some of the questions raised in relation to the issue of Max's maturation and identity formation. Spitz acknowledges the pervasive motif of the lonely, endangered child finding resolution in the end as the omnipresent theme of the narrative of growing up in children's

literature ("Ethos" 65-66) and immediately proceeds to point out the dramatic difference between Steig and Sendak in terms of their respective approach to this "dominant ethos" in their works. Unlike Steig's heroes who find resolution in "the enduring bonds that underpin a young child's sense of security and welfare in the world" (66), Sendak's lonely child remains alone from the beginning till the end experiencing none of the merits of Steig's "interpersonal connectedness" (68). In contradiction to her earlier analysis of the inside/outside blurred boundaries but consistent with her point regarding the inclusion of the "other" in the act of the formation of identity, Spitz highlights the isolation of Sendak's protagonists. The critic argues that Max, Mickey and Ida, unlike Carroll's Alice, are profoundly alone and abstain from communication with anyone else but their own inner self (70). In her delineation of the ending of *Where the Wild Things Are*, Spitz comments on the lack of interpersonal activity and depicts Max as the secluded child who has achieved no empathy through comprehension of other minds and ends up exhausted, selfishly wanting to be cared for much like the boy in Silverstein's *The Giving Tree* (72).

Betsy Bird, Julie Danielson and Peter Sieruta provide an alternative reading of Max's character as they argue for a brave rather than lonely, needy child who does not turn to his parents for assistance or protection, but instead, chooses to chart his own course and "masters his fears alone, resigning triumphantly over the Wild Things" (22). Coats in her analysis of Sendak's child characters also makes a point which can be adopted to view Spitz's dominant ethos in a different light. According to Coats, Max makes a choice –choice being the key word once again- to set his mother up as the "other" and rather than execute his threat to eat her up and, thus, totally negate the influence of the "other" on the self, he identifies with her by simulating her exercise of power over him in his exertion of power over the Wild Things ("Maurice Sendak's Theater of the Abject"). First, Max stares into their yellow eyes without blinking in order to dominate them, resembling the almighty adult whose persistent, unblinking stare is more intimidating than a thousand words of scolding and reprimand. Then, in a kind of mimicry, Max orders the Wild Things to stop their wild rumpus and sends them off to bed without supper exactly like his mother has decided to do with him. From this perspective, it can be argued that in Sendak's subtle manner of depicting the emotional and psychological barriers of the child's identity through his relationship to the "other" and the others, Max emerges as a character whose

consciousness is receptive to the effect of others' minds on his life; the young boy appears exhausted in the end precisely because he is sensitive to the feelings of another creature, his own mother. Introspection being a prerequisite to interpersonal connectedness and empathy, Max also puts himself through the complex process of experiencing himself, or parts of himself, as the "other", through partial identification with the Wild Things as projections of his enraged self. In her closing remarks, Spitz claims that Sendak successfully captures children's inescapable feelings of being estranged and misunderstood and through that acknowledgement empowers them to feel less isolated ("Ethos" 74); therefore, the thesis argues, solitude acquires a positive meaning, it becomes the essential context for the introspective process that triggers an understanding of the multiple aspects of the self and empowers the child in his exploration of individual identity.

As the questions regarding the limits and limitations of Max's power to manipulate his conscious and unconscious desires and emotions remain open, the aetonormative theory sheds light on the power struggle between childhood and adulthood which the process of growing up inevitably entails. Drawing on Bakhtin's theory of the carnival to complement the concept of aetonormativity, childhood is paralleled to the carnival as "temporary, transitional phenomenon" while the empowerment of the child through fantasy is seen as a state which ends with the return to the original order (Nikolajeva "From Mythic to Linear" 136-137).

From the aetonormative point of view, as discussed in the first chapter, the disruption of the child/adult power balance achieved through transportation to a world where the child's imagination rules inevitably comes to its end with the character's return to reality. The children in *The Cat in the Hat* experience empowerment through the mother's displacement from the domestic chronotope and the transformation of their home into the subversive Cat's field of fantasy game; the mother's return dictates the Cat's disappearance and signifies the return to the previous state of things both for the child and the adult. In her analysis of childhood/adulthood power relations in *Where the Wild Things Are* Nikolajeva states that in the end Max is depicted crownless and about to dispose of empowerment as a wild creature. Therefore, the critic concludes, the conflict remains open-ended and, thus, unresolved, confirming the adult superiority ("Power, Voice and Subjectivity" 169). Max is viewed as the disempowered child who has renounced his wild things and returns to

the normality of his bedroom, his meal, his regular life under the parent's control and authority. Coats's theory of childhood as a "place of abjection" in her analysis of Sendak's trilogy concurs with Nikolajeva's interpretation. Coats discerns a pattern on the course of the three books and reads their stories as a developmental narrative in which each child character attempts to construct the borders of the self, that is, build their individual identity; at the end of that course "a clean and proper social body emerges" as a result of the characters having abjected or rejected their wild, socially unacceptable feelings, thoughts and behaviours, their uncontrollable, disruptive otherness ("Maurice Sendak's Theater of the Abject").

This thesis proposes an alternative reading of Max's last picture in the book which suggests that the boy may have taken off his wolf hood but is still wearing the rest of his wolf attire as a visible proof of the enduring features of his wildness. The dish of food on Max's table is further proof of the duplicity of meanings which can be extracted from the image. Max only returned home after his mother yielded to his unchanging, persistent wildness and partially retreated in his punishment, offering food as a sign of reconciliation with the child's disruptive behaviour. The detail of the moon in this last picture further contributes to the understanding of Max's shifting position in the unstable child/adult power equilibrium.

The moon in Sendak's trilogy has been interpreted as a figure symbolic of the parental figure and its impact on the child character (Adams and Rabkin 236; Singer 24). The image of the moon in *Where the Wild Things Are* is perceived as the subtle reminder of the seemingly absent mother in the book. Sendak's depiction of the absent, distant mother converges with Dr. Seuss's representation of the vanished mother in *The Cat in the Hat*. Despite the absence of the two female characters, the text emphasizes the significance of their respective roles in the story. The fish, the boy and even the Cat constantly refer to the mother as a figure of domestic authority who is to be taken into consideration while in *Where the Wild Things Are* the centrality of the mother emerges through the power of the present moon/absent mother analogy. Though Max's mother is never actually seen, her presence is constantly felt in a manner analogous to the repeated apparition of the moon in the images of the nocturnal landscape in the illustrations of the book. On the level of the verbal/visual dialogue the absence of the mother from the text as well as the pictures denotes a symmetrical relationship between the word and the image. However, the symbolic

representation of the mother as a cosmic body in the illustrations of Max's adventure shifts the symmetry in the text/image interaction towards complementarity. The alternative image of the mother as the moon fills the gap created in terms of the parent's role in the child character's course of action. According to Singer the full moon in the last picture is indicative of Max's eventual acceptance of the mother's authority (24). Nevertheless, a close look at the changing phases of the moon throughout the story reveals that the moon was full during the wild rumpus ceremony as well. Therefore, Max's defiance of parental authority culminates under the gaze of the mother. The rebellious subversion of the word/image power balance in the wild rumpus scene with the image completely overtaking the text emphatically manifests Max's complete surrender to wildness. Rather than implying Max's acceptance of the parental authority, the presence of the moon points towards the imbalanced power relation between the child and the adult and illuminates Max's oscillation between wildness and maturity.

Reed recognizes in Max an existential hero who succeeds in understanding and modifying disruptive behaviour in order to gain control of his world (19). Max is undoubtedly the existential hero struggling to figure out the contradictory elements constitutive of his identity; he revolts against his mother's authority, yet, employs her methods of power exertion; he dominates the Wild Things but is equally dominated by their mesmerizing otherness in the wild rumpus; he becomes king of the world but decisively turns his back on his subjects claiming his right to the maternal love. Beauvais alludes to Foucault's definition of power as a complex system of relations of force, "the interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations" (Foucault "The History of Sexuality" 94) in order to point out that in the child/adult interplay the adult party can never be the sole or even main power holder and the child cannot systematically occupy the position of the powerless party (Beauvais "The Problem of 'Power'" 77). The lack of closure at the end of *Where the Wild Things Are* is not a declaration of the prioritization of the adult over the child, neither a denunciation or abjection of Max's otherness; the inconclusive resolution is a reflection of the open-ended power struggle between the self and the "other", the conscious and the subconscious, social propriety and disruption; it is an ambiguous, long-standing game and, like Max's meal, it is *still* hot.

3.3.2 *The beauty of the image of childhood is in the eye of the beholder*

In his 1987 interview to Bernard Holland, Sendak dispels the myth of the nostalgically innocent childhood; he exposes the adults' failure to realize that in their attempt to protect children through sentimentalization they are actually protecting themselves as, according to the author, children are tough and resilient and, in fact, know everything (Sendak). Sendak's criticism of adult normativity manipulating and reinforcing an idealized version of the concept of childhood converges with the theory of aetonormativity pinpointing the power imbalance between the child and the adult (Nikolajeva "Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 16). In keeping with the aetonormative perspective, Reed points out that children in Sendak's trilogy cannot escape experiencing the adult world from a subordinate point of view due to the adults' domination of their actions, choices and modes of behaviour for their own protection (18).

Where the Wild Things Are has been celebrated as a revolutionary picture book dealing with the difficult themes related to childhood. As Michael Rustin comments, the book created the imaginative space "for children to confront their emotional experiences and anxieties" (139). However, at the time of its publication the book provoked intense reaction and loud opposition for exposing children to inappropriate themes against the alarmed, protective adults' approval (J. Ball 167; Scott 100). The refreshingly realistic depiction of children's world through the scary images of the Wild Things was only one of the devices Sendak employed to question and undermine the dominant, at the time, notions surrounding children's position in an adult world. As it will be further explained in this chapter, the construction of the verbal and the visual text in *Where the Wild Things Are* is predicated on the author/illustrator's chosen techniques aiming at the empowerment of the child reader/viewer, thus, accentuating the effect of the book on the adult/child power relation.

Even though the narrative voice and the point of view rarely coincide in children's literature (Nikolajeva "Beyond Grammar" 11; Rata "Children's Literature" 240), in the case of *Where the Wild Things Are* the story is told in the third person with the omniscient adult narrator also functioning as the focalizer in the story.

Nevertheless, Sendak uses this conventional narrative technique only to subvert it and allow the child reader to freely participate in the meaning-making process in the verbal and the visual text. Sendak's manipulation of the key theme of Max's relationship to his mother minimizes the adult narrator's omnipresence by refraining from extensive, didactic descriptions of their respective feelings for each other and deploying, instead, what Nikolajeva and Scott refer to as "one of the most central motifs in children's fiction: the dilemma of eating or being eaten" (183). Several theorists have stressed the importance of the theme of cannibalism in the broader field of children's literature and *Where the Wild Things Are* more specifically as an effective means of providing access to the characters' repressed emotions, hidden thoughts and inner psychological world (Berglund xiii; Gottlieb, "Where the Wild Things Are" 849; Indick 88-89; Nikolajeva, "Power, Voice and Subjectivity" 170). At the beginning of the story Max is getting aggravated at the wild enjoyment of chasing the dog causing various damages round the house while building his tent. Rather than explicitly stating Max's feelings of anger, impatience and disappointment, the author allows the child character to vent his negative emotional energy by shouting at his mother: "I'LL EAT YOU UP!". Max's cannibalistic threat serves the purpose of illuminating the child character's intense emotional condition without resorting to the omnipresent narrator's interpretative intervention (Indick 88-89; Nikolajeva, "Power, Voice and Subjectivity" 170). Max's statement is typed in capital letters which, complemented with the exclamation mark at the end of the sentence, stand out so vividly in the text that they attract the reader's attention rendering the threat powerful, to the point of audibility. The mother's response to Max's declaration of his menacing intentions reinforces the relation of the theme of food to the issue of emotional expression as she uses the deprivation of supper to punish Max for his insolence and demonstrate in this way her disappointment in her son's demeanour.

Shifting focus from the child character to the child reader of the book, the use of the motif of cannibalism, eating and being eaten, functions as a device of empowerment of the child reading the story. The metaphor of food as the concrete proof of the parent's care for the child's welfare is a concept which the child reader can easily grasp in order to comprehend the symbolic meaning of food consumption and deprivation in the book as the corresponding expression and denial of love and affection. Further down in the story the Wild Things' cannibalistic reaction to Max's

departure from their land, "Oh, please don't go-we'll eat you up-we love you so!",
highlights the connection of the act of eating (up the other) with affectionate feelings.
Finally, the dish of hot supper awaiting Max at the end of his wild adventure
effectively conveys the constancy of maternal love which the child reader can relate
to and, therefore, decipher based on equivalent prior experience.

The synergistic relationship between the verbal and the visual text in the book
also plays a substantial part in the process of empowerment of the child reading the
book. As the author and the illustrator of the picture book, Sendak has equally
elaborated on the word and the image; the subsequent power exchange between the
two forms of representation has become the object of long-standing, extensive
research. Sipe, Oittinen and Nodelman have extensively analyzed the word/image
relationship to include punctuation and sentence length as verbal elements exceeding
their textual boundaries and producing a visual effect on the reader/viewer who
performs the act of gap-filling while reading the book. Oittinen identifies the
alternating pattern of sentence length in the verbal narrative as a story-telling device
also creating a visual effect and dictating the rhythm of the reading-aloud process
(135). Nodelman explicates the role of the punctuation on the plot movement with the
strong pauses in the text accompanied by pictures which rather than echoing the
action in the textual narrative move the plot forward ("Words about Pictures" 251-
252). Sipe focuses on the first six pages in the book and relates the length of the
sentences comprising the text to the act of the turning of the page; each page turn to
the next opening reveals an open-ended, unfinished sentence on the right side of the
double spread followed by a picture on the left side which increases anticipation of
the events ahead. In this manner, the reader's engagement to the story is intensified
through enthusiastic speculation over what is about to occur ("Picturebooks as
Aesthetic Objects" 38-39).

Integration of the above theoretical viewpoints in an overall consideration of
the word/image power balance points to the reinforcement of the child reader's power
position; manipulation of the child reading the book is constantly contested through
the repeated sabotaging, and eventually, subverting, the role of the omniscient adult
narrator. The three double spreads of the whole-page illustrations of the wild rumpus
scene in the middle of the book exemplify the domination of the image over the text
becoming the visible proof of the withdrawal of the omniscient narrator and the

emergence of the child reader as the protagonist in the act of meaning-making. As there is no verbal text to direct the audience's understanding, the young viewers turn to the images in order to interpret their content and form their own views on the development of the story. Lambert refers to the full-bleed page designs as a dynamic visual device dissolving the boundary between reality and the world of the book (32). The full-page illustrations of the wild rumpus, indeed, break down the perceived borderline separating reality from the imaginary world of Max and the Wild Things and increase the child viewer's feeling of proximity to the child protagonist.

Employing Sipe's analytical tools in this discussion, it is inferred that the use of position and distance plays a crucial part in the construction of the intimate relationship between the child character and the child viewer ("Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects" 31). Throughout the book the position of the viewer is on a level with the space of the illustrations but the distance from the depicted scenes varies depending on Max's location; the more Max distances himself from the domestic environment going deeper into the wild kingdom, the closer the viewer comes to the centre of action. The scene of the wild rumpus is where the viewer becomes totally immersed in the full-bleed image so that the feeling of empathy with the child hero is heightened to the point of rendering the setting of the tropical forest and the primitive dance taking place in it literally accessible. At this moment of the audience's identification with the child character, the child viewer shares Max's royal position and experiences power; Max has tamed the Wild Things and rules over them, the power of the image has prevailed over the text and, in this context, the child viewer is empowered over the potential adult reader and the obscured adult narrator. Prior to the culminating point of the child viewer's participation in the meaning-making process through empathy with the child protagonist, interaction with the represented participants in the book is established; the visual text deploys the technique of "engagement" through eye contact, in Painter, Martin and Unsworth's terminology of reading visual narratives (19), or "gaze" according to Kress and Van Leeuwen's Visual Social Semiotics ("Reading Images" 122). While "an ocean tumbled by with a private boat for Max", the wolf-suited protagonist directly facing his reading audience looks at them and smiles. Direct eye contact and the presence of facial expression addressed to the audience signifies the engagement of the represented participant with

the viewer and makes evident the potential of the active involvement of the child viewer.

The constantly changing relationship of the word and the image in the segment of the narrative following the wild rumpus contributes to the child's active participation in the interpretation of the text. Reversing the interactive pattern in the first part of the book, the text and the image appear to be entering a new phase of antagonism in their relationship; the words resurface and the pictures gradually withdraw from the left side of the double spread returning to their designated area on the right page. As Max abandons the world of his dreamy fantasy and approaches again the reality of home, the verbal text seems to be gaining power over the image. However, the antecedent domination of the image over the word and fantasy over rationality cannot be outdone or eliminated and neither can the child reader, Max's partner in adventure, be diminished to the position of the passive, disempowered audience. The lengthy narrative statements stretching over the left side of the last three double spreads in the book lacking the strong pause of the full stop symbol, or any other punctuation mark, keep the reader's interest alert; with every turn of the page the audience, like Max, comes closer to the end but the lack of closure signs, that is punctuation marks, intensifies excitement. The observation of the pictures discloses that Max's return home does not exactly equate a return to the previous state of things as the last two illustrations may be contained on the right side of the double spread but they remain frameless covering the entire space of the page.

According to Sipe, *Where the Wild Things Are* ends with both the verbal and the visual text circling back to the beginning and creating a symmetry, which is pleasing to the audience and ensures closure and resolution ("Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects" 37). However, this assumed symmetry is not perfectly balanced and accurate, and closure is not achieved in the pleasingly effortless manner the critic discerns. As a matter of fact, closure is so pleasingly complicated that the reader will have to go back and forth several times to study the details in the last picture and reread the last few narrative lines before it is clarified whether Max really experienced or only dreamed of his adventure; even then, the meaning of the message conveyed in this last round of the word/image power struggle can only be subjectively interpreted allowing the audience to draw their own conclusions as to how the story really ends.

3.4 Something is queer in the state of *Where the Wild Things Are*

Sharyl Peterson and Mary Lach's research stresses the prevalence of gender stereotypes in the 1960s and 1970s children's books including picture books in *The Horn Book* booklist as well as Caldecott winner picture books; according to their findings not only male characters outnumbered female characters on a standard basis but the portrayal of the latter represented passivity and incompetence as the main features of femininity (185). Although *Where the Wild Things Are* is not specifically mentioned in the article as a picture book exemplifying stereotypical gender portrayal, it does qualify as a case for investigation in the specific context having been written in 1963 and having received the Caldecott award. Taking into consideration that children's literature reflects social and cultural norms related to the construction of the individual identity, this thesis thoroughly examines issues related to gender roles and stereotypes.

The analysis of *The Cat in the Hat* in the previous chapter through a gender lens brought into focus the ambiguity of the power position of the mother in the domestic chronotope; it also drew attention to the fluidity of the power balance between the boy and the girl in the family, Sally and her brother, which challenge and interrogate the restrictions of the stereotypically masculine and feminine role in postwar America. Accordingly, gender representation in *Where the Wild Things Are*, an integral part of the puzzle composing Max's subjectivity, is an important issue which requires to be addressed. Several theorists have pointed out the significance of gender in children's literary texts functioning as the primary indicators of the dominant cultural values at a specific historical time (Krasny 79; Leak 280; Lesnik-Oberstein, "Children's Literature: Sexual Identity, Gender, and Childhood"; Peterson and Lach 188-189; Stephens 40). Karen Krasny refers to the "conceptualization of normativity" (79) that is the process of understanding and articulating contemporary prevailing gender expressions, thus, defining the development of individual gender behaviours. According to Karin Lesnik-Oberstein the interest in analyzing "sex, gender, identity, the body, childhood" lies not in what one sees "but in *how* that seeing takes place, and by whom and why" ("Children's Literature: Sexual Identity, Gender, and Childhood"). Sendak's portrayal of gender is conveyed explicitly or

implicitly through the conflicting aspects of the figures that populate the verbal and the visual text in *Where the Wild Things Are*; the invisibility of Max's mother contradicted by the constant appearance of the moon as a symbol of femininity is, at the same time, reinforced by the complete absence of the father figure; the patchwork of diverse monster parts composing the gender-unidentified, hybrid bodies of the Wild Things; Max's empowered presence as the sole male character in the story coming up against serious psychological and emotional challenges complicating gender related expressions of selfhood.

Analysis of gender representation in the book has evolved into two broad strands. Nodelman, Shaddock and Bruzelius adopt an approach in their critical considerations of *Where the Wild Things Are* founded on the bipolar perception of gender roles underpinned by the oppositional relationship between male and female (Bruzelius 211; Nodelman, "Making Boys Appear" 4-9; Shaddock 156-159). Caitlin Ryan and Jill Hermann-Wilmarth, Jacobs and Rebecca Brown pursue the exploration of gender roles on the basis of "the disruption of normative categories" (Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth 144); the concept of the hybridity of gendered identity is investigated either in the deconstructive context of queer theory or through the deployment of "monsters' literary and visual symbolism" that depicts the fluidity of gender expression (R. Brown 90). Although diametrically opposed, both strands shed light, from a different perspective, on gender representation in *Where the Wild Things Are* as it is reflected in the characters' bodily expression illustrated in the visual text and their behavioural norms defining gender performance depicted in the verbal text. Engagement in a discussion of the above arguments will provide a more integrated understanding of gender configuration in the book and respond to the pressing call for carrying on the debate about the construction of gender without resorting to what Lesnik-Oberstein regards as "assumptions which themselves establish norms, limits, and exclusions" ("Children's Literature: Sexual Identity, Gender, and Childhood").

Shaddock interprets Max's masculinity through the nineteenth-century adventure/explorer narrative motif, identifying the male heroic character who gains power and authority over the wild natives escaping the "feminine confines of domesticity" (156). Gender configuration in Shaddock's view is established on the premises of a power struggle between the male and the female determined by the influence of conventional perceptions, originating from the Victorian times; such

concepts privilege men over women, segregate their respective sphere of action and socially empower men via the restriction of women in the domestic space. Despite the fact that towards the end of her analysis Shaddock endorses Sendak's understanding of the wild as the inevitable counterpart of civilization, one closely bound to the other psychologically and culturally (159), the critic refrains from extending this understanding to the stereotypical representation of the male/female binary distinction and the oppositional logic supporting it.

Nodelman, on the other hand, while following the same binary logic of the male versus the female, underscores the "paradox of masculinity" in *Where the Wild Things Are* as well as other children's stories like *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*; the male character is expected to be wild, a savage, and, at the same time, in need of nurturing and domestication ("Making Boys Appear" 7-9). The implication behind Nodelman's "paradox of masculinity" is that the depiction of the male gender in *Where the Wild Things Are* reflects rather than questions social assumptions regarding masculinity. The text asserts masculinity as the expression of complicated, therefore remarkable and stimulating, inner processes. On the contrary, female representation celebrates stoic acceptance of domestication, which, in its turn, suggests a linear, non-challenging form of thinking and acting on behalf of women. Even the fact that Nodelman invites his students to think alternatively regarding *Where the Wild Things Are* and substitute Maxine for Max as the central character only to reach the realization that "what was desirable for Maxine was just inevitable for Max" ("Making Boys Appear" 4) reveals a similar line of thinking; the underlying perception is that the male character resists oppression of his individuality while similar female gender performance can only be described as wishful thinking.

Bruzelius in *Romancing the Novel* appears to agree with Nodelman's argument also noting the male versus female subjectivity pattern in children's books. Comparative analysis of the roles assigned to Max and his female counterpart in *Outside Over There*, Ida, confirms, according to Bruzelius, "the continuing difficulty in our culture of using the conventions of romance to write a girl's adventure" (211). Ida is the caretaker whose entire adventure revolves around her nurturing duties as the surrogate mother of her abducted baby sister. Max, on the other hand, is the rebellious adventurer who "goes off by himself and has a fine time" (211). Resonating Nodelman's perspective Bruzelius identifies male gender representation in the book

with the dynamic claim of individual freedom and female expression with the impossibility of release from the domestic sphere allocated to femininity. What is at work here is a process of Ida's gender othering; this process defines her subjectivity in direct opposition to Max's role as the archetypal male character and, in that context, fails to highlight the common elements binding the two heroes against or rather outside the cultural limitations of their respective gender. Ida's centrality in the story as the main female character defies the tradition of underrepresentation of females in children's books, which according to research, is manifested in the insignificant, secondary roles of girls and women in children's stories (Basow 149; Kimmel, "The Gendered Society" 155; "The Gendered Society (6th ed.)" 181; Peksen 160). Ida abandons her home and, in the same manner as Max, boldly steps *outside over there* into the unknown and struggles to confront all challenges and problems even if the ending of the story does not exclude the possibility of their future reappearance. Turning to Max, the interpretation of his gender behaviour is oversimplifying and reduces his adventure to an entertaining break from home rules and restrictions.

Nevertheless, as discussed earlier in this chapter, Sendak's narrative and illustration techniques intertwine the concepts of time and space, fantasy and reality demonstrating the artist's intention to create a complex, fluid context for Max's mission and, also, reflecting the complications of bordering Max's character in a fixed, binary gender identity. Further reflection on the representation of the mother in *Where the Wild Things Are* reinforces the latter point regarding Max's gender identity. On the one hand, Max's mother is rendered invisible, limited to her dismal, secondary role of punishing her son's impertinence. On the other hand, the cosmological element of the moon is a powerful visual symbol of the complexity of the subtle but, by no means, insignificant role of the mother in the book and Max's relationship to his mother. As pointed out earlier in the chapter, Sendak's representation of the obscure figure of the mother bears similarities with Seuss's portrayal of the invisible mother in *The Cat in the Hat*. Both female characters remain hidden, and practically silent, in the background of the story, yet, their role is far from marginal as their powerful influence on the child characters is constantly manifested in the verbal and the visual text. Max's adventure is fundamentally based on the need to explore his individual identity and the feminine element, his mother's presence, is an influential parameter of this exploration.

In his journey Max has resisted, fought and come to terms with the conflicting elements of his existence. In this light, Nodelman's paradox of masculinity is not the declaration of the socially expected duality of boyhood but the substantial proof of the paradox of the constructedness of gender whose arbitrary limitations over male and female behaviour cannot eliminate diverse gender behaviours expressing individual subjectivity. From this perspective, even Max's wildness, which Nodelman sees as a fixed, one-dimensional concept at the extreme end of the domestic space, is endowed with a more dynamic, versatile meaning. Adopting Brown's interpretation of Wild Things underscoring "the monster's significance for reimagining boys' gendered and social identities within Cold War and millennial domestic contexts" (91), the concept of wildness emerges as an unsettling force empowering Max in his experimentation with crossing cultural boundaries and social restrictions. As Karen Bond contends, the concept of wildness in *Where the Wild Things Are* is embodied in unusual, hybrid creatures of an ungendered animal bodily form (31); Max's partial identification with the Wild Things, which this chapter has already established, signifies the obscure boundaries of his corporal and behavioural gender expression.

Slightly shifting from Brown's subsequent point addressing the monsters' innate possibility for transformation (91), this thesis maintains that monsters possess the innate possibility for displaying Max's fluid gender role. Max identifies with the Wild Things but, simultaneously, invades their territory and subjugates them. The visual text questions the traditional male hero narrative and, even at the peak of his power, Max, the masculine, heroic conqueror is illustrated small, almost fragile in his white costume riding the scaled backs of the enormous, rough Wild Things. Max's relationship to the Wild Things is one of constant power exchange and negotiation breaking down the dichotomy of the self versus the "other" and the unwavering normative definition of the male gender identity ensuing from it.

Brown's line of interpretation of gender roles in *Where the Wild Things Are* belongs with the strand of theoretical approaches of gender representation in the book celebrating diversity and endorsing difference as an innate quality of the mobility that characterizes gender performance and behaviour. In their analyses of gender in picture books, Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth employ queer theory in order to highlight the multiple, shifting aspects of gender behaviour, and more specifically male gender behaviour, in the book. Exploration of gender through a queer lens, the critics point

out, facilitates a critical investigation of "incoherencies in terms that seem to be solid and unproblematic" questioning binary, fixed categories of gender identity (146). Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth perform a queer exploration of Max's adventure through a meticulous analysis of the verbal and the visual text in the book. The critics read Max's mischief accompanied by the construction of his private domestic space with a pink, floral-patterned sheet as an example of "gender transgression of domesticity" which triggers Max's queer impulse to create an alternative world growing among the space of the actual world of common reality (152). In this alternative universe Max realizes that being a wild thing can mean both being alienated from society, in his mother's use of the term, but, also, feeling acceptable as part of a community of creatures perfectly comfortable in their shared, wild, hybrid subjectivity (153). The critics conclude that the illustration of Max taking off his hood when he returns to his room is indicative of "his days of overt performance" being over, as well as his gained knowledge that he "can and does belong to multiple worlds" (154).

Although I agree that Max's gender representation is founded on the displacement of polarized gender perceptions, I do not share the critics' view of Max's return to his room as a signifier of anything being over for the child protagonist. On the contrary, the analysis of the text/image synergy in the last scene in the book has demonstrated the ambiguity and complexity of Max's experience and underlined its inconclusive, unresolved ending. Indeed, Max could not be marked by specific masculine gender traits conventionally attributed to the male protagonists of adventure children's stories of the 1960s or previous eras, but neither could he be identified as a character possessing finite knowledge of the present or future contexts in which he belongs or not. The land Where the Wild Things Are is the creation of Max's power of imagination, a fantastical extension of his bedroom into a tropical, almost mythical land whose existence is founded on an illusion; it is the refuge where Max can accommodate his wild otherness, the liminal site where time and space are intermingled breaking down all barriers of conventional perception of reality and normativity. In his review of *Ways of Being Male* Kenneth Kidd comments on the paradigm shift in the 1980s children's books depicting emerging masculinity "as a project rather than a given reality" (436). A forerunner of this shift in gender configuration, it is precisely this non-fixed, ongoing process of the construction of

Max's gender subjectivity that his wild heterotopia underlines providing the setting for conventional and disruptive modes of behaviour to simultaneously coexist, compete and interrelate. In this site of empowerment Max seeks an alternative way of being and as the Wild Thing/monster he is in possession of transformative possibilities that allow him to question his mother's authority and the social constraints she imposes on him. Nevertheless, Max is a boy still in the process of growing up while experiencing the tension and trepidation of understanding his social surroundings in relation to his own internal world. Max, the rebellious male adventurer is first and foremost a child whose subjectivity is not finitely defined and fixed not even at the end of the story.

3.5 Concluding remarks

Childhood survival and coping with the challenges of the gradual transition to adulthood emerges as the central issue in *Where the Wild Things Are.* In his discussion of Sendak's work, Sipe argues that "we err greatly in rejecting certain themes as inappropriate, or harmful to the tender sensibilities of the young" ("The Private and Public Worlds" 88). Sendak's picture books openly contradict the romanticized view of childhood innocence depriving children of their right to deal with the real, agonizing aspects of youth. *Where the Wild Things Are* captures that climactic moment of the young hero's mischief, the turning point in his childhood experience when the disruption of socially acceptable patterns of behaviour seems the only way out of his growing inner turmoil, while the deployment of fantasy towards the creation of an alternative wild world is essential.

Max's journey to the land of the Wild Things is founded on the synergistic relationship between the verbal and the visual text in the book; through the image/word synergy Sendak throws light on the power relationship of the author/illustrator to the text and the implied child reader/viewer. Arakelian addresses the issue of the author's control over the text and its subsequent influence on the power relationship between the author and the implied child reader through his

argument of the "manageable image" (122); the fluctuation of Max's control over his surroundings, his inner world and the Wild Things is in immediate correspondence to the disruption of the balance in the respective power relationship between the word and the image. In agreement with Arakelian's point, this chapter has demonstrated that every visual and textual element in the book functions as the site of contestation and power struggle between the adult and the child, social and individual subjectivity, fantasy and realism. As the story proceeds, the audience can trace the variations in the arrangement and the space occupied by the text and the illustrations from one double spread to the other underpinning the changing status of Max's control over the various parameters of his perilous journey. Through this technique Sendak undermines the author's power over the medium by evoking the child reader's ability to interpret the text in defiance of the condescending adult's practice of manipulation and overt didacticism. As Beauvais observes in her discussion of the notion of power in children's literature, the "author's intentionality" can be seen as "a way for the author to appeal to the might of the child reader, rather than a decision to set in stone his or her final word on the text" ("The Problem of 'Power'" 84). Sendak's confession in his Caldecott award speech that "*Where the Wild Things Are* was not meant to please everybody- only children" (154) positively highlights children's empowerment as the ultimate target and accomplishment of his work.

4. HEATED CONTROVERSY AND POWER GAMES IN THE COOL SHADE OF *THE GIVING TREE*

4.1 Introduction

The Giving Tree, written by Shel Silverstein in 1960 and published in 1964, is a reflection of the 1960s turbulent sociocultural background. Although the Civil Rights movement and the second wave of feminism peak in the 1960s, inequality and oppression continue to underpin the contradictory American reality. According to several surveys conducted on gendered characters in picture books throughout the twentieth century[1] the vast majority of children's texts tend to reinforce the male/female dichotomy and perpetuate stereotypes related to the respective roles of men and women (Berry and Wilkins 4). Picture books published in the US between 1930 and 1970 exhibit greater disparities than any other period in the twentieth century (McCabe et al. 197-198). *The Giving Tree* clearly ascribes heterosexual gender roles to its two characters, the female tree and the Boy. Richard Lingeman of *The New York Times* reports in his 1978 article on Shel Silverstein that the writer's response regarding *The Giving Tree* was that the book relates the story of the relationship between two people. Indeed, throughout the narration the author refers to the tree with feminine pronouns and, thus, establishes the character as female, the woman in the relationship with the Boy. The visual text complements the verbal text and deploys the power of anthropomorphic fantasy to hybridize female human and plant traits in the depiction of the tree; in the first double spreads the trunk of the tree is always, unrealistically for a fully grown tree, leaning towards the Boy while the tips of the branches inviting the Boy towards her resemble the fingers of an elegant female hand rather than the limbs of a tree; the image of the tree in the eleventh double spread with her branches caressing and hugging the Boy most convincingly affirms that "she loved a little boy" as a mother would love her son.

"Once there was a tree…", the book begins, the Giving Tree, who shares a beautiful friendship with a young boy spending his days playing with her, eating her

apples and demonstrating his affectionate feelings for her in every possible way. As the years go by and the Boy grows older, the exclusivity in the relationship between the two characters is ruptured; the Boy makes new friends and becomes interested in other girls forgetting about the Giving Tree and leaving her alone most of the time. When the Boy has become a grown man, his priorities in life have changed and money rather than friendship appears to be of utmost importance to him. The relationship between the Boy and the Giving Tree enters a new phase, one during which the Boy only returns to his friend in order to ask for something that he believes he needs and the tree supplies the Boy with the means that will fulfil his wishes and make him happy. Gradually the Giving Tree is stripped of her apples, so that the Boy can make money by selling them; her branches are cut off and used by the Boy to make a house; eventually, her trunk is also sacrificed in order to be made into a boat for the Boy to sail away from his troubles. In the end, the Giving Tree is diminished to a stump and the Boy has become a bitter, old man who cannot do much more than sit on what little is left of his friend and rest.

Silverstein published *The Giving Tree* after having been rejected by several editors such as William Cole at Simon and Schuster who felt the book was "not a kid's book- too sad" but neither a book for adults as it appeared "too simple" (Paul). Nevertheless, the publication of the ostensibly straightforward story of the tree and the Boy generated a broad, long-standing discussion revolving around the ideological messages communicated through the text. Is *The Giving Tree* a moralistic story glorifying self-sacrifice and altruism? Is it a blatantly sexist, anti-feminist text whose female protagonist feeds the ungrateful male child "patriarchal ideology along with her apples?" (Fraustino, "The Apple of Her Eye" 61). Does the text provide a "poignant representation of the parasitic relationship" between "the alienated modern subject" and nature (Moser 3)? Is it a philosophical narrative disguised as children's fiction exploring the elusive nature of the notion of happiness? This chapter addresses the diverse interpretations of the book and argues that *The Giving Tree* negotiates rather than moralizes about the issues raised in the text, that is, the power struggle between fantasy and reality, man and woman, child and adult, humanity and nature. The examination of the image/word interplay is instrumental in the amplification of the complexity and inherent controversy of these open-ended, enduring issues. The structure of the chapter underpins, on the one hand, the fragility of the power balance

between reality and fantasy "presented as fantasy, not a life possibility" (Lingeman) in Silverstein's own words, and, on the other hand, the intensity of the conflicting aspects of the inevitable course from childhood to adulthood.

4.2 "But all the magic I have known I've had to make myself": fantasy versus reality in *The Giving Tree*

4.2.1 *"Boy interrupted", fantasy disrupted*

The unresolved tension underlying the complex relationship between fantasy and reality in *The Giving Tree* is made explicit right from the very beginning of the picture book. "Once there was a tree", the opening line of the story, makes an allusion to the typical introductory phrase of "Once upon a time" traditionally used in fairy tales and folk tales; however, at the same time, it maintains a degree of differentiation which highlights the diversion from rather than the convergence with a genre based on the deployment of the imagination. The representation of the oppositional binary between fantasy and reality in the verbal and the visual text highlights the ambivalence of the boundaries separating the true from the imagined as the relationship of the word and the image is equally fluid ranging from complementarity to counterpoint and contradiction.

Drawing on the black and white illustration style the images in *The Giving Tree* are completely devoid of colour with the exception of the cover page which shows a picture of the Boy and the Giving Tree in vibrant red and different shades of green. The significance of black and white illustrations in picture books, as opposed to the use of colours and the effect they produce on the reader, is underlined by several theorists of visual criticism. Sipe argues that bold, bright colours would be inappropriate for the illustration of a story that is a dream or fantasy such as *Where the Wild Things Are* and that "the surreal quality of the story is heightened by the lack of colour" (29). Painter, Martin and Unsworth in their analysis of images in children's

literature introduce the notion of ambience, that is the influence of colours on the emotions of the audience. The critics argue that picture books illustrated exclusively in black and white produce minimal emotional impact on the viewer as the vibrancy, warmth and familiarity in relation to colours is virtually absent (42). According to Nodelman images in picture books tend to convey the details of emotion and setting which words may leave out ("Words About Pictures" 69). It can be inferred that the use of colours enhances and reinforces the emotional involvement and participation of the audience in the represented scene. The deployment of fantasy in children's books serves the purpose of engaging the audience in a process of visualizing distressing or confusing aspects of reality in an alternative manner; as Nancy Johnson and Cyndi Giorgis phrase it, "readers' own imaginations are sparked" while they "relate the familiar to the unfamiliar, and ponder never-considered possibilities" (504). Nevertheless, the black and white illustrations far from encouraging the involvement of the audience in the development of the fantasy-based plot of the story actually deprive their viewers of the ambience instigating their participation. The urge of the reader/viewer of *The Giving Tree* to submerge emotionally in the fantastic relationship between a talking tree and a human being is restrained through the use of black and white in the visual text. Echoing Hunt's conviction that alternative worlds founded on imagination "must *necessarily* be related to, and comment on, the real world" ("Introduction: Fantasy and Alternative Worlds" 7), Silverstein portrays a world of fantasy which is a fictional construct but also a reflection of aspects of reality in the relationship between women and men and nature and humanity.

Because of the lack of colour, Silverstein's depiction of the Giving Tree is based on the use of lines and shapes creating the effect of an anthropomorphic entity, an element of nature which is shown to be invitingly moving its leafy branches in response to the Boy's playful actions during the first half of the story. The verbal text in this first part of the book is limited to the narration of the routines establishing the setting of the two characters' relationship; the tree's ability to talk is empowering an anthropomorphic fantasy in the book that is only revealed in the second part of the story where the emotional background of the relationship is altered and large sections of dialogic interaction between the tree and the Boy prevail. In her analysis of the use of line in picture books and its "great expressive potential" Kiefer refers to the curving lines which create a rhythmic and peaceful sense as well as the quality of line

which conveys fragility and delicacy when thin, and strength and weight when it is thick (79). The thick, black lines shaping the outline of the trunk and the foliage of the Giving Tree denote the importance and weight of the character in the book but also its centrality as an individual life-form of nature and its stability as a point of reference in the everlasting cycle of life. The rounded, curving shapes in which the tree is depicted leaning over the Boy and embracing him during their games produce a double effect. On the one hand, they attribute a human-like emotional quality to the tree whose attitude towards the Boy appears to be delicately loving and protective in the same way that a mother would care for her child. On the other hand, this depiction of the tree triggers the viewer's emotional involvement in the fantastical character's life.

The framing device deployed in *The Giving Tree* further obscures the boundaries separating imagination from reality. As no inner or outer lines signify a border keeping the verbal text apart from the visual text, the white margins of the pages forming each double spread in the book create an air frame which encloses the left, right and bottom part of the image and leaves unbounded space on the top for the foliage and branches to move freely. The technique of the expanding and diminishing air frames in Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* fundamentally functions as the visual expression of the changes in Max's emotional constriction (Nodelman, "Words about Pictures" 52) but it is also inversely proportional to the expansion of Max's fantasy world. Silverstein consistently uses this framing device in his picture books *The Missing Piece* (1976) and *The Missing Piece Meets the Big O* (1981) which follow the illustration patterns of *The Giving Tree*; the illustrator's aim is not to reflect his characters' emotional state, but to capture and convey the intensity in the power struggle between fantasy and reality. However, because of the sparsity of the objects illustrated in stark contrast to the white, to the point of blank, background of the pages in the book, the margins operating as frames create the impression of merging into this background making it impossible for the reader to discern where the frame begins and ends or even whether the frame exists at all. The ambivalence of the air frame, the spacious white margins surrounding the double spread, provides what Nodelman refers to as "a focus that demands our attention" ("Words about Pictures" 53).

Several theorists explicitly refer to the importance of frame in picture books (Imada 14; Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer 17; Nikolajeva, "Play and Playfulness" 64). According to Sipe the frame functions as the borderline between

the illusion of the represented world and "the reality of the physical page" ("Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects" 34) while Moebius states that the act of breaking the frame is a technique which allows the reader/viewer to take up the role of the participant of the story "from within" ("Introduction to Picturebook Codes" 150). In his *Where the Wild Things Are*, Sendak, Silverstein's contemporary, uses the technique of framing in combination with gutter bleeding; the writer aims at the manifestation of the synergistic relationship between the verbal and the visual text and illuminates the importance of the power struggle between fantasy and reality in the formation of the aforementioned interaction of word and image. The gradual expansion of the fantastical landscape over the domestic scenery of the civilized world which culminates in the wild rumpus scene is expressed through frame-breaking and the consequent domination of the power of image and imagination over the verbal text. In *The Giving Tree* the image of the tree is illustrated spreading from one page of the double spread to the other repeatedly crossing the gutter. In this first part of the book where narration does not entail direct speech or dialogue, the verbal text appears at various points either on the left or the right page opposite, under or next to the tree. In this manner, emphasis is placed on the power play at work between reality and imagination and the degree of influence each part exerts on the reader.

The image/word relationship in the double spread of the seventh and the eighth page requires special attention; the leaves of the tree are depicted in motion falling down and into the Boy's stretched hand; the words "and he would gather her leaves" comprising the narrative text are placed on the right side of the tree, one below the other forming an imaginary curving line pointing towards the lower part of the page mirroring the movement of the dropping leaves. The particular arrangement of the text on the page resembling the shape of a concrete or visual poem generates the illusion of words as leaves, that is, words acquiring a pictorial quality which destabilizes and fundamentally shifts their status in the verbal/visual relationship and stimulates the visual imagination of the audience. The image of the falling leaves denotes the passing of time in the natural process of the change of seasons while words functioning as images themselves literally occupy the space of the picture and become representations of the notion of space. This juxtaposition of the verbal and the visual in the form of W. J. T. Mitchell's imagetext ("Picture Theory" 9) establishes

the fluidity of the identity of the word and the picture and disrupts the boundaries separating them as binary opposites.

As the plot unfolds the significance of the concept of time is further accentuated in the narrative; the passing of time signifying the Boy's course towards maturation is associated with the dramatic changes in the relationship of the two characters in the book.

But time went by.

And the boy grew older.

And the tree was often alone. (n. pag.)

The text clearly states that the Boy's progression from childhood to adulthood gradually and irreversibly changes his attitude towards the tree; the effect of time on the relationship between the tree and the Boy is indisputable as far as the Boy's part is concerned. However, close examination of the visual text reveals that the flow of time exerts no power over the tree whose image remains emphatically unchanged during this period of transition while the Boy's figure changes from one page to the next and is endowed with a sour look of disappointment permanently fixed on his face till the end of the story. Time goes by and the Boy grows older, as the narrative text asserts, but the tree is, though alone, impervious to the process of ageing to which the Boy is subject; the notion of time is portrayed as a human-made construct, an arbitrary notion whose scope of influence does not extend outside human sociocultural perception. The text raises questions regarding human understanding of reality through artificial concepts such as time and space. Consequently, an interpretation of the fantastical relationship between the tree and the Boy founded on the perception of the tree, a symbol of nature, as a commodity dominated by humans is also challenged. Silverstein does not exploit the potential of Bakhtin's chronotope, as Seuss in *The Cat in the Hat* and Sendak in *Where the Wild Things Are*, to demonstrate the arbitrariness of the rules distinguishing fantasy from reality. Dr. Seuss's fantastical characters, the Cat and Thing One and Two, disrupt the home chronotope, the realm of parental order and authority, and establish a "play" chronotope within its boundaries highlighting the inextricable link between children's fantasy and adult reality. Max's transition from the domestic chronotope to the land of the Wild Things, the fantasy chronotope, as he

sails off "in and out of weeks" and "through night and day", is based on the conceptualization of time and space as intertwined constituent parts of reality as well as fantasy. The author/illustrator of *The Giving Tree* relies on the counterpoint between image and text as a point of tension to exemplify the constructedness of reality and expose the illusory power of its artificial constituent elements, such as the concept of time, over the imaginary fictional world or the actual world outside the picture book.

"Then one day the boy came to the tree" the text announces and initiates at this point the second phase in the relationship of the tree and the Boy, one during which the power balance between reality and fantasy once more shifts and, is eventually, disrupted. The narrative text persistently refers to "the boy" who is now a grown-up man as the visual text makes plain to see; this text/image counterpoint at work suggests that as the tree is symbolic of nature, the generic character of the boy functions as a metaphor for humanity and its ephemeral existence in the eternal natural world. The tree also calls his friend "the Boy" and asks him to play in her shade and "be happy". The Boy repeatedly rejects the tree's playful invitations in their every interaction and in a very matter-of-fact manner declares his adult identity.

"I am too big to climb and play," said the boy. (n. pag.)

...

"I am too busy to climb trees,"

said the boy. (n. pag.)

...

"I am too old and sad to play,"

said the boy. (n. pag.)

The visual text confirms the male protagonist's statements regarding his adulthood and simultaneously contradicts both the narrator's and the tree's perception of the character as a "boy". As the tension between the different perspectives and consequent interpretations in relation to the Boy's identity escalates, the unstable word/image spectrum of power reinforces the oscillation between the effect of

illusory imagination and realistic rationality. The representation of the character of the tree similarly disrupts the balance and equilibrium between reality and imagination both in the verbal and the visual text. Just when the unimaginative, crudely realistic, materialistic aspects of the Boy's character begin to unfold, the Giving Tree assumes additional anthropomorphic features, becomes the Talking Tree and responds to her friend by directly speaking to him for the first time in the book.

"Come, Boy, come and climb

up my trunk and swing from my branches

and eat apples and play in my shade

and be happy." (n. pag.)

The representation of the talking, anthropomorphic character in the text addressing the emotional, youthful aspect of the Boy's identity, or what is left of it, is accompanied by the placement of the image of the tree on the right page of the double spread, which has only occurred once so far in the book. According to Louise Ravelli and Robert McMurtrie new information is presented on the right side in the picture book (106) which in the case of *The Giving Tree* signifies how the speaking ability of the tree reinforces and empowers the fantasy aspect of the anthropomorphic character.

However, the development of the plot in the pages to follow points to the direction of Moebius's interpretation of the position of the picture book character on the right side of the double spread; according to Moebius, characters on the left page are considered to be in a secure, confined space while placement on the right symbolizes moving into a situation involving risk, adventure and even danger for the character ("Introduction to Picturebook Codes" 149). Page after page the Boy mutilates the tree cutting off one part after the other until there is nothing left to take away but the trunk. The image of the naked, devoid of leaves and branches, tree is positioned once again on the right side of the double spread of the forty-first and forty-second page signalling the imminent danger threatening her survival. The Boy, indeed, takes away the last vital part of her existence in order to make a boat out of it. The narrative text in the pages following the removal of her trunk is revealing of the feelings of the tree:

And the tree was happy...

but not really. (n. pag.)

The picture of the weedy stump to which the Giving Tree has been reduced is positioned at the bottom of the right side of the double spread below the short but astute comment "but not really". According to Sipe "placement in the bottom half is a sign of greater pictorial weight or "down-to-earthness" and may also mean more threat or sadness" ("Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects" 30) while Kress and Van Leeuwen point out that information placed on the top part of the page indicates "the ideal" ("Reading Images" 193). Furthermore, the diminished image of the tree produces a significant change in the framework of the double spread as there are no branches, leaves or trunk occupying the upper part of the page.

In a perfectly balanced verbal and visual narrative Silverstein's choice to privilege the economy of words and pictorial elements over explicitness operates in a manner inversely proportional to the intensity of the emotions expressed and the multiplicity of the meanings extracted from the text. At no other point in the book does reality and its inherent realism attack fantasy with such force but, at the same time, nowhere else in the book does fantasy take such a firm grip on the reader. The tree is illustrated axed down to earth, no longer able to maintain her idealistic visualization of her relationship to the Boy from the top of the world, that is, the top part of the page in the context of the picture book. There is nothing imaginative or fantastic in the visual representation of nature annihilated by mankind in the name of profit; yet, the viewer cannot help but completely empathize with the fantastic, anthropomorphic character of the Giving Tree whose motionless stump drawn in the corner of a frameless blank page as if left alone in the middle of nowhere vibrates the sadness of her loss and pulls the reader in the dramatic experience of her physical and emotional elimination.

And after a long time

the boy came back again.

"I am sorry, Boy,"

Said the tree, "but I have nothing

left to give you- (n. pag.)

The story of the Giving Tree and the Boy is coming to its end with the return of the "Boy" who has, in fact, become a humpbacked, decrepit old man unwilling and powerless to do anything other than sit on the stump that his friend is. The tree demonstrates her unwavering commitment to her relationship with the Boy inviting him to spend time with her even though it can only entail sitting down on her remaining grassy old stump.

Come, Boy, sit down.

Sit down and rest."

And the boy did.

And the tree was happy. (n. pag.)

The line "And the tree was happy" concluding the narrative text is placed on the left page of the double spread against the picture of the old Boy sitting on the stump of the tree which is a replica of the picture in the previous double spread only here the Boy has his back slightly turned on the reading audience and is illustrated as if viewed from a significantly longer distance. This inconsistency in terms of the point of view, the position of the reader/viewer in relation to the picture, which has remained stable throughout the book only to suddenly change in the last frame along with the amplification of the distance separating the viewer from the image produces a significant effect; it increases the tension in the relationship of the realistic and the fantastic in the book and, also, determinedly affects the audience's involvement in the story.

Sipe points out in reference to the differentiation of the point of view that "abrupt changes from one perspective to another" invest illustrations with a surreal quality ("Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects" 31); Kress and Van Leeuwen relate the distance separating the viewer and the represented participant in the image to the degree of intimacy established between the two (Moya-Guijarro 2984; Kress and Van Leeuwen "Reading Images (2nd ed.)" 127-128). The audience has so far watched the exchanges between the tree and the Boy from upfront and aligned at an eye level angle, implying an equal power status of the viewer and the characters but, also,

facilitating the viewer's involvement in the imaginative setting of the narration and identification with its characters. The unexpected shift in position, perspective and distance in the last double spread unsettles the reader's view of the characters and challenges the audience to consider the depicted scene and its verbal expression on the opposite page in a less emotional and more detached manner. It is up to the reader to decide whether the assertion of the verbal text that the tree is happy is actually complemented or contrasted by the image which could be interpreted as a soothing, comforting closure of a resilient friendship or the sad ending of a self-destructive relationship.

In Silverstein's own words happy endings "create an alienation" in the child reader who "comes to think when his joy stops that he has failed, that it won't come back" (Lingeman). The author's constancy in ending his books "on a note of ambiguity" undermining "this very conceit of happiness" whose presence is recurrent in the text (Margalit) is in line with Dr. Seuss's and Sendak's practice of open-endedness questioning the moralistic character of children's books and rescuing the audience from the "improbably neat happy ending" (Sutherland 182).

4.2.2 *The Giving Tree: anthropomorphic, anthropocentric or posthumanist?*

Anthropomorphism is a literary trope intricately related to children's literature (You, "The Necessity of an Anthropomorphic Approach" 183-184); anthropomorphic animals, animated toys and other objects bearing anthropomorphic characteristics thrive in children's stories. Potter's Peter Rabbit, A.A. Milne's Winnie the Pooh and Charlotte the barn spider by E.B. White are only some examples of anthropomorphic animals as key characters in children's literature. The Cat in the Hat, the Wild Things, Lafcadio the lion in the respective works of Seuss, Sendak and Silverstein also display human-like behaviour and attitudes which invest the narration with its imaginative quality proving the point raised by Rebecca Lukens that the artistic device of anthropomorphism creates fantasy in a children's story (49). The anthropomorphic character of the Giving Tree bears all the features rendering it a believable human-like creature. The Giving Tree is sentient and deeply emotional; she has gender and her

own individual voice as she is capable of speech; her image, though undoubtedly that of a tree, is depicted in motion associating her branches and leaves with the arms and hands of a woman, perhaps a maternal figure, in a distinctly human manner towards the Boy. Critics have developed conflicting interpretations of Silverstein's deployment of anthropomorphism. Lisa Fraustino ("The Rights and Wrongs" 156) and Maude Hines (139) integrate anthropomorphism in *The Giving Tree* into the anthropocentric trend; conversely, Zoe Jaques (127) examines Silverstein's use of anthropomorphism as a manifestation of a posthuman approach to the relationship of nature and man and strongly interrogates the hegemonic role of humanity over animals and the natural world. This chapter proposes a third alternative based on the interpretation of the role of the tree as an agent of fantasy and an agent of nature in the text.

The origins and connotations of anthropocentrism have been inextricably linked to environmental ethics and the belief that "value is human-centred and that all beings are means to human ends" (Kopnina et al. 109). Using a typically dualistic paradigm, the anthropocentric thinking positions humans as the measure of all that lives and advances the idea of the world as a passive place to be dominated by human authority. In the anthropocentric point of view, the anthropomorphic character of the Giving Tree is assigned the didactic part of benefiting the reader with what Fraustino refers to as "the human morals" of the story in her analysis of the ethical implications of this process of addressing the "other" through anthropomorphic representation ("The Rights and Wrongs" 156). The main function of the character of the tree in the story is to perform its role in developing the audience's empathy, allowing the young reader to experience from within the tree's life and respond emotionally to the tensions in the relationship between the tree and the Boy. Following the same line of argument, Hines views the Giving Tree as "merely instrumental to the story" (139) precisely because her sole function is perceived to be that of pleasing the Boy's requests in a manner subservient to the human interests. Furthermore, as Adam Weitzenfeld and Melanie Joy contend, the non-human perspective in the anthropocentric approach is marginalized because the other, non-human species, achieve meaning only as instruments to human consciousness (4); in the case of the Giving Tree the character becomes the instrument facilitating the development of the audience's capability for empathy and compassion. In this light, the character of the

tree is established on the presupposition that the picture book aims at moralizing, imparting knowledge and wisdom in terms of how the readers, the young children, are to understand the world and form values that will guide them through their interaction with other human or non-human beings.

Although children's literature plays a major part in shaping children's minds and their ideas in relation to their place and position of power in the world, authors like Seuss, Sendak and Silverstein consciously abstain from didactic practices and forcefully question and challenge the desirability of the normalizing effect of such trends on the child reader. *The Butter Battle Book* by Seuss leaves the grave question of an imminent nuclear threat open to interpretation motivating the audience's critical thinking and keeping them alert to contemporary social and political developments. Max, Ida and Mickey, Sendak's heroes, never completely give up oscillation between fantasy and realism while Silverstein's satirical texts expose the rather arbitrary, nonsensical aspects of conventional representations of reality. Amy Ratelle remarks in *Animality and Children's Literature and Film* that "Western philosophy's objective to establish a notion of an exclusively human subjectivity is continually countered in the very texts that ostensibly work to figure human identity" (4). Several examples of Silverstein's work manifest the complexity of the exchange between humans and nature through its reflection in the word/image synergy and the equally complicated relationship of reality and imagination in the text. Some of the cases at hand include the difficulty of the Missing Piece to form a functional relationship with animals, plants or other geometrical shapes it came across; the displacement of Lafcadio the lion from hunted animal to human-imitating hybrid, back to wild animal; the shifting power position of the Giving Tree in her relationship with the Boy.

Jaques demonstrates in counterpoint to the anthropocentric approach that a reading of *The Giving Tree* through the lens of posthumanism destabilizes "commonly accepted boundaries that arrange the world hierarchically" (Persky 88). Posthumanism has its roots in the political and social movements of the 1960s which deconstruct the notion of the human imposed by the dominant humanist ideology. Environmental, feminist and countercultural movements of the period challenge established politics and construct their own alternative narratives as subjects (Ferrando, "Towards a Posthumanist Methodology" 12; Papadopoulos 204); posthumanism acknowledges the inherent diversity in the human species and proposes

that "no specific type of human can symbolically represent humanity as a whole, just as no species can hold any epistemological primacy" (Ferrando, "Towards a Posthumanist Methodology" 12). Posthumanism brings forth an understanding of humanity as part of the natural world but not its centre; it examines the interconnectedness between man and nature establishing the fluidity of the boundaries separating them and exposing the weaknesses of the binary logic maintained in the anthropocentric discourse (Braidotti 34-35; Ferrando, "Towards a Posthumanist Methodology" 10). Children's literature critics such as Jaques, Maija-Liisa Harju and Victoria Flanagan refer to the deployment of posthumanism as a way of representing complex issues of identity formation and the human/non-human relationship to young audiences (Flanagan 22; Harju 4-5; Jaques 5). As Nikolajeva insightfully points out, posthumanism has raised awareness regarding issues of hybridity, yet such issues have been a vital part of children's literature for ages ("Recent Trends" 136).

Turning to Jaques and *The Giving Tree*, the critic's analysis extensively reflects on the role of fantasy in the "ambiguous affiliation of humanity and nature" that is embodied by the two fictional characters (127); the fantasy of the tree as a sentient natural being prompts the fantasy of "an inter-being conversation" and reciprocity between the tree and the Boy (129-130). Silverstein is described as a radical posthumanist representing the tree as the central character and having her deliver the first spoken words in the narration (127). In the context of this argument, the anthropomorphic features of the tree become proof of Silverstein's posthuman understanding of the relationship between man and nature. The turning point in the relationship between the Boy and the tree, as well as fantasy and reality, is, according to Jaques, the scene of the final stage of the tree's mutilation leaving her a mere stump. The critic explicitly refers to the extract "And the tree was happy... but not really" as a moment of realism, a "jarring break in the fantasy of the tree sentience". The text discloses that the tree as a "botanic being", in Jaques's own words, is absolutely incapable of all emotions and that the fantasy of the tree's happiness or lack of it is an anthropocentric construction (129-130). This subversion of the anthropomorphic disrupts the surface reading that the tree finds pleasure in serving the Boy "in a kind of humanist fantasy about ecological resources being there for the taking" (130).

Although I agree with Jaques's interpretation of *The Giving Tree* as a complicated text which deploys the counterpoint between the word and the image to illustrate the conflicting relationship between nature and humanity, I do not share her view of the fantasy/reality power play. *The Giving Tree* is structured on the premise that the tree is anthropomorphic and, therefore, possesses human-like features. The text establishes the duality of the tree as an agent of nature but also as an imaginative character hybridizing fantasy with reality. What Jaques describes as the "humanist fantasy" about the tree, a representative of nature, being there for exploitation by the Boy, an agent of humanity, is not identical to the notion of fantasy as imagination in the narrative. The scene of the tree's mutilation by the Boy is viewed by Jaques as a rupture in the fantasy of the anthropomorphic tree. I contend that it is actually a subversion of the anthropocentric perception of nature as eternally available to humanity for exploitation; the text further supports this interpretation through the comment that the tree is not really happy with her systematic annihilation by the Boy. Nevertheless, the anthropomorphic representation of the tree is not disrupted or subverted as in order for the tree to feel the pain and the discomfort of the Boy's attack she has to be sentient. Jaques's argument that the tree is a "botanic being" devoid of all emotions, positive or negative, is inconsistent with the fundamental premise that, on the one hand, the tree is, indeed, part of nature, but on the other hand she can speak, interact with a representative of a different species and express verbal and visual signs of emotions in connection to the relationship with the Boy. The double spreads following the mutilation of the tree reinforce the tree's sentience as she continues to communicate with the Boy in an anthropomorphic manner.

"I am sorry," sighed the tree.

"I wish that I could

give you something…

but I have nothing left. I am just

an old stump. I am sorry…" (n. pag.)

Reduced to an "old stump" the tree remains a part of the reality of the natural world; at the same time she eloquently expresses wishes, feelings and thoughts in

manifestation of the powerful elements of fantasy present in the character as well as the preservation of the reality/imagination interplay in the verbal and the visual text.

4.3 "Once there was a tree … and she loved a little boy": the child-adult relationship

The uniqueness of *The Giving Tree* in terms of the representation of the child-adult relationship in its verbal and visual context lies in the fact that the child character in the story develops into a fully grown young man and, towards the end of the book, an elderly man, thus, dealing with the issue of the loss of youth which provides a perplexed, non-static perspective of childhood; at the same time, the child reader is motivated towards adopting a position of interrogation as identification with the child protagonist presents a considerable challenge with the child, on the one hand, changing into a dispirited, unappealing adult while, on the other hand, remaining in the eyes of the tree the beloved, eternally young boy.

4.3.1 *Childhood with an ironic twist*

The vast bulk of negative criticism the book has received since its publication up until more recently is directed to a feminist reading of the character of the Boy and his relationship with the tree. The feminist perspective highlights the male/female dichotomy but fails to acknowledge and consider both the aetonormative effect, in Nikolajeva's terminology, which significantly determines the parameters of the Boy/tree relationship, as well as the image/text synergy which constantly undermines binary approaches to the interpretation of the book. Gender roles emerging in the relationship between the tree and the Boy undeniably promote the agenda of the feminist and ecofeminist critics of the book ranging from Spitz and Fraustino to Hilary Pollack, Alice Deakins and Helen Sterk. Nevertheless, tackling the

complications of the relationship between the child and the adult demands an engagement with the story which is not limited to the male/female counterpoint. A feminist reading does not open up the scope of investigation to include childhood representation in the verbal and the visual text and, thus, downplays the importance of the issue in the book. This chapter extends the framework of analysis beyond dualistic thinking and focuses attention on the child/adult power struggle and the experience of childhood traversing the boundaries of what Ellen Miller refers to as an understanding based on "gendered embodiment" (258).

In response to the problematization of the process of interpreting the child/adult relationship in *The Giving Tree* Hines remarks on the variety of "radically divergent readings" inspired by the text in connection to its reception as a children's book and the assumptions regarding childhood attached to it (124). Hines makes extensive reference to the admirers of *The Giving Tree* viewing it as a moral story teaching kindness and selfless giving as well as the book's detractors reading it as a "hegemonic proliferation of white supremacy and patriarchy" (144); then, the critic proceeds to deconstruct all positive and negative moral judgements of the book as reflections of "children's literature's complicated historical relationship to didacticism, and a persistent belief in the power of children's books to transform readers" (124). Hines's argumentation is in line with Silverstein's proclaimed lack of interest in imposing his views and ideas on his young readers. In his 1975 interview to Jean F. Mercier, Silverstein expresses his hope that his readers "would find something to identify with" in his books but he also anticipates that his works trigger the audience into experiencing "a personal sense of discovery" and follow their own route of thinking regarding the ideological content of the book (Silverstein). In fact, Hines's reading of *The Giving Tree* is founded on the acknowledgement of the role of satire in the book challenging utopian notions of childhood innocence and the need for its prolonged maintenance (126-127).

Examination of the use of narrative devices such as irony, paradox and satire serves a double purpose. It determines the methodological grounds on which Silverstein's representation of childhood is constructed and it also establishes the terms on which the power relation of the adult writer and the child reader is developed. In this sense the extent to which the specific techniques are appropriate or effective in permitting and facilitating the child reader's understanding of the text is a

valid question demanding investigation. Nikolajeva dismisses the deployment of irony in children's books as ineffective in serving the writer's purpose of communicating diverse, direct and implied, meanings to the child reading the book because "it is widely believed, and supported by empirical research that young readers generally do not understand irony" ("Aesthetic Approaches" 204). Although several recent studies addressing the question of children's perception of irony present evidence that even very young children can appreciate and process humour, irony and sarcasm[2], children's literature critics such as Fraustino and Spitz comply with Nikolajeva's argumentation. Fraustino who fiercely attacks *The Giving Tree* in its entirety insists that "most people, especially children, read it as straight, not snark" ("At the Core of The Giving Tree's Signifying Apples" 287). Fraustino is in alignment with Spitz, another severe critic of *The Giving Tree,* who declares the impossibility of making sense out of the book unless the device of irony and humour is deployed but immediately proceeds to invalidate the use of irony because it "cannot be understood by a toddler" ("Inside Picture Books" 144). Despite the fact that the age span of the young readers of *The Giving Tree* stretches beyond the three or four years of a toddler, Spitz's point most eloquently expresses the opposition of a broad strand of critics to the use of irony in children's literature.

On the other hand, Sue Walsh in her analysis of irony in children's books defies the notion that "simplicity is what is appropriate to the child" (26); furthermore, the critic argues against the assumption that whereas the language employed in irony is of ambivalent meaning, the language of the child and for the representation of the child is or must be produced "as meaning what they say in all 'innocence'" (33). The perception of the child as innocent and, therefore, simple-minded underpins, according to Walsh's analysis, the reluctance of the adult to consider even remotely the possibility of the young reader beginning to figure out and participate in the complex process of extracting the multiple meanings of irony. Walsh opposes this essentializing approach to the representation of childhood subjectivity which Marah Gubar also discusses in her account of definitions of children's literature. Gubar contends that a depiction of childhood based on the incapability and innocence of children as opposed to adult maturity and complexity of thought is a reductive way of understanding childhood and ends up producing a static and highly stereotypical idea not only of the child but of the adult as well (211). Nodelman also addresses the issue

of childhood representation in children's narratives and suggests that the dynamics underpinning its writing constitute childhood innocence "as a utopian escape for adults from adult sophistication" ("The Hidden Adult" 220). Picture books ranging from *The Story of Doctor Dolittle* series (1920-1952) by Hugh Lofting to *The Snowy Day* (1962) by Ezra Jack Keats and the *Henry Higgins* series (1950-1977) by Beverly Cleary and Louis Darling are analyzed to exemplify visions of childhood evoking permanent inadequacy and eternal dependence on the protective adult (53). By contrast *Plain City* (1993) by Virginia Hamilton is examined in connection with Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) as a children's text undermining the idea of a safe, static childhood and relying on an increased level of irony in order to illustrate the child protagonist's state of constant uncertainty (54). This chapter aligns with Walsh, Gubar and Nodelman who point out the narrowing perspectives of binary assumptions perceiving the child in opposition to the adult and question the unsuitability or inappropriateness of irony, humour and satire as narrative techniques addressing young audiences. Turning to the author of *The Giving Tree*, Silverstein maintained his own ideas concerning what is appropriate or not for children, which he applied in his poems and picture books addressing young audiences (Bird, Danielson, and Sieruta 27).

The Giving Tree relies heavily on irony in order to express the conflicting aspects of the relationship of the tree and the Boy. There is a deep contrast between the image of the middle-aged man on the thirty-sixth page who has turned into a decrepit old man five pages onward and the tree's persistence on addressing him as Boy and inviting him to come and play like he used to do in the past; this contrast clearly points towards the breech in the relationship between the two characters and reveals fundamental differences in their respective perception of reality. The Boy now assumes the position of the other adult in the relationship and asserts his authority by imposing his demands on the tree. On the other hand, the tree appears to be unaware of the change in the Boy's character and oblivious to the fact that there is a growing distance between them, as their aspirations no longer coincide.

And so the boy cut off

her branches

and carried them away

to build his house.

And the tree was happy. (n. pag.)

The painfully obvious contrast between the image of the tree, now a mere trunk with no leaves or branches, and the verbal declaration of the tree's happiness amplifies the contradictory interaction between the illustration and the text and demands the reader/viewer's active participation in deciphering the meaning conveyed. Up until this point in the book the tree's feelings are expressed through her anthropomorphic representation with the branches joyfully moving towards the Boy and the leaves forming patterns similar to the fingers of a woman's hands tenderly hugging the young child. The tension between the word and the image becomes palpable as the tree is depicted bare, motionless, its roots smothered in weeds, incapable of visually expressing any emotion, still less happiness.

In the next double spread the Boy returns and asks for the tree's trunk in order to make a boat out of it. The image of the mutilated, diminished to a stump, tree on the left page of the twenty-second double spread is followed by the assertion "and the tree was happy" whose repetition in the form of a mantra throughout the book appears paradoxical in this context with the contradiction between the text and the illustration reaching a climactic point. The power of the absurdity in the statement declaring the tree's happiness is overturned with the retorting comment on the opposite page of the double spread "but not really"; this short, yet powerful, phrase exposes the irony in the verbal representation of the state of the tree and subtly raises the reader's awareness regarding the consequent shift in the dynamics of the power balance between the two characters. For the first time the text suggests that the tree is critical of the Boy's stance towards her and expresses a feeling of disillusionment which affects and questions the Boy's position in the relationship.

There is a consistent pattern in Silverstein's use of irony, parody and satire in his poems and picture books which generates the "conceptual continuity" of his work (Thomas "Reappraising Uncle Shelby" 289) and which functions as the means of conveying the challenging realities of life and their impact on both children and adults.

My dad gave me one dollar bill

'Cause I'm his smartest son,

And I swapped it for two shiny quarters

'Cause two is more than one!

...

And I went and showed my dad,

And he got red in the cheeks

And closed his eyes and shook his head--

Too proud of me to speak! (35)

The use of irony across the board of the poem "Smart" in *Where the Sidewalk Ends* 1974 collection humorously showcases the need of the child for parental approval but at the same time deconstructs the grave seriousness of the consequences of falling short of adult expectations for moulding the faultless, ideal/idealized child by allowing the child to laugh in the face of failure.

Whosever room this is should be ashamed!

His underwear is hanging on the lamp.

His raincoat is there in the overstuffed chair,

And the chair is becoming quite mucky and damp.

...

Whosever room this is should be ashamed!

Donald or Robert or Willie or–

Huh? You say it's mine? Oh, dear,

I knew it looked familiar! (35)

The twist in the end of "Messy Room" from the 1981 collection *A Light in the Attic* is highly satirical of the judgemental attitude of the protesting adult towards the negligent, chaotic teenager who eventually, and quite surprisingly, owns up to his messy lifestyle without feeling the need to apologize for it. The ironic turn in another work of Silverstein *The Missing Piece* does not evoke laughter on behalf of the audience but it inquisitively addresses the social norms and conventions dictating individual attitude, life choices and expectations. The big piece missing a little piece

in order to be completed spends day and night searching for its ideal partner; it finally fulfils its dream only to discover a little later that this relationship prevents it from doing all the other things that made life fun and meaningful like singing, stopping to notice the little, interesting details around it or talking to friends and acquaintances. Thomas argues that Silverstein's cartoons demonstrate the artist's "condemnation of such sacred cows as monogamy, romantic love, parenting, the nuclear family" ("A Speculative Account" 29). I believe that the ending of *The Missing Piece* with the protagonist recovering from its broken relationship and merrily continuing its search for the missing piece indicates that Silverstein does not actually attack conventions and institutions in a condemning disposition; rather, he displays their various, unpredictable impacts registering their fragile power over individuals and suggesting the possibility of alternative, diverse life courses.

Silverstein never saw himself as a successor of Carroll or Lear; nonetheless, the exploration of "the upside down, the messy, the nonsensical" (Lerer 206) in his works, the accentuation of ambiguity and contradiction through satire and irony, the subsequent impossibility to ascertain the author's ideas in his writings (Moser 4) place him in the sphere of influence of the literary nonsense. In this long line of authors of children's books who would not hesitate to embrace the "silly, scary or sophisticated" aspects of childhood Silverstein stands side by side with his contemporaries Seuss and Sendak. The character of the Cat revels in mockery, irony and satire of all that is conventional and proper at the children's home while the visual text consistently underlines the reversal of the Cat's verbal statements facilitating the young reader's understanding of the contradictory meanings expressed through the text/image synergy. Sendak's wild beasts display their "terrible teeth" and "terrible claws" as described in the text but their pictures also reveal their squashy bellies and comical haircuts leaving the reader to decide whether to be afraid or amused by them. The repeated ironic juxtaposition of the verbal declaration of happiness and the illustration of the slowly deteriorating relationship between the Boy and the Giving Tree alerts the audience to the incongruities between the word and the image and establishes an interaction between the reader/viewer and the text which goes on till the ambiguous, bittersweet end.

4.3.2 The struggle for voice, might and authority

Silverstein employs a third-person narration with external focalization in *The Giving Tree*; the author's choice to narrate the story from an external point of view conditions the reader's engagement with the text and has a significant impact on the power play between the adult narrator and the child narratee. On the one hand, external focalization allows the child reader to maintain distance from the narrated events and form a personal, individual judgement of the story and its participants. The audience observes the plot unfold without being tempted to step into the action and become involved or identify with the characters, especially the fictional child, to the point of adopting their perspective of the story. On the other hand, the presence of the external narrator who views events from outside and has insight into the entire world of the story and its characters' thoughts and feelings is not very far from the omnipresent, all-knowing narrator who views events from above and whose authority is not to be contested. Consequently, the question emerges as to whether Silverstein's narrative approach is, indeed, unintrusive and prioritizes the child reader's voice over the adult narrator's authority, thus, challenging the child/adult power relation.

The text speaks of the Boy and the Giving Tree in an almost factual manner reporting their actions and dialogues, the latter in direct speech as if in protection of the authenticity from the narrator's mediation. The only exception to this pattern is the repetition of the phrase "and the tree was happy", a conclusive remark on the exchanges between the tree and the Boy and the author's sole comment on the tree's state of emotions. Nevertheless, even this unique intervention on the narrator's part develops into a device of empowerment rather than manipulation of the audience's critical thinking about the story. The comment does not operate independently of the visual text, in fact, it can only be read in juxtaposition to the image of the tree on the opposite page of the double spread inviting the reader to examine the word/image correspondence and form an opinion regarding the state of the tree and the validity of the comment itself. When the tree has given away the last bit of her existence to the Boy and the text states, "And the tree was happy... but not really" the audience cannot but discern the irony in the repeated assurances of the tree's happiness simply by considering them in contrast to the image of the tree's bareness. What Silverstein

achieves here is to motivate the reader to interpret the tension between the word and the image in order to explicate the relationship between the tree and the Boy and, consequently, provide the context for the child reader's voice to rise. Cynthia McDaniel examines the notion of empowerment of the child by analyzing Paulo Freire's work towards the advocacy of critical pedagogy and the idea of the "gift" of voice. In agreement with Freire's pedagogical theory, McDaniel argues that if the dominant adult gives voice to the child, then the adult retains the power to take it away unless the receiver is grateful and conforms; such a process "delimits possibilities" and entails an "inherent censorship" of what the receiver of the gift of voice, the child, may come up with and express (22). The child reader of *The Giving Tree* is not subjected to censorship; on the contrary, the audience of the book is at liberty to develop their own views and interpretations of the story. Although Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was not translated in English until 1970 and no bibliographical information indicates that Silverstein took an interest in pedagogical theories, the effect of social movements in support of the oppressed sweeping the US in the 1960s is clearly reflected in his work. *The Giving Tree* creates the structures, which Freire's radical approach promotes, for the child reader to be heard, become visible and empowered.

Focusing on the child inside the book, the fictional Boy, it is important to underline the time span of the portrayal of the Boy's life course from being a child to becoming an adult and, finally, an old man. The narration of the child's coming of age, and reaching old age, too, constitutes a novelty of the picture book which significantly affects childhood representation in the text. According to the age-based theory of aetonormativity children's books always privilege adult authority as it is through the adult's perception of childhood that the adult is represented (Nikolajeva "Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 16). Adult experiences are normative whereas children are positioned as non-normative and deviant, thus, adults' control and power over children is legitimized (Alkestrand 44; Stander 39). This oppressive function of children's literature, Nikolajeva continues, can be interrogated but not overthrown with the use of strategies such as the carnivalesque device of fantasy which allows the fictional child to be empowered but only "on certain conditions and for a limited time" (17). The two picture books which have been analyzed so far in the previous chapters, *The Cat in the Hat* and *Where the Wild*

Things Are, confirm that the use of fantasy as a device releases the fictional child from the constraints of parental authority and social normativity. However the ending in both books puts in doubt the temporary nature of the subversive effect and the inevitable return to the initial state of order which Nikolajeva describes. Neither of the two picture books provides the audience with a finite ending safely restoring the power balance between the child and the adult in favour of the latter. The deployment of an open-ended resolution preserves alive the influence of the anarchical Cat even after the return of the mother, and Max's still hot meal under the pale light of the full moon prolongs the effect of fantasy on the child reading the book. The arbitrariness of the rules and laws of adult society regulating reality is exposed and the child reader is set free to keep questioning its authority.

In the case of *The Giving Tree* fantasy is deployed to illustrate the relationship between the Boy and the tree, an anthropomorphic figure of nature falling under the category of what Nikolajeva refers to as anthropomorphic characters "living in symbiosis with a human child [and] have excellent premises for the carnival effect" (19). The subversive factor in *The Giving Tree* is that the Boy grows up and continues his relationship with the anthropomorphic tree but in his own adult, down-to-earth manner. The tension between what is real and what belongs to the sphere of fantasy simultaneously undermines not only the carnival effect of the deployment of the anthropomorphic character of the tree but also the privileged position of the rational adult Boy in the power balance with his younger self. The fact that the relationship between the child and the adult is explicated in the young Boy's confrontation with his adult self further complicates childhood representation in the text. The young Boy lives in a world of fantasy engaging in a relationship with a talking creature of nature very much resembling the stereotypical figure of the happy, innocent, playful child that, according to the aetonormative theory, is narrated by the nostalgic adult. The adult Boy, in contrast, holds a pragmatic, materialistic view of life, deromanticizes his relationship with the tree, now a resource to be exploited rather than a friend, and appears to be in control as the aetonormative theory would have it. However, at the end of the story the adult Boy is neither successful nor satisfied with his life choices. He is profoundly unhappy and has no physical strength or inner drive to sustain his empowered position; the restoration of adult normativity simply does not work for him.

In Milena Radeva's reading of *The Giving Tree* the tree's last gift to the Boy, the act of caring, also gives him time, in fact, "forces him, in a way, to take time", reconsider his life course and potentially "return to the playfulness and innocence of his childhood" (280). This brings to mind Beauvais's interpretation of the notion of power in the theory of aetonormativity; children are mighty in the sense that time is on their side, that is their power depends on the future ahead of them, while adults' power lies in their authority stemming from experience and expertise they have gained in the passing of time ("The Problem of 'Power'" 82). Radeva reads the Boy's final return to the tree and his request to rest his decrepit old body on the tree stump as his last chance to make amends for his pathetic behaviour; retrieve some of the joy in his friendship with the tree, the source of his childhood might; balance the loss of his deteriorated authority evidently proposing an optimistic resolution, a romantically happy ending to the story. However, as this chapter has already demonstrated, the analysis of the image/text relationship in the last two double spreads in the book establishes the fluidity of its inconclusive ending. The final image of the Boy sitting on the tree stump is powerful but also ambivalent and open to contradictory interpretations. The power balance between might and authority remains unstable rendering the relationship between the young Boy and his adult self unresolved.

4.4 Money makes the world of patriarchy go round: identity construction in a patriarchal, consumerist society

The Giving Tree has been fiercely criticized as a text portraying traditional gender-role stereotypes, therefore, promoting the Western patriarchal culture. Spitz, Fraustino and Greta Gaard are only some of the critics whose analysis of the gendered protagonists in *The Giving Tree* reads the text as a reflection of the sexist stereotype of male superiority and domination over the disempowered, objectified through motherhood, self-sacrificing woman. As I have already noted, the 1960s social and cultural conflicts constitute an essential backdrop that has a resonance in the *The Giving Tree* but rather than promoting or privileging patriarchal male normativity the

book portrays and highlights the contradictions and complications of gender representation in the fluid context of its era. The deployment of the anthropomorphic tree creates an analogy between the man/nature and male/female relationship which connects the text with the contemporary environmental movement and, also, renders its ambivalent meanings more accessible to the reading audience. Faithful to the non-didactic, non-moralistic principle which runs through his writings, Silverstein abstains from taking sides with either of his gendered characters and like his predecessors in this study, Seuss and Sendak, lets his readers decide on the interpretation of the story and evaluate the ideas and concepts underpinning it.

4.4.1 *The Giving Tree: co-dependent lover, selfish mother or misinterpreted female figure?*

Taylor Berry and Julia Wilkins state that "children's literature exerts a particularly powerful influence on children's ideas of appropriate gender-role behaviour" (6). Their research on gender representation of inanimate characters in picture books examines the various ways in which gender stereotypes are reproduced in children's texts. According to the research findings the covers of children's books, in terms of title and illustration, are dominated by male characters conveying the message of the importance of males in comparison to females (6). The use of colour on the book cover is also related to the stereotypical gender representation, e.g. pink for female characters and blue for male ones (9). The green cover of *The Giving Tree* with an addition of red elements featuring both the Boy and the Giving Tree whose name is also the title of the book unquestionably resists Berry and Wilkins's categorization. Furthermore, the depiction of the Boy, his physical deterioration, his repeated failure in the search of meaning and happiness in life, contradicts the portrayal of the male characters in the majority of the picture books under examination as "big and strong, and personality-wise ... brave, heroic leaders who completed heroic feats" (10). Berry and Wilkins's analysis draws special attention to the objectification of female characters more often shown without a face, or when given a face without a mouth, which prevents the expression of their feelings and ideas and also hinders the young readers from empathizing with them (13). Silverstein

could probably have made the tree human-like in a more obvious way by drawing features alluding to eyes and mouth; then, the outcome would steal emphasis away from the anthropomorphic movement, posture and the rest of the pictorial elements contributing to the depiction of the tree and holding an important part in the image/text relation. Additionally, the use of direct speech in the exchanges between the tree and the Boy functions as a reinforcement of the tree's power to express opinion, thoughts and feelings.

Another feature of stereotypical female representation that Berry and Wilkins point out by using *The Giving Tree* as an example is the trait of being self-sacrificing (11) which has raised feminist reactions against the book through the years and still continues to be the spearhead of feminist criticism on the matter. Spitz attacks *The Giving Tree* for presenting as a paradigm for its young readers "a callously exploitative human relationship" perpetuating the myth of the selfless, self-sacrificing mother ("Most Overrated" 46). Fraustino embraces Spitz's criticism and argues that the character of the tree represents that quintessentially good, inexhaustibly patient martyr mother who allows the Boy to consume her ("At the Core of The Giving Tree" 288; "The Apple of Her Eye" 61). Helen Sterk and Alice Deakins claim that *The Giving Tree* promotes the gender stereotype of women's existence and identity centrally defined by their roles as mothers; such stereotypical representation operates as "the embodiment of gendered fundamentalism" (xviii) and deprives women of decision and choice-making when it comes to finding their own way of mothering (xxi).

The verbal and the visual text in *The Giving Tree* establish from the beginning of the book the relationship of affection connecting the two characters.

Once there was a tree…

and she loved a little boy. (n. pag.)

…

And the boy loved the tree…

very much. (n. pag.)

The small child plays with the tree and relies on her for company and comfort in the same manner that the child depends on the mother for care and protection. The Giving Tree responds to the Boy's need for nurturing as generously and wholeheartedly as a mother would do for her child. "But time went by" the text narrates and signifies the beginning of the problematic phase in the relationship of the tree and the Boy which feminist criticism assails. The Boy develops into a greedy, unemotional man who has turned his back to the tree and only returns to her when in need of something, he believes, she has to offer. The tree maintains her loving attitude towards the Boy and satisfies his demands regardless of the dire consequences for her own survival. In other words, the tree remains unaffected by the Boy's shift towards raw realism to the point of cynicism not only in the sense that she does not adopt any such patterns of behaviour but most importantly because she lacks possession of defence mechanisms against the Boy's consuming desire. Feminist criticism declares that the tree does not resist her annihilation and condemns the author/illustrator for introducing the child reader to the sexist ideology which underpins the monolithic, stereotypical representation of the woman as the self-sacrificing mother. The underlying assumption is that this stereotypical representation of the female character aims at promoting the subjugation of women to patriarchal ideology and, thus, reinforce a female role-model which diminishes the power position of the woman in the domestic and the wider social context.

However, this chapter has thoroughly analyzed Silverstein's authorial practice of refraining from exercising judgement on his characters and patronizing his readers towards adopting the stance of one or the other. The Giving Tree is represented in a very matter-of-fact manner as self-sacrificing and the Boy does receive her gifts with remarkable lack of gratitude but that is a situation stated rather than promoted in the pages of the book. The writer refrains from the deployment of adjectives describing the mood, inner emotional world or character traits and strictly uses "sad" and "happy" to refer to the tree and the Boy. Fraustino ("At the Core of The Giving Tree" 287) and Spitz ("Inside Picture Books" 144) reject the ironic quality with which Silverstein has imbued the word "happy" in reference to the dismembered tree as a literary device children cannot understand. Nevertheless, it has been already established that the synergistic relationship between the word and the image in the

relevant text excerpts has the power to trigger the audience's observation skills which accentuate their perception of implicit meanings in the story.

Fraustino's argumentation against *The Giving Tree* includes a reference to *Where the Wild Things Are* and the character of Max's mother illustrated by Sendak who "deals with the psychological complexity of the primary bond from the child's perspective and steps away from modelling mythical good-mother behaviour or feeding adult needs" ("The Apple of Her Eye" 62). The critic's interpretation of the representation of the mother as revolutionary because it exposes her incompetence in coping with her son and addressing his rage fails to recognize the complexity in the relationship between the child and the parent reflected in the relationship between the text and the image. The figure of the mother in *Where the Wild Things Are* is not "real-life" as Fraustino sees her but illusive and aloof, yet, constantly present in the visual text even in the form of a celestial body symbolizing the fluidity in the power exchange between the text and the image. Still, there is a substantial connection between Sendak's and Silverstein's approach to the representation of the figure of the mother which inevitably points to a third party in the equation, that of the children's mother in *The Cat in the Hat*.

Women's role inside and outside the domestic household changes rapidly and significantly in the 1950s and the 1960s in the US but this evolution does not come without reaction from the supporters of conservative social norms and ideas. The one element that binds together the Giving Tree with the mother of Sally and her brother, and Max's mother is their "invisibility" diversely expressed in each respective picture book. The mother in Dr. Seuss's book is literally absent, thereby not visible, for the most part of the story and Max's mother is distanced from her son's wild rumpus experience only symbolically visible in the form of the moon. Focusing in *The Giving Tree* one could say that the notion of invisibility is reversed in the text. The tree is physically present in every encounter with the Boy and the central figure in all the illustrations in the book. However, the tree's existence as an active participant in their relationship has become invisible to the adult Boy who no longer sees her as a companion or mother but denies her subjectivity and diminishes her identity to that of his source of income. Does the author impose in any way the male character's perspective onto the audience? If anything, Silverstein's imagery makes it particularly difficult for the child reader to identify with the Boy exploiting, and, finally,

mutilating the tree. The ending of the story vividly demonstrates the catastrophic consequences of the male character's failure in empowering himself on the expense of the female tree and, thus, questions the male dominance⁄female subordination pattern.

4.4.2 *The Boy and the tree: a story of consumerism attacking nature?*

The environmental and conservation movement which arose in the US as a reaction to the catastrophic consequences of the Second World War on the environment and natural resources became of interest to American politicians known as the "grass roots" in the 1960s (Kuzmiak 265). "The politicization of environmental activism," which D.T. Kuzmiak describes as a "natural offshoot of the American political culture" (265), launched a new decade of intense social protest against industrial activity causing environmental degradation. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* published in 1962 reflected the writer's concern with the future of the living earth and became a landmark of modern environmentalism; the book sensitized the American public to a broadened concept of nature as a "quality-of-life" issue worth defending against corporate industrial interests (Silveira 503-504). Did the radical environmental movement galvanize Silverstein into ecological action? There are no indications of any active involvement on his part in the contemporary social and political fronts but his works clearly demonstrate the influence of the ecologists' opposition to ecosystem destruction and the depletion of natural resources for economic growth. The power relation between man and nature is eloquently illustrated in *Lafcadio: The Lion Who Shot Back* (1963) and it is one of the central issues underpinning *The Giving Tree* which was published one year later. Although Lafcadio did not draw the ecocritics' attention, *The Giving Tree* instigated a long-standing discussion over its representation of human alienation from nature due to modern materialistic and consumerist trends. The main argument against *The Giving Tree* and its scope of the man-nature power balance is put forward by ecofeminist critics; similarly to feminist criticism, ecofeminists regard the book as a reflection of the Western patriarchal culture subjugating nature, in a manner analogous to the subjugation of women, and objectifying it in order to serve man's consumerist needs. This section argues that Silverstein's deployment of the image/text synergistic relationship is the

writer/illustrator's subtle method of questioning man's exploitative relation to the natural environment.

Gaard claims that *The Giving Tree* reinforces the dominant culture's childish projection "of its own gendered image onto nature as selfless and self-sacrificing mother" in its symbolic representation of the "mindless, patient" maternal nature (66). The deployment of anthropomorphism in the book is a key feature of the text which, however, is aimed at increasing the fantasy/reality tension rather than restricting the representation of the female character in a stereotypical gendered image. The projection of human traits onto the maternal figure of the tree undoubtedly establishes a connection between woman as a mother and the concept of mother-nature but an understanding of the character as mindless is not supported either in the verbal or the visual text. "Come, Boy", "come and play", the tree greets the Boy every time he returns to her and invites him to spend time in her company. This constancy in the tree's attitude towards the Boy viewed in terms of the nature-human relationship is hardly evidence of nature's irrationality but verbal proof of the essence of nature as independent of human intentions and actions and, most importantly, resilient in the passing of time. The visual text reinforces this understanding of the concept of nature outside and beyond the anthropocentric framework with the increasing decay of the Boy's physical demeanour from one encounter to the next while the tree remains emphatically unchanged until the Boy, driven by his financial motives, begins destroying her.

Focusing on a different view Pollack declares that the representation of the tree as a "somewhat generic tree, identified clearly as a female" suggests "some unpleasant generalizations about male/female relationships" (1888). However I contend that the generic quality of the tree demonstrates her symbolic function in the story as the archetypal figure of nature. The Giving Tree is, in fact, a character without a name whose visual image demonstrates no particular elements which could individualize her representation. On a symbolic level, the generic verbal and visual depiction of the tree highlights her role as the embodiment of the archetypal mother nature. Furthermore, while Pollack comments on the generic character of the tree, there is no mention in her argument of the generic reference to the male character as the nameless "Boy". The practice of depriving both the tree and the Boy of specific names has a significant impact on the reader's ability to associate with the characters,

empathize with them and get involved in the story. As with Seuss's male character in *The Cat in the Hat* whom the audience gets to know as Sally's brother, Silverstein's readers are encouraged to maintain a degree of distance from the Boy and the tree and follow their relationship without being drawn into it. From this perspective, the generic representation of the male/female relationship alluding to humanity's relationship to nature allows the readers to see the actual consequences of the exploitation of nature for the sake of consumerism and position themselves ideologically on the issue.

The ambivalent ending of the book motivates the audience to use their critical thinking and reflect upon the portrayal of the effect of commercialization and materialism on the connection of humanity to nature. As Keith Moser explains in his analysis of the text, the Boy's annihilation of the tree suggests "that he has internalized the dominant ideology of Western society to such an extent that other material beings have only instrumental importance" (6). Nevertheless, the last scene in the book does not give insight into whether the Boy's return to the tree signifies his regret for having alienated himself from nature by turning to artificial sources of happiness such as money and property ownership, or whether he has simply resigned to the decadence he has inflicted on himself and nature. Is the relationship between humanity and nature beyond saving or has the Boy restored his connection with the tree, and subsequently, nature? It is up to the reader, the child reading the book or the adult reading to the child, to answer the question and provide closure to the story.

4.5 Concluding remarks

If there is one word which best describes *The Giving Tree*, Silverstein's most celebrated and, at the same time, most harshly criticized picture book, it has to be "controversial". Throughout the fifty-six years since its publication *The Giving Tree* has received the enthusiastic response of the majority of the reading public, a powerful proof of the book's appeal to children. Feminist and ecofeminist critics, however, have fervently rejected the picture book as a fundamentally chauvinistic text

glorifying the masochistic pleasure of self-sacrifice, imbuing the child reader's mind with poisonous ideas about the relationship between men and women symbolically represented in the relationship between man and nature. Emphatic condemnation of patriarchy, children's oppression by the adults, nature's overexploitation by humans would have rendered the book more compatible with the revolutionary social and political upheaval of the Civil Rights period. Nevertheless, Silverstein remained constant in his writing and illustration style founded on irony, satire, economy of words and sparsity of pictorial elements.

The synergy of the word and the image in *The Giving Tree* lies at the core of all power relations examined in the book and it is the complexity of this relationship that informs their representation. The Boy's manipulation of the Giving Tree is cruel and infuriating, yet, the text refrains from stating the obvious; instead, it allows the audience to explore the word-image counterpoint interaction which reflects the shifting power dynamics in the relationship between the tree as an agent of nature and the Boy as a representative of humanity and its hegemonic perception of the natural world. The anthropomorphic effect in the construction of the character of the tree, the use of visual devices such as the expanding and diminishing air frames and the juxtaposition of the verbal and the visual text in the form of the imagetext subvert the binary opposition between fantasy and reality. *The Giving Tree* draws upon the power of fantasy in order to represent but also subtly question aspects of reality and, thus, creates the context for the children reading the book to construct their own understanding of the world and find their place in it.

Notes

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[1] The studies conducted on gender stereotypes in children's books of the twentieth century which this essay refers to are:

Bian, Lin, Sarah-Jane Leslie, and Cimpian Andrei. "Gender Stereotypes about Intellectual Ability Emerge Early and Influence Children's Interest." *Science* 355 (2017): 389-391.

Hamilton, Mykol, David Anderson, Michelle Broaddus, and Kate Young. "Gender Stereotyping and underrepresentation of female characters in 200 popular children's picture books: A Twenty-First Century Update." *Sex Roles* 55.11-12 (2006): 757-765.

Wetzman, Lenore, Deborah Eifler, Elisabeth Hokada, and Catherine Ross. "Sex-Role Socialization in Picture Books for Preschool Children." *American Journal of Sociology* 77.6 (1972):1125-1150.

[2] The relevant research studies conducted by pshychologists addressing the issue of children's understanding of irony are:

Banasik-Jemielniak, Natalia, and Barbara Bokus. "Children's Comprehension of Irony: Studies on Polish-Speaking Preschoolers." *Journal of Pshycholinguistic Research* 48 (2019): 1217-1240.

Nicholson, Andrew, Juanita, M. Whaley, and Penny, M Pexman. "Children's Processing of Emotion in Ironic Language." *Frontiers in Pshychology* 4 (2013): 1-10.

Matthews, Gareth, B. "Children, Irony and Philosophy." *Theory and Research in Education* 3.1 (2005): 81-95.

5. THE PLAYFUL CHAOS OF MACAULAY'S COLOURFUL *BLACK AND WHITE* NARRATION(S)

5.1 Introduction

Black and White by David Macaulay was published in 1990 and won the Caldecott Medal Award in 1991. Macaulay draws attention to the complexity of the book which he sums up as "one large complex story, like life" in his 2001 interview (Macaulay). The writer's warning at the front endpaper of the book that it may contain one or a number of stories followed by the recommendation for "careful inspection of both words and pictures" accentuates the complexity and the playful subversiveness underpinning the verbal and the visual text in *Black and White*. Nikolajeva and Scott view "this uncertainty in the iconotexts" of the late twentieth century as a reflection of the shift "from absolutes to relativities" and the ensuing ambiguities characterizing the contemporary socio historical context (260). The 1990s was indeed a decade of accelerated social, cultural and economical change; advances in global communications, mass media and digital technology overturned traditional perceptions of time and space (Harrison 2); furthermore, the cultural context of the period was marked by the emergence of a number of discourses such as postmodernism, post-feminism and post-ethnicity "announcing the end of dominant cultural and intellectual paradigms" (Harrison 3). Postmodern adult literature flourished in the period from the 1960s to the 1980s but, as Allan points out (18), the postmodern picture book genre proliferated in the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century with the publication of texts such as *Black and White*, *Tuesday* (1991) by David Wiesner, *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (1992) by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith, *What's Wrong with This Book?* (1997) by Richard McGuire, Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park* (1998) and Emily Gravett's *Wolves* (2005).

Although the concept of postmodernism had given rise to controversy during the period of its culmination, subsequently defying a concise definition (McHale 5),

children's literature critics agree that postmodern picture books display a vast range of metafictional features and devices; play, intertextuality, non-linearity, parody, multiple narrators and narratives, open endings and indeterminacy effectively elucidate the constructed nature of the text (Allan 18; Daugaard and Johansen 126; Pantaleo, "The Metafictive Nature of Postmodern Picturebooks" 326; Pantaleo and Sipe 2). The deployment of metafiction in picture books aims at enhancing the reader to reflect on the fictional status of the text and through the elimination of the "reader illusion" consider the relationship between the fictional and the real world (Daugaard and Johansen 126; Waugh 18); the child and the adult reading the book are motivated to question their perception and understanding of what they believe they see and what they actually *do* see.

Black and White does not lend itself to a traditional summary, but the complicated structure of the book renders a brief thematic analysis essential. The main protagonists in the four episodes are: a small boy taking a lonely train journey back home in "Seeing Things"; the younger son and teenage daughter of a middle-class family whose communication gap grows with the invasion of television in "Problem Parents"; a group of commuters on the train platform in "A Waiting Game" most probably expecting the arrival of the train in the first story; a herd of Holstein cows set free by the runaway bandit who hides among them in "Udder Chaos" but also moves freely from one story frame to the next. The mother and the father in "Problem Parents" are potentially related to the awaiting crowd on the train platform as they return home at the end of the day in highly bizarre attire, festive newspaper costumes very similar to the paper-cut creations made by the passengers who grow weary of waiting for their train in "A Waiting Game" and collectively participate in the transformation of the station into a carnivalesque scenery. The lazy Holstein cows appear to have caused the train delay lying on the railway tracks for a considerable amount of time which gives the robber hiding among them the opportunity to board the train and sit in the same compartment as the boy in "Seeing Things". The young child in "Problem Parents" is illustrated playing with a toy train and railway platform bearing significant resemblance to the respective train and platform in the other characters' episodes. The assumption that the whole story is the product of the playing child's imagination is plausible but not irrefutable. In the last double spread, the boy in "Seeing Things" gets off the train and reunites with his parents, the commuters

triumphantly board the train, and the parents resume their prior behavioural habits, to their daughter's immense relief; meanwhile, the cows return to their barn to be milked and the thief makes one last appearance in the after-party train platform sending everybody else off.

Even after the narrative text comes to its end, a number of questions remain unresolved as the last double spread is followed by the back endpaper which depicts a hand lifting off the train platform, or just its picture, at the story of "A Waiting Game". What if that story is embedded in the games of the children in "Problem Parents", or it is only a figment of the lonely boy's imagination, or a dream world in "Seeing Things"? How many stories are, after all, being narrated? How are the plots related spatially and/or chronologically? Do the different stories told in the book function as constituent parts of one larger story of a modular structure? The book asks the reader to make meaningful links between the text and the image across the four episodes in order to form a narrative. The different routes of interpretation that each individual reader may follow contributes to the formation of one narrative but most likely a different one for every reader.

The striking multiplicity of meanings allowing, or rather, necessitating a multiplicity of interpretations has been examined from various critical perspectives. Numerous critics have analyzed the text and the image in the book with special focus on their postmodern features ranging from their metafictional quality and intertextuality to their playfulness and sarcastic tone (Aiken 2-3; Allan 31-32; Anstey 446-447; Hellman 7; Kaplan 37-38; Pantaleo, "The Long, Long Way" 3-4). Another perspective adopted by Elisa Dresang based on the application of the Radical Change Theory on children's literature identifies *Black and White* as a radical picture book exhibiting interactivity, connectivity and access, thus, anticipating the characteristics of digital media and establishing a connection between postmodern children's fiction and digital storytelling (Dresang 43; Dresang and Kotrla 94; Pantaleo, "Everything Comes from Seeing" 51; Yokota 204). Although I conduct an in-depth analysis of the verbal and the visual text in *Black and White* and their interaction in it, I do not adopt Radical Change Theory as my framework of study and refrain from limiting my scope of investigation to the postmodern features of the book and their subversive effect on the audience/writer relationship. I argue instead that the use of metafictional elements in the book amplifies the main area of focus which is the complexity in the

word/image transaction and its connection to issues of power struggle in the text; I highlight the interplay between reality and imagination, the child reader-adult writer power balance, the relationship between the child and the working parent in the nuclear family of the '90s in Western societies, and the encounter of the individual with the power exercised by mass culture and its discourse.

5.2 "Seeing Things" in the metafictional game of intermingling fantasy with reality

Macaulay is the writer and illustrator of children's picture books but also non-fiction books such as *Unbuilding* (1980), *The Way Things Work* (1988), *Ship* (1993) and *Mosque* (2003), which focus on design, engineering and architecture. The common element binding together these diverse works is that they exemplify, as Jack Zipes states, "to what purpose the fantastic has been put to use" in the process of creating machines and architectural structures, or, in the case of *Black and White*, a picture book (85). Bette Goldstone and Linda Labbo refer to *Black and White* as an example of the postmodern book keeping readers grounded in reality by revealing its creative process and reminding them that the real world exists outside the story narrated (201). This chapter argues that through the deployment of metafictional narrative devices Macaulay underlines the constructedness of the picture book, and, at the same time, pinpoints the significance of fantasy and imagination in the making as well as the interpretation of the story.

The first double spread in *Black and White* is divided in four framed quadrants hosting four different stories whose distinct character is underlined with the use of diverse verbal and visual styles. "Seeing Things" is the story in the top left quadrant which gives out a first sign of the word/image synergy in the book as it is the soft-edged illustration of the white smoke coming out of the train chimney which spells out the words in the title. The combination of the impressionistic style of the picture, its pale water-colours, the rounded, curving shapes of the objects depicted in it composes an illusion of reality and conveys a mood of nostalgic serenity, comfort

and safety. The circular frame which bounds the visual text and neatly separates it from the verbal text on the right side of the quadrant accentuates the feeling of safety and peacefulness from the second double spread onwards, the circle representing eternity and continuity (Kiefer 80). At the same time a definite association is made with traditional children's stories whose full, circular plot is expected to provide closure to the narration which, as Sipe comments ("Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects" 37) is satisfying and aesthetically pleasing to the audience.

The story of "Problem Parents" occupies the lower half of the left page in the double spread. The extensive use of sepia colour, which is considered to give pictures and illustrations the feel of vintage photographs or old manuscripts (Beckett "Crossover Picturebooks" 169; Martinelli 267), can be interpreted as an allusion to past events and memories, therefore a personal account of a critical family situation is to be expected by the audience. The vertical lines dominate the design of the figures and the objects in the scene with the thick white line of milk pouring all the way down to the dog's head for no obvious or logical reason right in the middle of the image. This pattern suggests energy and produces a feeling of anticipation of imaginative, and possibly nonsensical, developments in the plot. The figure of the all-white dog with the bandit-like black patch over the eyes at the centre of the picture vividly contrasts the sepia tones of the rest of the image and, most importantly, implies a connection to the hanging figure of what appears to be a runaway thief dressed in black and white featuring at the opposite page.

"A Waiting Game" is the story occupying the top right quadrant of the double spread opposite "Seeing Things" and the diverse character of the two stories is made immediately obvious through the contrasting style of their visual imagery. The naivety of the realistic depiction of the setting of the train station (Pantaleo, "Everything Comes from Seeing" 47) bears no resemblance to the dreamy quality of the illustration of "Seeing Things"; the variety of the bright colours filling the picture produce a markedly different result from the soft, pale colours of the first illustration in the book. Although colour is the most important feature related to ambience in visual analysis (Painter, Martin, and Unsworth 42), the wide range of vibrant, yet flat, colours in "A Waiting Game" fails to evoke the vibrancy, warmth and familiarity creating ambience. The massive use of horizontal lines highlights the lack of depth in

the colours and the picture in general which distances the reader's imagination and defers emotional engagement with the depicted story.

The title of the story at the right bottom part of the double spread is "Udder Chaos" the letter U drawn and coloured as pink cow udder establishing a parallel with the title of "Seeing Things" in terms of the denoted word/image synergy. The picture is coloured in bold, green, black and white; although, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen, the degree of modality an image possesses depends on its resemblance to the real world ("Reading Images" 160-163), the black and white rectangular shape featuring at the bottom right corner of the image does bring to mind a cow grazing in the rich meadow pasture. Simple recording of reality is not enough, as Macaulay asserts, because "illustration is a process of selection of that which needs to be seen from all that can be seen" ("Caldecott Medal Acceptance"). The process of selection entails the deployment of prior knowledge and imagination in order for the audience "to recognise things with remarkable certainty" and very little information ("Caldecott Medal Acceptance"). The really subversive feature of the picture, though, is the figure of the thief, a caricature of the stereotypical villain dressed in a black and white striped, long-sleeved shirt, black trousers, a black beret and a black mask hiding the upper part of his face. The thief is hanging from a rope made of a long, white, knotted sheet which stretches from the front endpaper of the book, continues through the entire right page of the first double spread and finishes half-way down the "Udder Chaos" quadrant of the second double spread.

The admittedly humorous and not at all fear-provoking character of the thief remains unnamed, silent and of a mysterious identity throughout the book, yet, the significance of his presence is implicitly stated in more ways than one. The black and white attire of this simultaneously suspicious and entertaining character is an obvious link to the title of the book hinting at the centrality of the thief's figure. Careful observation of the images in each consecutive double spread discloses that the thief, although never identified in the verbal text, shows up at different moments in all four stories. Therefore, the character is invested with the function of the connecting thread of the story, a recurring motif binding together the events making up the four separate plots into one integrated narrative. The thief is the cunning getaway convict who successfully and rather amusingly hides himself among the black and white Holstein cows in "Udder Chaos"; he is the notorious outlaw whose face appears on the TV

screen of the family in "Problem Parents"; his disguised figure as an old lady also pops up sitting opposite the boy in "Seeing Things" while the story of "A Waiting Game" ends with the thief standing on the train platform waving goodbye to the departed commuters.

Furthermore, a metafictional element emerges every time the thief moves from one frame to the other breaking the boundaries of the fictional character's function by making his way from the peritextual space of the front endpaper into the illustrations composing the visual text in the book. Charles Van Renen extensively discusses the metafictional quality of the central characters in Anthony Browne's *Bear Hunt* (1979) and April Wilson's *Magpie Magic* (1999) who repeatedly wander beyond the designated narrative level as they "use their own initiative to transcend their circumstances" (10-11). Bear uses his pencil to design the setting which will enable him to elude his hunters while the magpie is portrayed escaping the outstretched hands of the illustrator of the book. The thief in *Black and White* makes his appearance in every story in the picture book but he does not belong in any of them; he contributes to the integration of the diverse plots in one complex narrative but plays his part disguised, hidden behind his mask without ever being seen or addressed by the rest of the characters. It is as if the thief has intruded into the picture book on a fictional as well as a metafictional level interfering with the information presented on the front endpaper. The fine line separating the fictional from the factual becomes blurry and the power play between fantasy and reality is profoundly accentuated.

Marking "a movement from the public space of the cover to the private world of the book" (Sipe and McGuire, "Picturebook Endpapers" 293) the front endpaper in *Black and White* plays a critical part in the disruption of the binary opposition between the real and the fantastic. Scieszka's *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (1992) and Browne's *The Tunnel* (1989) are only some of the picture books contemporary to *Black and White* which underline the materiality of the endpaper and, consequently, stress the duplicity of its role as an introduction to the story and a key physical element of "the print picturebook experience as a whole" (Yokota 204). Earlier picture books such as *Where the Wild Things Are* also underpin the influence of the peritext on the storytelling process. The dark-coloured, full-bleed illustrations of the cross-hatched luscious vegetation smothering the front and back endpaper in *Where the Wild Things Are* smoothly guide the reader/viewer in and out

of Max's adventure proving Sipe and McGuire's point about the liminal character of the endpaper not quite belonging inside or outside of the story ("Picturebook Endpapers" 292). In the case of Macaulay's picture book, the title *Black and White* is printed in scarlet red bold letters stressing the incongruity of the book; the name of the author and the publishing house are scattered all over the page having been clearly pulled down during the fictional convict's escape; the warning printed in red capital letters instantly grabs the audience's attention and stimulates their power of imagination.

The relationship between reality and fantasy played out in the verbal and the visual text poses challenges, primarily on account of the complicated spatial and temporal connections between the stories and the episodes. Michele Anstey describes *Black and White* as the story "of an interruption in commuter train service" (447) establishing "A Waiting Game" as the central narrative and Deborah Kaplan reads the master narrative in the book as that of a convict who escapes jail positioning "Udder Chaos" at the centre of her analysis (38). Nevertheless, Louise Collins recognizes the complexity of working out the relations among the stories as well as between the text and the illustrations which comprise them. The critic acknowledges the multiplicity of interpretations allowed and, therefore, the impossibility of singling out one story as the master narrative or one storyline as of higher significance in terms of the plot development (36).

Several theorists identify the non-linear plot as a key feature of the postmodern picture book (Pantaleo, "The Long, Long Way" 3; Serafini, "The Pedagogical Possibilities of Postmodern Picturebooks" 23; Wolfenbarger and Sipe 275). Scieszka's *The Stinky Cheeseman*, *Voices in the Park* by Browne and *The Three Little Pigs* by Wiesner feature among postmodern picture books containing non-linear structures and storylines. In this light, although the four narratives in *Black and White* are contained within the boundaries of their frames for the most part of the book, the intertextual and intratextual references[1], the various recurring visual motifs, the powerful presence of the element of play in the form of puns and riddles but also actual playing and disguising hold a crucial part in constructing the complex form and format of the book and shaping the fragile power balance between the real and the imaginary.

Different types of interaction between the verbal and the visual text are at work in the four narratives in *Black and White*. The text in "Seeing Things" is placed on the right side of the framed quadrant neatly separated from the circular, soft-edged frame of the illustration. The story of the boy in the train is narrated in the third person with an omniscient perspective conveying the child's flow of feelings and thoughts and communicating valuable information which complement the depicted action. The boy's image in the fourth opening leaning out of the window is accompanied by a description of "what looks like a row of boulders in front of the train", which cannot be seen in the picture, and a glimpse into the boy's mind wondering "if it's an avalanche". Four pages down the expression of surprise on the boy's face is explained in the verbal text as a manifestation of his disbelief for the sight ahead of him, which again the reader is not shown, the moving boulders; this illusion of overview contributes to the reality effect of the narration. However, there is one exception to the relationship of extension and enhancement between the text and the image in the third double spread which temporarily disrupts the effect of credible realism and hints at the potential connection of this story to the rest of the narratives. According to the text, "sometime in the early morning hours... an old woman enters the compartment and sits opposite the boy". A close examination of the corresponding picture, however, reveals that the old lady is none other than the runaway thief who has disguised himself as an old woman in order to keep his true identity hidden and safely board the train that will take him to his destination. The discrepancy between the text and the image as a result of the intratextual reference to the character in "Udder Chaos" stimulates the reader to look more closely into the connecting threads linking the stories in *Black and White*, in this case the disguised fugitive, and, thus, prompts a non-linear reading.

The text and the image in "Problem Parents" occupy separate framed spaces with the verbal text on the left and the visual text on the right part of the quadrant. The story is told in the first person from the teenage girl's –the daughter of the family-perspective creating a feeling of intimacy to the reader which facilitates submergence into the imaginary world created. The relationship between the text and the image is, as in "Seeing Things", one of enhancement and extension, only in this case it is not always the text which extends the information provided in the picture but the reverse process occurs, too. The opening line of the story conveys the young protagonist's

personal opinion that parents are the people one is supposed to count on "even when they don't understand you". The image on the right in agreement with the girl's statement shows her listening to music and simultaneously watching TV while, rather casually, she addresses her parents, "Hmm ... Hmm ... Hi, Mom ... Hmm ...". Here is a teenager taking refuge in her own private world, counting on her parents for not making a fuss about her lack of interest in them, even if they may not understand why this is so. The picture, however, contains a lot more information which is not stated in the text suggesting that careful inspection of both the narrative and the visual text is essential in order for the reader to grasp the complications of the plot development. The girl's younger brother emerges out of an improvised fortress constructed with blankets, furniture and a broom which brings to mind Max's fortress in *Where the Wild Things Are* made with his mother's floral sheets. The boy's imaginative games also include a remote train and railway set which constitute a direct reference to the train journey in "Seeing Things" and the railway station in "A Waiting Game". The boy's black and white T-shirt and the black and white coat of the dog, which interrupt the monotonous sepia tone of the picture, serve as yet another intratextual reference to the thief in "Udder Chaos" and reiterate the verbal/visual pun in the title of the book.

The narrative text amplifies the pictures in the next two double spreads explaining the details of the background to what the audience sees in the visual text. Both parents, we are told, leave for work at seven in the morning, hence the image of the legs on the doorstep of the house and the bag-holding arms which are visible, to return twelve hours later and take care of their children and household until they collapse on the sofa reading their newspapers as shown in the accompanying picture. The element of the newspaper featuring in the images is a repeated motif in *Black and White*. The parents use the newspapers to read the news but, as the story unfolds, the newspaper becomes the material for the hats and costumes in their subversive game of disguise. The emerging connection between the two stories raises questions as to whether the parents belong among the delayed commuters who entered the game of disguise with newspapers out of pure boredom and despair. This hypothesis is reinforced with the intertextual reference to the traditional children's song "She'll Be Coming Round the Mountain" derived from the Christian spiritual "When the Chariot Comes". As the text narrates in the sixth opening, one night the parents came home wearing newspapers singing "She'll be coming 'round the mountain when she

comes", which in the specific visual context can only be perceived as a humorous reference to the delay of the train in "A Waiting Game". The playful, humoristic character of the visual text in "Problem Parents" is underscored in the picture of the previous double spread and contributes to "a relationship of irony", to use Nodelman's terminology ("Words about Pictures" 223), between this illustration and its escorting text. The text announces that once the parents arrived home that night, the girl and her brother "knew something was wrong". If read independently of the picture, a sense of imminent disaster or danger is conveyed, but a view at the picture immediately dissolves this indication of peril in the most hilarious manner. Both children are depicted with wide-open eyes staring at their parents exclaiming, "Mom!", "Dad!" in the word bubbles drawn overhead, while the family dog is staring at the picture of the runaway thief on TV with a thought bubble over his head saying, "Mom? Dad?". The resemblance between the two characters, the dog and the thief, in combination with the unexpected twist of the canine thoughts in display produce an amusing cartoon-like effect which implies that no real threat lies ahead.

Focusing on the plot development in "A Waiting Game", there appears to be a shift in the power balance between the text and the image as, unlike "Seeing Things" and "Problem Parents", the narrative text does not consistently accompany the illustrations. It is mainly through the sequence of the pictures of the train platform and its passengers that the story unfolds as only four quadrants out of the fourteen display a few lines of text on the upper part of the picture which spreads across the entire allocated space in the double spread. The reader turns page after page waiting for something to happen other than the tiresome gathering of more and more passengers on the platform. A piece of text in the form of an announcement appears on the top part of the fifth illustration of the story informing the passengers, as well as the reader, that the waiting will be extended. Then, suddenly, the sixth opening reveals the image of the station master sitting on the rooftop of the station gazing towards the direction of the delayed train. Right behind him there is a squirrel standing on the chimney and facing the same direction as the station master, looking, as it seems, into the distance for the same delayed train. The surprise of the reader at this unexpected break of the monotony of the almost identical images which uneventfully come one after the other is apparently not shared by the passengers who simply go on reading their newspapers ignoring the surreal act taking place in front of their own eyes. The

delightfully irrational reaction of the train master continues to unfold on the next opening as he has now climbed down the train rails to stick his ear onto them in order to hear for the train coming, in all probability. The satirical reference to the classic American western films where the cowboy would stick his ear on the ground to hear for approaching Indians, signals the beginning of the much anticipated game which will implicate the indifferent passengers as soon as they take notice of the hilarious situation developing in front of them.

In the following six images the passengers engage in a game of origami for the purpose of which they use their newspapers to create hats and costumes for everyone including the squirrel and party decorations for the train station. The platform is turned into a huge costume celebration which culminates in a performance of dressed-up passengers singing and throwing confetti-style newspaper bits in the air. As the fun escalates, the nonsensical effect of the picture is enhanced by the equally absurd message in the verbal text featuring in the ninth double spread. "Passengers ... are advised that Southern Rail has no idea where the train is and regrets any inconvenience". The unlikely choice of words emphasizes the subversion of order and rationality in the surreal imagery of the play chronotope created in the visual text. An immediate connection is drawn between "A Waiting Game" and the playful, satirical language and illustrations of Carroll, Jonathan Swift and Seuss as the latter's verse in *A Cat in the Hat* reverberates:

It is fun to have fun

But you have to know how. (18)

The disruptive effect of the passengers' game is not restricted within the boundaries of the story frame. The straightforward, complementary relationship between the text and the image in "Seeing Things" is disrupted in the eleventh double spread; the circular illustrations have disappeared and the words in the text are depicted in shredded pieces of paper, identified as newspaper in the next double spread, breaking the story frame and falling all the way down into the visual text in "Problem Parents". The descending words/pieces of newspaper are the powerful expression of the synergistic relationship between the verbal and the visual text creating the imagetext (Mitchell "Picture Theory" 9); their powerful effect brings to mind the image in the

fourth double spread in Silverstein's picture book composed of words printed against the white backdrop falling like the leaves of the Giving Tree into the Boy's lap.

In the thirteenth opening the words written on the white pieces of newspaper are placed on the page in such a way that the gaps formed between them, when studied from a distance, outline the elusive silhouettes of two people who, like mum and dad in "Problem Parents" seven double spreads back, are wearing their paper hats and singing with their mouths wide open. The frames separating one story from another prove ineffective in hindering the plots, characters, words and images from trespassing their designated space and engaging in massive interaction. Temporal linearity is equally interrupted throughout the book as the reader has to go back and forth the book pages several times so as to determine the time order in which events happen in one story and continue to evolve and extend their consequences in another. This mind game underpinned by the non linear format of the book is a technique commonly used in postmodern picture books creating disruptions in the reading of the narrative and allowing the child reader to consider the text from different perspectives (Arizpe and Styles 161; Nalkara 91- 94; Serafini and Reid 263). In "A Waiting Game" the newspaper game on the train platform takes place during the morning hours as suggested by the colours of the background in the pictures but the disguised "Problem Parents" only show up at home in their newspaper costumes at night according to the narrative text. The boy in "Seeing Things" sees the flying newspaper bits three double spreads earlier than the time of the newspaper cutting and throwing in "A Waiting Game". In the meantime the thief and the cows in "Udder Chaos" make their entrance in "Seeing Things" and "Problem Parents" at various points while their surrealistic, abstract depiction in their own story frame makes it impossible to discern whether their adventure takes place during daytime or night. Tatyana Fedosova argues that the deployment of temporal distortion in narrative texts aims at the representation of time as the structuring framework of our experience of the world which is subjectively formed since different people perceive it in different ways (79). Macaulay's problematization of the idea of time in *Black and White* creates the space for the polyphonic inclusion of the reader in the production of meaning in the text.

Although the sparse text in "Udder Chaos" does not contradict the visual text, the absolute omission of the central visual character, the thief, from the narration does create a discrepancy in the interaction between image and word. The text provides

information on the habits of the Holstein cows which explains their images going into hiding until the blurred black, white and pink shapes become obscure to the point of resisting all resemblance to cows. However, the persistent figure of the bandit taking cover under their bellies is positively absent from the verbal text. The factual, informative character of the text counterpoints the imaginative, abstract character of the thief who is also an intertextual reference to the runaway bandit in Macaulay's *Why the Chicken Crossed the Road* (1987). The verbal text cannot capture or account for the fictional character that is, nonetheless, a very real and substantial part of the illustration on the page. According to Nodelman, when the pictures show more than the words narrate, the text/image relation emerges as ironic ("Words about Pictures" 223-224). The irony in this case is based on the transgressive quality of the runaway thief whose identity is situated on the margins of social structures and discourse representing life outside the law. The humouristic imaginative depiction of the thief staying under the radar by hanging from cow udders stands as a symbol of mockery of the representational power of the text or, as Nodelman would phrase it, implies "an ironic comment on the words" exposing their incompleteness (223). The amplification of the power of imagination is reflected in the visual text as the pictures progressively become even more elusive with no text to accompany them. Despite their diverse timelines, the four stories become synchronized in the climax of their respective plot structures in the thirteenth double spread leaving the reader in suspense as to what is coming next.

The fourteenth double opening presents a very different layout compared to the previous double spreads with the stories contained within the frames of their respective left and right colourful quadrants. Words and images are fused together in one black and white full-bleed illustration which, as Allan points out, "appears to construct a single reality" (68). "Problem Parents" still occupies the bottom part of the left page only the two black shadows now representing the children are simultaneously a part of the image as they stand out against its white backdrop, but also an extension of the pitch black space for the narrative text. The black and white illustration crosses the gutter and assumes the shape of a cow udder on the right while the brightly coloured picture of "A Waiting Game" is now replaced with indeterminate, foggy, black, white and grey shapes vaguely reminding of a train platform within the very area recognized as cow udder. There is no visual reference to

the boy in "Seeing Things" but the few lines of text above the children's heads on the left clearly state that the boy goes back to sleep causing the reader to wonder whether this illusory scenery is nothing but a child's dream. On the top of the left page three lines of bold-type, large, black letters announce the arrival of the delayed train with a "piercing whistle" that "suddenly interrupts the celebration" which, however, the visual text has already illustrated to have happened in the preceding double spread. The "single reality" of the intersecting words and images of the four stories now represented as one is, according to Allan, "evidence of a postmodern chronotope operating in which conventional spatio-temporalities do not apply" (66). Dresang and Bowie Kotrla also address Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope in the Radical Change Theory and interpret the disruption of spatiotemporal relations in *Black and White* as a reflection of the non-linear, non-sequential, complex temporal and spatial relationships in the digital world emerging towards the end of the twentieth century (95).

My interpretation of Macaulay's technique of breaking the boundaries that separate time and space and bring the two concepts together in the form of a fusion of the two indicators is in line with Allan and Dresang and Kotrla's respective arguments up to an extent. Bakhtin's artistic chronotope, the intersection of the two axes, founded on the interaction of time, space, plot and history ("The Forms of Time" 84) has been extensively analyzed by a large number of children's literature critics as a concept reflecting the existential conditions of the contemporary sociocultural context (Goga 244; Johnston 137-138; Nikolajeva, "Aesthetic Approaches" 136). Foucault discusses the tension in the power relation between time and space as a dominant characteristic of the late half of the twentieth century which he refers to as "the epoch of simultaneity... the epoch of juxtaposition" ("Of Other Spaces" 22). The analysis of the verbal and the visual text in *Black and White* in this chapter exemplifies the simultaneity and juxtaposition of time and space anticipating the epoch of digitality and digital storytelling rising towards the end of the twentieth century, therefore, aligns with Dresang's interpretation.

However, Dresang's argument fails to shed light on the equally important power relation of fantasy and reality in the book which simultaneously triggers and responds to the word/image power struggle lying at the core of the picture book. The "fantasy chronotope" in "A Waiting Game" turns the image of a typical train platform

into a space of carnivalesque subversion most eloquently illustrating Bakhtin's concept of the carnival feast as "an accidental and temporal liberation" from rules and conventions ("Rabelais and His World" 10). The depiction of the anarchical space into which the platform has been transformed contradicts the verbal text as it completely undermines the validity of the official announcements made by Southern Rail Company. The timetable is, according to Eviatar Zerubavel's analysis of the social organization of time, one of the main processes which "govern the temporal regulation of social life" ("Timetables and Scheduling" 87). In the context of the commuters' mobility, the train timetable is overturned and, subsequently, the function of the railway station as a spatiotemporal chronotope of social structure and organization is disrupted. In connection to the fantasy chronotope of the train station in "A Waiting Game", the eventful appearance of the disguised, laughing, singing adults disrupts the home chronotope in "Problem Parents". Time arrangements which regulate the family's life and establish their home as a secure space of routine and stability, such as time devoted to checking mail and children's homework, and bedtime curfew on weekdays, are completely violated; the spatiotemporal order of the household is subverted and a chronotope of chaos is created through a blizzard of millions of pieces of ripped mail as the verbal and the visual text in the eleventh double spread confirm.

In resonance with the Surrealists' perception of the world from the perspective of dreams and imagination rather than a realistic point of view, the power of dreams and imagination in shaping diverse perceptions of reality rather than one single reality is central in Macaulay's picture book and an issue of profound interest in children's literature long before the digital era. The play chronotope constructed by the Cat in the Hat totally disintegrates the orderly domestic setting in Seuss's picture book and questions the power of the realistic over the fantastic; Sendak's child hero challenges parental authority by creating the fantasy land of the Wild Things, a chronotope of dream and imagination that blurs the boundaries between the real and the fantastic; there is a timeless quality in the Boy's games with the Tree as the words and the images synergistically interact dissolving their oppositional boundaries to relate the story of the two characters. As Kiefer declares, the creators of picture books have always felt the need to respond to their social context but also "to push the boundaries of visual depiction" (20); in this perspective, *Black and White* is a picture book which

anticipates the characteristics of the digital era to push the boundaries of the word and the image in their representation of fantasy and reality.

The last double spread shows the pictures and their respective narrative texts having returned to their allocated spaces, discernibly framed and separated from one another. The plot for each story comes to its end with the protagonists returning to their normal, or, anyway, prior, state of being; the boy has finally reached his destination and his parents are there to pick him up; the adults in "Problem Parents" go back to being responsible and attentive to their parental duties and the Holstein cows finally find their way back home because they want to be milked. However, the black and white striped figure of the escaped thief waving goodbye to the departed passengers on the platform of "A Waiting Game" implies a deviation from the traditional ending which rounds off the plot, the closure which ascertains the domination of the rational and realistic over the surreal and imaginary. The illustration of the hand picking up the picture or actual toy of the train platform questions, as Allan notes, "the possibility of an achievable conclusion" (69) and, I would add, maintains the power play between fantasy and reality very much alive. The ambiguous ending in *Black and White* resonates Seuss's strategy of having the fish visually and verbally address the audience on the last page for the determination of the outcome of the story; it alludes to Sendak's technique of blurring time sequence through verbal and visual depiction in order to give an open-ended resolution to his picture book. Correspondingly, the ambivalent last scene in *Black and White*, which stretches the narration into the peritext, is Macaulay's device of highlighting the complex power relation between reality and imagination and its inextricable link to the equally complex, fluctuating word/image relationship which leaves its mark from the first to the last page in the book.

5.3 *Black, White and Everything in Between* in the child-adult power relation

It is a rare occasion that a writer directly addresses the audience only to assure them that the interpretation of the story or stories they are about to read relies on their

capacity for shrewd inspection, and potential interrogation, of the verbal and the visual products of his work. Is the child reader's empowerment the purpose of this playful metafictional device or should the writer's warning be perceived as a covert expression of the author's intent to manipulate the audience into thinking in the advisable manner? It is argued that *Black and White* genuinely motivates the "curious", in Macaulay's own words ("Caldecott Medal Acceptance"), child reader to get involved in the process of constructing the meanings conveyed through the word/image synergy; the text elaborately highlights the quintessential role of play in this process, thus, fostering the child reader's sense of agency and autonomy.

5.3.1 *Playful characters and curious readers in a game of Black and White storytelling*

In their research on the visual and literary art form of picture books Wolfenbarger and Sipe declare that "the best picturebook authors/illustrators are in tune with human needs and desires" (279). The inherent need and overwhelming desire for play is fundamental in shaping the child's individual identity and, thus, the value of the role of play in children's books is broadly recognized by critics of children's literature (Lewis 81; Morgenstern 393-394; Pantaleo, "Everything Comes from Seeing" 50; Steinsholt and Traasdahl 86). In this light, Macaulay appears to be in tune with the child reader's need for play by integrating the concept of play in the intersecting plots of the stories in the book; as Pantaleo points out, the use of playful metafictional devices turns the child's reading experience into a game of "careful inspection" and creates a type of synergy between the text and the reader ("Everything Comes from Seeing" 51).

Lewis views the breaking of rules and narrative conventions in children's books as a form of play rather than an attempt towards obscurity (81). The disguised figure of the runaway bandit trespasses the frames and boundaries separating endpaper from the main text, one story from another and text from image. In her 2020 article for the *British Journal of Photography*, Hannah Abel-Hirsch refers to the term "transgression" as a word which "evokes immorality but also allure-even

empowerment" (n. pag.). The transgressive boundary-crossing character of the thief defies the limitations imposed by social norms and the moral conventions underpinning them, thus the immorality. Simultaneously, the ease with which this fictional character extends beyond the confines of the visual story frames renders him the power to become the constant in all stories and inevitably attract the reader's attention. In this manner, the transgressive identity of the thief galvanizes into action the child reader's playful spirit; consequently, the young audience becomes engaged in a game of interpretation and reorganization of the unfolding plot and, thus, undermines the authority of the almighty author. Macaulay's enigmatic character bears resemblance to young Max, the child protagonist in *Where the Wild Things Are*, whose disguise into a wild wolf represents the child character's untamed otherness and simultaneously reflects the child reader's suppressed urge to defy adult rules and conventions of behaviour. The agile escaped criminal in *Black and White* is also connected to the representation of the child, the child reader in this case, who becomes actively involved in reconstructing the spatiotemporal word/image relation in the book and destabilizes the writer's authority in a manner analogous to the masked character's disruption of conventional narrative structures.

Adult characters in *Black and White* display an excessively playful mood dressed up in their newspaper costumes and hats foregrounding John Morgenstern's argument that "children's play does not simply disappear but is kept alive" even when adulthood takes over (394). Going back to the previous chapter in the thesis and Silverstein's representation of the child/adult relationship in *The Giving Tree*, the Boy's gradual evolution from a creative child devoted to the act of play as a demonstration of friendship and affection to a discontent, cynical adult portrays the significance of play in reverse. The construction of the identity of the individual is a dynamic, open-ended process, liable to change, Van Renen remarks (9), and the elimination of the role of play, that is the gratifying process of inquisition and investigation of the world and the player's position in it, induces alienation from the self and the others. The frustrated passengers in "A Waiting Game" indulge in the pleasure of participating in a game which begins as an individual attempt to resist the boredom of stasis and quickly transforms into a collective act of subversion of order and embracement of playful chaos and absurdity. The connection with the chaotic play chronotope created by the titular character in *The Cat in the Hat* within but at the

same time in defiance of the orderly domestic chronotope is evident and underlines the subversive nature of play. The Cat performs his precarious game of balancing various objects one on top of the other in the context of which he removes them from their usual place in the house and, most importantly, denounces their conventional use and redefines their function as toys. The Cat's game results in utter chaos manifested not only in the deterioration of the represented household but also in the blurring of the boundaries separating the verbal from the visual text on the page of the book. The Cat's juggling act is a game of transgression which, like Macaulay's masked outlaw, breaks frames and narrative conventions inviting the child reader to focus on the relationship between the word and the image and its contribution to the interpretation of the story.

The passengers' game with the newspapers as materials for costumes and festive decorations in *Black and White* reinforces the point regarding the subjective perception and the assigned functions and roles of the objects implicated in it. The adults' subversive act of play radically changes the scenery of the train station in "A Waiting Game" but also plays a decisive part in the plot development of the rest of the stories as well as the representation of the synergistic relationship between the word and the image. At the turn of the page into the eleventh double spread the child reader is presented with the hybrid function of the illustration and scattered parts of the dismantled verbal text printed on them. The concept of play has permeated the plots in the four stories while it establishes the linking elements which the audience has to put together in order to assemble the puzzle that the reading of the book is. Borrowing Deleuze's terminology in describing the book as a machine, Morgenstern proposes that far from being a fixed representation children's literature is a machine open to play, a toy for the reader (393). The powerful act of play which is familiar to the child transforms the process of storytelling into a game and, consequently, *Black and White* into a toy for the child to play and experiment.

5.3.2 *The ongoing power play between the child reader and the adult author(ity)*

"Nothing can be intelligently or intelligibly recorded on a piece of paper unless true seeing occurs: first on the part of the person making the picture, and then on the part of the person reading it" (Macaulay, "Caldecott Medal Acceptance"). Although the attribution of clear intentions to creators of picture books can lead to quite arbitrary conclusions, Macaulay is rather explicit in his manifestation of his expectations regarding the child reading *Black and White*. The writer/illustrator aims at stimulating children's curiosity and sharpening their ability to carefully observe and pose questions about the verbal and the visual text in the book; as Peggy Albers points out, "to see is to transact with the text, to make meaning from the elements that comprise this text" (168). No matter how empowering this process is intended to be for the child reader, it still does not resolve the child-adult power struggle which is inherent in children's literature; the adult who writes, and, thus, controls the book is in a position to exercise equal control and influence on the child reading the book.

Beauvais addresses the issue of the child reader-adult writer power relation in the context of the postmodern picture book by introducing the concept of the readerly gap or didactic gap as a space "surrounded with and controlled by an adult injunction" and questioning the assumption that the child reader is a navigator or interpreter of the picture book outside the adult influence ("What's in 'the Gap'?"). Beauvais's definition of the readerly gap includes not only the gaps inherent to the picture book such as the endpaper, the gutter and page breaks, or the gap between the word and the image, but also intertextuality, intervisuality and metafictional devices which characterize postmodern picture books ("What's in 'the Gap'?"). The critic argues that the readerly gap, this privileged space of exploration for the child reader is, in fact, a didactic gap associated with and controlled by the authority of its creator, the adult author/illustrator ("What's in 'the Gap'?"). According to Beauvais the child reader is invited to "close the gap", yet, there is a limit to the reader's freedom set by the parameters of the text, an adult's creation ("What's in 'the Gap'?"). Beauvais's argument is grounded in Nikolajeva's theory of aetonormativity[2] and its foundational concept that adults control the production of children's literature, therefore, adult normativity is prioritized in the child reader/adult writer power struggle (Nikolajeva, "Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 16). Viewing the postmodern picture book in a different perspective, Dresang proposes the Radical Change Theory in order to examine picture books such as *Black and White* in connection to the

development of digital storytelling in the 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century (41). In agreement with Beauvais and Nikolajeva on the subject of the child-adult power structure, Nodelman describes *Black and White* as a deceptively open narrative whose innovative technique of connecting four separate stories in complex but cohesive ways underlies "a very conventional chain of cause and effect" ("Hidden Adult" 278). The implication of this statement is that the child reader's understanding of the complicated, interacting plots in *Black and White* is in reality controlled through the author's careful construction of word and image on the basis of the convention of cause and effect, a standard feature of the didactic tradition in children's literature.

Collins and Kaplan further elaborate on the child reader-adult writer power issue in their respective analyses of *Black and White*. Collins argues that, on the one hand, the text removes the authority of the writer/illustrator as "a guarantor of the definite reading" by alerting the readers to the prospect of relying on their own observation skills to determine the number of stories narrated and interpret the relationship between what is real and what appears to be true in the complicated image/text relationship (38). On the other hand, Collins continues, Macaulay's recommendation to the reader to take up responsibility for interpreting the text is, in fact, a paradox because a Warning which advises equal attention to pictures and text, while a text itself, cannot be trusted (38). The critic further amplifies this paradox through reference to the ambiguity in the word/image and fantasy/reality relationship which excludes the possibility of closed narrative in *Black and White* and, therefore, engages the reader in the process of creating order and "piecing together adequate meaning that satisfies both child and adult readers in relation to the text" (43-44). Kaplan draws on the argument Collins proposes to elaborate on the question of whether authority and power over the text lies with the adult writer or the child reader. The critic meticulously examines the reasoning behind Collins's argument and its focus on the metafictional devices in *Black and White* which assign the reader with the authority to construct the meaning in the verbal and the visual text. However, Kaplan remains sceptical about the degree of authority exercised by the reader over the narrative of *Black and White* and, hence, the extent to which the text creates agency in the reader (39). How is it possible, Kaplan wonders, for didacticism to be avoided when "whatever ownership the text offers has been placed in the

metafictional aspects of the text" by, in the critic's own words, an "authoritative creator" (39)?

Though I agree with Kaplan that *Black and White* creates ample space for an ongoing negotiation of power among the reader, the text and the author, I do not share her view of Macaulay's encouragement of the child reader's inquisitiveness as the act of "an authoritative creator". In alignment with a broad range of critics such as Serafini ("The Pedagogical Possibilities of Postmodern Picturebooks" 28), Goldstone and Labbo (201), Hellman (8), Wolfbarger and Sipe (275), I view *Black and White* as a genre which enhances the child's reading and interpretative strategies; the book invites the young readers to pay close attention to the complexities in the verbal and the visual text and become "navigators of the picture book format and constructors of meaning" (Serafini "The Pedagogical Possibilities of Postmodern Picturebooks" 25). Several cases of empirical research suggest that the constitutive elements of the narrative and the illustrations in *Black and White* reinforce the child reader's active engagement in the process of meaning-making (Hellman 8-9; McClay 95-97; Pantaleo "Everything Comes from Seeing" 52; "Exploring Student Response" 145-146; Serafini "The Pedagogical Possibilities of Postmodern Picturebooks" 28-29). My argument is that far from being didactic or manipulative, the text promotes critical thinking and questions the authority of the author as the sole constructor of meaning in the text.

In this light, even though the power to create the text lies with the author/illustrator, control of the interpretation of the text is negotiated and shared between the adult creator and the child reader. Like Sendak's wolf-suited child character navigating through the unknown wild land of fluctuating text frames and full-bleed double spread images the child reader of *Black and White* traverses through the different but intersecting plots of the stories in the book. The subversive character of the disguised bandit assumes the role of the child reader/navigator's compass pointing to various directions up and down the peritext, text and images in *Black and White* perplexing rather than delineating the reading process and leaving the child reader responsible for setting the course of the journey. Goldstone and Labbo place special emphasis on the reader's part in making decisions regarding the reading process. However, their claim that postmodern narratives "give overt power to the reader... to actively construct whole new stories" (199) fails to recognize the power

negotiation between the text and the reader in the case of *Black and White*. A number of features demonstrate that the text does not surrender to the overt power of the reader; the unexpected appearance of the thief in various parts of the book literally inside and outside the story frames, the disruption of the notions of space and time with parental figures and Holstein cows freely jumping from the plot of one story into another, the complete collapse of the traditional boundaries separating word from image in the fourteenth double spread; these devices exhibit, instead, the power of the text to engage the reader in an intense and simultaneously playful interaction and negotiation of meaning.

The construction of the perspective from which the child reader experiences the story plays an important part in determining the subject position of the child reader (Nikolajeva, "Beyond Grammar" 11). In the case of the picture book the question of the point of view applies to the text as well as the images which can position the reader/viewer "to assume different viewing personas" (Unsworth 30). "Seeing Things" is narrated in the third person with an omniscient narration which is consistent with the point of view of focalization in the visual text. The boy's adventures are seen through the eyes of the external, omniscient narrator while insight is provided into the boy's thoughts and emotional reactions to the events taking place. This rather traditional narrative approach is disrupted in the story of "Problem Parents" with the girl of the family occupying the position of the narrator. Although the first-person narration with internal focalization most often facilitates the reader's identification with the child character, the visual text in "Problem Parents" eliminates this possibility as the focal point of view consistently varies from one image to the next and rarely coincides with the textual point of view. The child viewer watches the plot unfold as an external observer in the first, sixth, tenth and twelfth double spread; through the eyes of the parents in the second, fifth, eighth, ninth and fourteenth double spread; from the child character's point of view in the fourth and seventh double spread; most probably, through the dog's perspective in the third picture of the story as the viewer is placed at the level of the parents' handheld bags at close distance from their figures standing at the doorstep on their way to work, the upper part of their bodies remaining invisible outside the picture frame. The alternation of focalization emphasizes the constructedness of reality through subjective points of view, external, internal, human and nonhuman, without prioritizing either of them; in

this manner, the reader is enabled to resist potential manipulation or imposition of one particular subject position and assume, instead, a subject position that does not necessarily coincide with the narrator or a character's vision.

"A Waiting Game" signifies yet another shift in the viewer's perspective. The narrative voice behind the formal announcements of the train station in the verbal text is presumably that of the train company's employee in charge, an impersonal, invisible, detached narrator. The representation of the surreal scenery of the train platform, as, for instance, in the eleventh double spread where passengers "are advised that Southern Rail has no idea where the train is" but, as the announcement continues in the same official tone, "regrets any inconvenience", forms a paradoxical relationship of agreement with the fixed, external visual point of view; they are both rendered highly distanced and, so, severely inadequate in providing a reasonable explanation of the escalating chaos which they address. The constant shift of perspectives motivates the reader to engage critically with the text and consider that there are more than one ways to look at things and tell a story. The young audience is invited to interrogate whose standpoint is represented in the text which, as Danielle Hartsfield and Sue Kimmel argue, empowers the readers to make their own judgement by challenging a dominant point of view and allowing the emergence of an alternative perspective (131).

"Udder Chaos" further widens the gap between the verbal and the visual representation of action and demands the accentuation of the child reader/viewer's skills of observation and interpretation. The scarce verbal text is narrated in the second person directly addressing the audience, "Ask any farmer. It's a nightmare. But it happens."; the visual point of view is externally focalized positioning the viewer up close to the illustrated scene as in the second, fifth and thirteenth double spread or drawing the viewer back as in the third and tenth double spread. The constant alternation of different, and at times surprising, perspectives in the verbal and the visual text from one story to the next is a complicated process; despite the fact that it is designed and implemented by the author/illustrator, it removes control of the understanding of the various texts and viewpoints from the creator as the assignment of a single, fixed position to the child reader is invalidated. The reader has to go back and forth the pages of the book and pay attention to the details in order to put together the manifold parts of the non-linear stories in it and consider each narrative and

illustration from various perspectives and points of view in order to decide on their implicated meaning. The fact that multiple identifications between the child and the various points of view are invited is also empowering, giving the child the opportunity to select and exclude. According to Adel Aiken the process of interpretation of the storybook "takes on the qualities of a conversation" in which the child reader's response and participation matters (4).

Multiple narrative and visual perspectives is not the only device Macaulay deploys towards the child reader's empowerment and the consequent undermining of the writer's authority. In his 1985 picture book *Baaa* Macaulay uses the front endpaper to address the reader and make an introduction to the narrative which raises questions concerning the identity and, therefore, reliability of the creator of the book. *Baaa* transfers the reader to an era when all mankind has vanished and sheep take over the world copying the practices of humans and eventually, like humans, disappearing themselves from the face of the Earth. The message in the front endpaper informs the audience that the time of the last person's disappearance is not recorded and that the sole person "who could have recorded when the last person disappeared was the last person to disappear". If the only person who could have recorded the story, in other words the writer of the story, is the one who disappeared last but whose time of disappearance remains unknown, then the writer of the story could not have existed when the story was recorded. This self-contradictory statement serves no other purpose than blurring the boundaries between what is fictional, what is real and what appears to be real, and, thus, challenges the writer's authority over the text and the child reading it. A corresponding pattern is followed in *Black and White* with the warning in the front endpaper destabilizing the writer's power position and alerting the reader to the subtle, even indiscernible, difference between reality and the illusion of reality.

5.3.3 *"You've got to watch those parents. It's exhausting": power relations between children and their parents*

The notion of "overworked parents" and the effect of the phenomenon of mothers' and fathers' long working hours on the family's well-being is a prominent theme in the 1990s American mass media (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, and Crouter 983). *Black and White* addresses the crucial issue of the adult-child power play in the form of the relationship between the working parent and the child in "Problem Parents". The title immediately introduces the idea of the problematic parental figure reflecting the view of the teenage daughter who also performs the role of the narrator; the parents are represented as "weird", still, dependable since "you're supposed to be able to count on them, even when they don't understand you" (n. pag.). The visual text in the fourth double spread provides additional information complementing the portrait of the parents who fall asleep on the couch in front of the television with newspapers and work files scattered around them, an image which underpins the impact of the culture of overwork on family life. At this point, it is worth noting that although there are two child characters, the story mainly focuses on the adolescent-adult relation; this is probably in response to the increased interest in the transitory, dynamic state of adolescence which the flourishing sociological and psychological research on the subject towards the end of the twentieth century, considerably advancing in the 1990s (Furstenberg 896), indicates.

According to Vanessa Joosen, adolescent characters in children's books tend to exhibit indifference towards their parents and lack of interest in their feelings unless the child's comfort is put at risk due to the adult's feelings and experiences ("Adulthood in Children's Literature" 28). The adolescent daughter in Macaulay's picture book definitely fits into Joosen's description reporting the parents' everyday work and home routine in a cool, disinterested manner, not bothering to properly greet her parents back home from the office, as the picture in the second double spread shows, remaining unimpressed by their responsible adult/parent role performance. From the adolescent character's perspective, the relationship with the parents is rendered in a tightly fixed context regulated through routines and schedules which determine the child-adult power balance. On the one hand, this time management system provides the adults with the authority to control the children's activities, impose curfews and send them to bed; as Zerubavel argues, the authority of the adult over the child through temporal arrangements is an expression of the relationship between time and power ("The Sociology of Time" 47) which the text in "Problem

Parents" elucidates. On the other hand, parental authority is not unconditionally accepted by the daughter, in fact, the visual text illustrates an attitude of detachment and distance clearly separating the child from the adult and revealing the implicit criticism of the teenager towards adult normativity. Kress and Van Leeuwen have established that the choice of distance suggests different relations between the viewer and the depicted participant ("Reading Images" 130) and, also, that the viewer's sense of distance can be derived from the angle of vision (134); the picture in the second double spread is focalized through the eyes of the mother who is positioned at a high angle and considerable distance from her children, while the daughter is facing the other way making no eye contact with her parent. The high angle, Kress and Van Leeuwen explain, indicates involvement with the represented participants but also power over them ("Reading Images" 148); the lack of eye contact from the daughter's part is suggestive of her detachment from parental control. The fourth picture is focalized through the eyes of the daughter who is watching her parents asleep on the couch from a high angle and at a far greater distance compared to the second illustration; this shift in focalization is indicative of the adolescent child's perception of her relationship to her parents and her implied questioning of parental authority.

Although in the majority of children's books the subversion of adult normativity is achieved through the child character's rebellious attitude, in *Black and White* it is the parents who actually disrupt the serenity of the household and destabilize the power balance in the child-adult relationship. As the adolescent narrator reveals in the fifth double spread, "the moment they [the parents] came through the door" it was obvious to both children that "something was wrong" (n. pag.). Going against all rules and routines supporting adult normativity the mother and the father of the family arrive wearing newspapers, singing, refusing to check children's homework making the young girl wonder in the ninth double spread "Who *are* these people?" (n. pag.). Children's picture books traditionally scrutinize the child character's identity, while, as Amy DeWitt, Cynthia Cready and Rudy Seward point out, the parents' portrayal is "rarely of primary concern" to children's writers (100); however, "Problem Parents" brings the role of the adults to the foreground in order to challenge aetonormative hierarchy in the family context. The anthropomorphic Cat bringing down adult authority in *The Cat in the Hat* and little Max escaping to the land of the Wild Things in Sendak's picture book are succeeded by the two adult

figures in *Black and White* who take it upon themselves to undermine their own authority.

The adolescent child character finds herself in the peculiar and uncomfortable position of having to deal with adult insanity and re-establish order in the household as she knows she is "the only one who can save them [the parents] now!" (n. pag.). According to Lydia Kokkola privileging adulthood "as a period of balanced maturity" by underlining the disruptive, tumultuous behaviour of teenagers, "the *sturm and drang* of adolescence" (6), is a way to maintain aetonormative perceptions of childhood which disempower the child in the relationship with the adult (23). "Problem Parents" outlines a distant, yet calm teenager, poised to handle a crisis, an image free from romantic perceptions of childhood vulnerability and powerlessness; on the other hand, the parents' transgressive behaviour underpinned by their carnivalesque liberation from the restrictions of adult maturity demonstrates the constructedness of adult normativity and, subsequently, questions the validity and dominance of adult social and cultural conventions on which it depends. In this reversed reality experienced by the family members the boundaries separating adulthood from childhood become rather blurry as the respective roles of parents and children are rendered equally fluid and the power balance in their relationship is inevitably shaken.

The function of the newspaper is crucial in this highly extraordinary context where the parents give up their duties and, so, the child assumes the adult's responsibility to restore stability. The newspaper is a powerful means of the media enforcing grown-ups' reality; its deployment as a toy, a playful costume transforms it into a symbol of the reversed reality founded on the debris of adult normativity, social conventions and cultural norms with which the media-imposed reality is invested. In the wider context of the aetonormative theory the child revolts against the oppressive adult through magical transportation to a fantasy world (Nikolajeva "Theory, Post-theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 17). Ironically, in *Black and White* it is the most efficient means of influencing people's understanding of reality, the newspaper, which is used to exemplify the fragility of aetonormative perceptions putting pressure not only on children but, as it turns out, adults as well; the magic carpet transporting the hard-working parents from the stuffy train station to the land of carnival fun and,

then, on to a chronotope of disruptive upheaval within their own home is none other than the newspaper.

The late-night cleaning up of all newspaper bits and pieces around the house signals the return to the much desired by the teenage daughter domestic serenity, even though, as the adolescent child admits, this reversal of roles and breaking of rules "was kind of fun in the end" (n. pag.). The last lines in the verbal text with the parents asking about "that homework" can be interpreted as a sign of compliance with the conventions of order and propriety; however, the adolescent character appears determined to "watch those parents" regardless of how exhausting it might be and, thus, maintain her critical stance towards her parents, adult rules and restrictions confirming the constantly shifting character of the child-adult power structure.

5.4 *Black and White*: the inevitable encounter of the individual with the mass media

The position of the individual in the power spectrum of contemporary society is a theme indirectly but consistently addressed in *Black and White*. Over the past decades an increasing array of various media has come to be a standard feature in the lives of adults, young people and children (Lievens 1). The social and cultural context of the 1990s is inextricably linked to the rising popularity of television which like other mass media strengthened its value as a vital part of the average American's daily routine (Xiaoming 353). Furthermore, media critic and Pulitzer Prize winner Ben Bagdikian emphasized that the American media in the 1990s was dominated by five global corporations whose leaders held "more communications power than was exercised by any despot or dictatorship in history" (3). Mass media penetration and strong ability to convey information and ideas which significantly influence the people's outlook and world view raise questions regarding the impact they exert on the audience. Do the mass media and especially television, "a dominant tool in public communication since the 1960s" (Cengiz and Arvas 254), reach the citizens helping them to actively engage in public affairs? Or do they, as Benjamin Page inquires,

"mislead citizens and distort public opinion" (6), therefore, producing passive and easily manipulated consumers?

Macaulay devotes a substantial part of his Caldecott Medal Acceptance Speech to the power relationship between the public and mass media and the degree of control these channels of information and entertainment exert on their younger and older audiences. Macaulay refers to television as "a major cause of our visual narcosis" and argues that resistance to the visual complacency to which we are subjected becomes increasingly difficult (n. pag.). The writer also pinpoints the connection between the media and picture books in terms of the way in which the audience hears, watches or reads the news and the reading process for the picture book. As Macaulay notes, reading both the positive and the negative spaces to fully grasp the image in a picture book is essential in the same manner that it is crucial to "constantly consider what is not said" in newspapers and the television (n. pag.). *Black and White* elucidates the complex power negotiation between the individual and the pervasive mass media and communication means through the deployment of the newspaper as a visual/narrative device and the structure of the verbal and visual text in the book.

The *Black and White* title of the book coloured in red in the front endpaper is an intertextual reference to the classic newspaper riddle, "What is black and white and red all over?" (L. Collins 39-40), which establishes the central role of the newspaper in the narrative reflecting the state of media thirty years ago. The first picture in "Problem Parents" illustrates the family sitting at the breakfast table. The parents are reading the morning papers but the pages of their newspapers are blank white; this unusual depiction of the newspaper is hard to go unnoticed by the reader/viewer especially since the sole colours of the image are brown, black and white. The missing text lines on the newspaper page are rendered the first tangible example of the gap to which Macaulay refers with the term "negative space". This undrawn visual space is an element of surprise which causes wonder and, thus, initiates an attitude of interrogation regarding the role of the media in providing information towards the representation of reality. The role of the newspaper as part of the family's daily routine is further accentuated through its recurring presence in the majority of the illustrations in "Problem Parents". In fact, the picture in the third double spread which is focalized through the dog's perspective, showcases the newspaper protruding from

the mother's work briefcase as it is placed right at the centre of the illustration and its black and white colour contrasts the sepia brown entirely covering the rest of the picture and the figures in it. The viewer, who adopts the perspective of the dog which is probably standing right behind its departing owners, inevitably notices the prominent image of the newspaper, an evident hint of the significance of the newspaper not only in the fictional characters' lives but also as a narrative device in the book.

The role of television in the storyline of "Problem Parents" functions in complementarity to the influential part of mass media in the public's everyday life as well as the metafictional quality of the newspaper in *Black and White*. The pictures in the fourth and the fifth double spread clearly depict the TV set at the centre of the living room, the furniture arranged in front of the TV screen and the children's toys spread around it. The communal space of the family is literally constructed around television which along with reading the newspapers puts the parents to sleep in the fourth double spread indicating literal and figurative "visual narcosis". The numbing effect of television on the viewer is one aspect of its presence in the story. The TV screen in the fifth double spread displays the face of the runaway convict in "Udder Chaos" creating a link between the two plots and, therefore, operating as a metafictional visual device which facilitates the identification of the connecting threads between the two texts.

The newspaper as a narrative device in *Black and White* also associates the plot of "Problem Parents" with "A Waiting Game". The first illustrations of the commuters waiting for the train on the platform depict a crowd of men and women with their heads buried deep in the newspapers they are massively reading. Although their figures are drawn standing in rather close proximity to one another, the act of reading the news appears to be an obstacle in their way of becoming aware of the people next to them. The conflicting representation of the passengers, on the one hand eager to be informed on current affairs, and, on the other hand, oblivious to their surrounding reality, is highlighted in the sixth and seventh double spread. These distant characters, mentally and emotionally reserved from their surrounding environment, seem to come to life the moment they fold away their newspapers and start taking notice of their whereabouts. They become alert to the unexpected delay of the train and the equally surprising reaction of the station master who first climbs the

roof of the building and then kneels down on the steel rails in anticipation of the arrival of the "eight-thirteen to the city". The viewer is inclined to speculate whether this breach in the normality of the circumstances met by the official's unusual behaviour is to be enriched with the commuters' potential participation in breaking the rules of proper social conduct. The passengers' response to the emerging confusion is expressed through an alternative use of the newspaper. The material of the newspaper is transformed into a means of disguise, a part of the nonsensical setting gradually taking over the austere train platform. Paper hats, costumes and festive ornaments are crafted with the newspapers and operate in a twofold manner. "A Waiting Game" and "Problem Parents" become interrelated as the disguised-in-newspapers figures of the singing parents in the sixth double spread bear a definite resemblance to the dressed-up train passengers. The representation of the newspaper in the form of a material suitable for decoration and festivities rather than a medium of information and communication of the contemporary reality challenges its power of influence over the public in shaping their perception of the world around them.

The narrative function of the newspaper is restricted to the visual text until the eleventh double spread where torn pieces of white paper with printed words on it, apparently bits and pieces of the newspaper cut-outs in "A Waiting Game", are witnessed dropping from "Seeing Things" and entering the framework of "Problem Parents". Macaulay looks back to the artistic traditions of early twentieth century Cubists and Dadaists who assembled collages and photomontages from fragments of pre-made items such as newspapers, wallpaper, photographs and other recognizable images which they juxtaposed in order to produce "disturbing counter-realities", as David Hopkins observes (74), and, thus, make people see things from a different perspective (Elder 150-151; Hopkins 3). Furthermore, the scattered words on the newspaper pieces printed in bold, large letters render the newspaper a metafictional device as they call attention to the act of narrative construction and the process of writing, unwriting and rewriting it involves. The newspaper fragments, which move forward the narration of the boy's train adventure underpinning the connection of "Seeing Things" to the plot of the other two stories in the book, blur the distinction between the verbal and the visual operating simultaneously as word and image. Their hybrid verbal/visual form combined with their disorderly placement on the page complicate the reading process and form yet another case of negative space which is

open to multiple interpretations. According to Frank Serafini, the possibility of multiple interpretations allows the readers to "assume a variety of perspectives to any text they encounter" ("The Pedagogical Possibilities of Postmodern Picturebooks" 29). The audience develops a stance of critical readership which, as Collins suggests, can enhance the process of thoughtful engagement with other media (32) and eliminates the danger of visual narcosis or any other form of passive consumption of the mass media products.

Ester de Waal and Klaus Schoenbach contend that the linear, finite format of traditional printed newspapers provides the reader with a kind of guidance which encourages a "paging-through behaviour" and permits the readers' interest to be stirred towards topics which may have not been of interest to them in the first place (163). Nevertheless, *Black and White* demonstrates that the reappropriation of the newspaper as an artefact, a part of reality rather than an accurate representation of reality transcends the borders separating what is real from what appears to be so; hence, the individual reader is in a position to apply a different viewpoint and interpretative perspective. The power of the newspaper as a lens through which the dominant culture illustrates reality and perceived reality is destabilized; in agreement with Patricia Paugh's line of argumentation, "the master narratives that are accepted within dominant society" are viewed "not as natural truths but as constructions of specific power relations" (99).

The enigmatic persona of the escaped convict whose face appears on television in "Problem Parents" is never named, directly or indirectly addressed in the verbal text and still his function as a device of interaction between the four plots is indispensable to the structure of the book. The reader of *Black and White* comes across a fictional character whose entire existence is equivalent to the negative space that remains liable to more than one interpretations. Whether a plain thief, a humorous character, a visual feature of the book or a metafictional device, the disguised outlaw can assume any one or several of these identities depending on the reader's analysis. The text refrains from patronizing the audience towards a specific explanation of this mysterious character and, contrary to the common mass media method of presenting stories and those implicated in them from one angle which will appeal to their target audience, triggers the reader's curiosity and allows individual inquisitive thinking. The ambiguous content of the front and the back endpaper in the book negotiating the

authority of the writer over the text and the power relation of the author to the reader highlights the fact that an integrated understanding of the story also relies on features outside the actual pages of the narrative. This trespassing of the storyline borders renders the book an object open to exploration by the reader attempting to make sense of the process of its construction and the connection between its various physical parts and the story inside it.

The format of *Black and White* definitely reflects a break from a more traditional, linear picture book form identified as a demonstration of the absence of "hierarchy of power or structure" which characterizes postmodern picture books (Botelho and Rudman 207); nonetheless, it does not automatically amount to the empowerment or elimination of power of the capacity of the individual to become an active participant in the meaning-making process. The distinct style and format of *Black and White* is a tool of exploration of the world but at the same time a field open to investigation itself and as such the power of its impact is contingent on the audience's manipulation of it. It is up to the reader to exploit the transparency of the mechanisms behind the construction of the book and think the question of media power addressed in it, or not.

5.5 Concluding remarks

"The storytelling, as in a children's garden of forking paths, roams through several levels of reality" Kimberly Fakih of the *Los Angeles Times* contends and offers a description of the picture book which effectively applies to *Black and White* (Fakih). As Brian Richardson points out, the "forking paths" principle, which was articulated by *The Garden of Forking Paths*, J. L. Borges' short story written in 1941, can be related to popular children's texts where the audience decides how to sequence the reading (175). The Garden of Forking Paths is the illustration of the universe as an "ever spreading network of diverging, converging and parallel times" (Borges 9). The four interwoven stories in *Black and White* constructing a complicated, non-linear verbal and visual narrative function as a space available to the child reader/viewer for

playful investigation of symbols and meanings which are to be discovered through various "forking paths". The complex relationship of reality, perceived reality and fantasy is captured in and accentuated by the interplay between the illustrated and the narrative text within the framework of each individual story as well as the broader framework of their interrelated plots. The synergistic relationship between word and image and the possibility of multiple readings and routes of interpretation provides adequate explanation of the mixed response of *Black and White* (Dresang 44). Anstey claims that the complicated process of reading *Black and White* based on the detection of the connections bringing the four plots together depends on the reader's use of prior knowledge of story construction implying that *Black and White* is a text too sophisticated for the child reader (453). Jill McClay, on the other hand, argues that *Black and White* simultaneously engages the child and challenges the adult to meet the demands the complicated form of the text places on younger and older audiences (103).

In line with McClay, this chapter has argued for the essential contribution of the non-linear, highly interactive format of the book as a factor of empowerment for the child reader who may have little or no background on how stories are built. The disruption of the traditional spatiotemporal relation in the word/image exchange, the verbal and visual clues of intertextuality connecting the four stories, the reconsideration of the implication of the peritext as an additional field of action for the fictional characters underpin the insufficiency of traditional reading strategies and amplify the need for a more divergent interpretative approach. The inexperienced child reader and the more accomplished adult reader are equally encouraged to follow the seemingly arbitrary course of the bandit in and out of the storyline frameworks; read the information drawn but also the missing bits in the negative space of the morning papers; spot the black and white Holstein cows and watch them upset not only the itinerary of the train but also the representation of time sequence in the book. The older or younger reader of *Black and White* has to move several times up and down and back and forth the pages of the book and literally "think outside the box" in order to make sense of the story components.

The constantly shifting power balance between the real and the fictional, the tension in the power relation of the word and the image, the negotiation of influence in the author/text/reader relationship create an extremely complex system of power

dynamics which alludes to Foucault's "net-like organization" in the context of which power is employed, exercised and circulated rather than fixedly held or owned by the participant subjects ("Power/Knowledge" 98). The prospects for the exploration of meaning in the open-ended, composite verbal/visual space of *Black and White* are endless; to paraphrase the mother's welcoming statement at the last scene of "Seeing Things", what a journey the readers of *Black and White* must have had.

Notes

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[1] For the purposes of this study intratextual references are defined as the visual and verbal references within *Black and White* as contrasted with the intertextual references to external texts.

[2] The theory of aetonormativity developed by Maria Nikolajeva has been extensively discussed in previous chapters in the thesis.

6. REAL AND IMAGINARY WORLDS CALLED INTO PLAY BY BROWNE'S DIVERGENT *VOICES IN THE PARK* BLAZING AWAY

6.1 Introduction

Anthony Browne is an English author and illustrator of children's books and the winner of the 1998 Kurt Maschler Award for *Voices in the Park*, one of his most popular picture books. As the author himself admits in his 2011 interview to Anna Metcalfe, Maurice Sendak was one of his greatest literary influences in terms of the rhythm, the design and the verbal text in his picture books (Browne); his work also traces a line back to the English surrealists (Browne, "A Life in Books") in whose tradition Dr. Seuss is located (Nel, "Dada Knows Best" 152), thus, a connection can be drawn between the two writers/illustrators, as well.

British children's literature in the 1990s signalled an attempt to address issues of social, racial and cultural diversity (Grzegorczyk 1); children's writers were driven to explore the power relations between a dominant group and the oppressed "other" placing emphasis on the subjective experiences and responses of those marginalized to prejudice and discrimination (Grzegorczyk 2). The rise in the publication of children's books in the UK addressing cultural diversity is met with a corresponding trend in the US towards publishing multicultural literature voicing different perspectives and viewpoints (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson 244). Macaulay's *Black and White* vividly exemplifies this trend as different perspectives are provided through the multiple viewpoints in the verbal and the visual text. The association between American and British children's literature is further suggested by the fact that the vast majority of children's book imports to the US during the 1990s belong to these originating in the UK (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson 237).

The creation of *Voices in the Park* is based on the much earlier *A Walk in the Park*, also written and illustrated by Browne in 1977. The two picture books share a

common thematic core and fundamentally rely on the story of a day at the park narrated from four different perspectives, however, in the *fin de siècle* version, four anthropomorphic apes take the place of the human characters in the narrative. The first voice in the book is the middle-aged, upper-class, controlling mother of Charles who takes her son and cherished pet dog to the park. She disapproves of every other visitor at the park, reprimands Charles for playing with a "rough-looking girl" and finally returns her family to the security of their sterile home. The second voice is a lower-class, unemployed zoomorphic man who seeks a breath of fresh air at the park in an attempt to resist the hopelessness and despair of unemployment. The third voice belongs to Charles, the son of the posh family, who visits the park wishing for even temporary release from the suffocating parental control. Smudge is the fourth and last character and she openly challenges the elitist, conservative outlook of Charles's mother; unlike her father, the unemployed man in "SECOND VOICE", and Charles, she faces the world with confidence and optimism.

Voices in the Park features among postmodern picture books of the late twentieth century whose metafictional characteristics substantially contribute to the construction of the word and the image and their synergistic relationship (Belcher 30-31; McGuire, et al. 197-204; McMillan 123; Serafini, "Voices in the Park" 49-50; Swaggerty 11). My analysis of the devices of metafiction and intertextuality draws on Hutcheon's work in the field of postmodernism. Hutcheon defines postmodernism as a fundamentally contradictory phenomenon installing and subverting convention through the mechanism of parody ("The Politics of Postmodernism" 180). The critic links the notion of intertextuality, "the dialogic relation among texts" ("A Theory of Adaptation" xii) to parody as a particular case of intertextuality paradoxically marking both "continuity and change, both authority and transgression" ("The Politics of Postmodernism" 204). Although new to the field of children's literature, as the critic herself admits, Hutcheon recognizes the vast potential offered in children's texts for the exploration of narrative self-reflexivity, parody and metafiction ("Harry Potter and the Novice's Confession" 169-170).

This chapter focuses on the function of the metafictional narrative techniques in highlighting the constructedness of the book and the interplay between the real and the fictional on which the text is founded. The deployment of the device of the multiple narrative voices underscores the metafictional quality of the text but also

amplifies the relationship between reality and what the individual perceives as reality and intensifies the complications in the interaction of reality with imagination. Intertextuality, another central feature of postmodern literature, works on two levels in picture books, the verbal and the visual level (Nikolajeva and Scott 228). Ample visual intertextual, or intervisual, references to recognizable works of art by various famous artists such as Rousseau and Leonardo da Vinci supplement the metafictional character of the book and increase the tension in the relationship between the real and the imaginary. In particular, Browne's homage to Magritte's art and surrealist aesthetics establishes the book as a site of contestation of the binary opposition between reality and imagination. The child-adult opposition sustains the complications in the roles assumed by parents and children respectively through an age-based framework. The anthropomorphic representation of the grown-up gorilla characters and their children, the two young monkeys Charles and Smudge, complements the surrealistic imagery in the book. Examination of the hybrid, anthropomorphic characters through the posthuman lens explicitly questions the defining lines between the normative human and the inferior non-human "other"; it, also, contributes to the destabilization of perceptions of reality organized around the oppositional relationship between manmade world and nature, civilization and animal instinct, adult reason and child imagination.

Voices in the Park has attracted critics' attention as a complicated text whose intriguing surrealistic images and polyphonic narrative voices represent multiple meaning potentials and, thus, activate the child reader's impulse to interrogate the surrounding adult world. Nevertheless, several critics such as Nel (" Surrealism for Children" 268-269), Erica Hateley (325) and Sue Saltmarsh (105) promote scepticism about the power of Browne's picture book to expose the arbitrariness and absurdity of social rules and conventions and transgress the boundaries they impose on the individual. I argue that the book, indeed, does not exist in isolation; on the contrary, it responds to its contemporary socio historical context, the highly contradictory social reality in the 1990s Western-world countries, as described in Bill Jordan's socio economical analysis, as well as the impact of the rising levels of unemployment of the less advantaged classes, inequality and social exclusion (11).

Voices in the Park reflects the socioeconomic changes taking place in Britain of the late 1990s but also exercises criticism on the prejudice and stereotypical

perception of those suffering social exclusion due to financial deprivation; the book emphasizes social class division and attempts to disrupt the lower class-upper class binary by voicing the diverse perspectives from which the same social phenomenon can be viewed, experienced and interpreted. In the case of the female child character the text sheds light on the issue of discrimination as a result of the intersection of age, gender and class. Patricia Hill Collins defines the term intersectionality as "the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities" (1). In order to highlight the interaction between gender as a significant identity marker and other factors such as class and age rendering characters vulnerable to discrimination, I apply an intersectional analysis lens to explore the ways in which Smudge experiences disadvantage but also how she deals with the circumstances of her life. My argument is that far from leaving "the polarized terrain of social class divisions intact" (Saltmarsh 106), the picture book addresses issues of class and gender embedded in the text through the verbal and the visual narrative techniques which unsettle the power relations of text and image, child and adult, the individual and contemporary social conventions.

6.2 Subversive games of word and image in the park

This section investigates the complicated interplay between the real and the imaginary through the deployment of anthropomorphism, surreal fantasy, intertextuality and a variety of typographic styles which point towards the diversity among the "voices", each narrating their own version of the visit at the park. The constant friction between the verbal account of events and their visual depiction highlight the respective roles of fantasy and imagination in perceiving and interpreting the world around us and identify the power relationship between the real and the imaginary as synergistic rather than oppositional. The examination of the hybrid, anthropomorphic characters through a posthuman lens elucidates Browne's perception of the animal-human relationship as one of interdependence and

significantly contributes to the interrogation of the binary oppositions of human/beast, real/imaginary, culture/nature.

6.2.1 *The real, the surreal, and the multiple perspectives of "truth"*

Browne attributes his deep interest in the movement of surrealism to the Surrealists' subversive take on the representation of reality; by putting together disparate objects in a common context, their function, which is taken for granted, changes "as if we are seeing them for the first time" ("In-depth Written Interview"). The artist's fascination with surrealism is made evident through the multiple visual intertextual references to famous surrealist works of art in his picture books such as *Through the Magic Mirror* (1976), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1988), *Willy the Dreamer* (1997) and *Voices in the Park*.

According to Sipe and Caroline McGuire the peritext or the "threshold" of the picture book, encapsulates the fundamental features in the verbal and visual narrative ("Picturebook Endpapers" 292); the front cover illustration which extends to the four edges of the page and depicts two children, in fact, anthropomorphic monkeys, standing at the end of a path lined with trees, an allusion to Rousseau's promenade in his painting, *The Avenue in Saint-Cloud Park* (1908); the different fonts of the typeface used in the title; echoes of Magritte's surrealism traced in the picture of the floating hat on the page of the front endpaper, an image recurrent throughout the entire picture symbolically connected to the first character/narrative voice. The visual impact of the red hat as the sole red object in the pale-coloured introductory image of the first story is quite powerful and, whether the intended connection to Magritte is perceived by the audience or not, it undoubtedly draws attention to the figure of the mother and her double part as key character and narrator. The connotation is that the mother's subjective point of view, therefore, her personal understanding of reality is the determinant factor in the representation of the course of events.

On the other hand, even though the verbal text is narrated through the character's point of view in the manner of intradiegetic verbal narration, the visual processing of the story is externally focalized; the story is visually represented from an external, omniscient point of view which, as it is demonstrated further down in this section, does not necessarily comply with the corresponding verbal assertions and,

consequently, questions their status. The story is entitled "FIRST VOICE" in underlined capital letters printed on top of the introductory image, a most surprising choice as one would expect a title summarizing the plot or a one-word title with the name of the central character. Accordingly, the second story is entitled "SECOND VOICE", the third story "THIRD VOICE" and so on. The repetitive pattern in the naming of the four stories is a metafictional element which highlights the use of multiple narrators and narratives; the constructedness of the picture book is revealed, with the voice, equivalent to the point of view, one of the formal features characterizing a narrative and, as Nikolajeva points out, a significant analytical tool for the examination of children's literature ("Beyond the Grammar" 11).

The diversity of perspectives deployed in the four narratives is decidedly accentuated with the writer/illustrator's strategic decision to use different fonts for each "Voice" in the book which simultaneously underscores the ongoing power play between the verbal and the visual text. Serafini and Jennifer Clausen assert that the typographical features of contemporary picture books convey "particular emotional and social meanings and associations" (14). According to Thomas Phinney and Lesley Colabucci, typography plays a vital part in enhancing the meanings conveyed in picture books and can, in fact, highlight specific aspects and elements in the story (17-18). Careful observation of the selected typeface for each "Voice" corroborates the critics' argument as a close connection can be discerned between the central character narrating their own version of the day at the park and the font style of the text in each story. Considering the size, colour and style of the typeface, the Times New Roman font in the "FIRST VOICE" appears orderly and formal which is in compliance with the character's austerity, but it is also a bit inflated in size, a possible allusion to her inflated ego. The bold, markedly large, pitch black sans serif typeface in the "SECOND VOICE" seems to be making a statement about the father's rather dark and pessimistic perspective on life; a picture bearing a close resemblance to Edvard Munch's *The Scream* on the front page of the newspaper in the third double spread effectively emphasizes the father's desperate state. Charles's fragility and lack of self-confidence is quite eloquently expressed in the thin, faint sans serif font of the text in the "THIRD VOICE", while Smudge's playful, carefree disposition is a perfect match for the informal, hand-lettered typeface in the "FOURTH VOICE".

In this light, the text face chosen for each story in accordance with the character's viewpoint functions both as a constituent element of the verbal text and a

visual feature contributing to the illustration of the character's state of mind and psychology. The arrangement of the text and the image on the page leaves no room for disruption of their boundaries. However, the double function of the typeface brings together the verbal and the visual and lays claim to an alternative interpretation of Mitchell's imagetext ("Picture Theory" 9) as in the case of the fourth double spread in Silverstein's *The Giving Tree* where the words of the visual poem are depicted falling off the tree like leaves; in both books the visual emerges as an inherent part of the verbal and, in this sense, the image/text interplay emerges as a form of integration of the imagetext.

The interrogation of the objectivity of truth, a key feature of postmodernism, unfolding with the deployment of multiple subjective perspectives of reality is further established through the technique of image framing in the picture book. Qing Qiu refers to the function of the framed or bound image as the bordered visual space which keeps the illustrated fictional world apart from the world lying outside the reality of the picture book (48). Sipe also describes the picture frame as the boundary between the illusory reality of the illustration and the reality of the book as an artefact ("Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects" 34). The use of frames, either in the form of borderlines or the white margins surrounding the image and visibly separating it from the text, contributes to the interplay between the real, what lies beyond the world of the book, and the fictional.

In the case of *Voices in the Park* framing also powers up the tension between the verbal and the visual which are diversely focalized and, therefore, offer at times contradictory representations of reality filtered through fantasy and imagination. The two pictures on the first and third page, respectively depicting the family house and the mother sitting on a bench with Charles immobilized next to her, are framed with straight, bold, dark lines emphasizing the mother's powerful control over all aspects of the family life but also indicating the compliance of the message in the picture with the text placed underneath it. The majority of the pictures in the third story, young Charles's narration, are similarly framed in strong, straight lines creating a connection with the first story and highlighting the extended control of the mother over her child; her rigid, austere perception of reality is imposed on Charles constricting his impulse, thought and imagination. The trembling, free-hand drawn frame enclosing the second and fifth illustration participates in the power play between fantasy and reality and interrogates the validity of the female character's account of events in the verbal text.

According to the mother the family dog, Victoria, is bothered by "some scruffy mongrel" which "chased her all over the park" (n. pag). However, as the picture on the left clearly proves, the exact opposite has taken place, refuting the mother's biased perception and representation of reality. Furthermore, the incongruent, fantastical figures of the enormous caterpillar and the queen strolling around the park at the background of the second illustration function in a somewhat mocking manner towards the stern mother hinting at the character's inability or unwillingness to endorse alternative interpretations of the surrounding world.

The visual text in the second story follows a specific pattern with the use of the free-hand drawn frame on the left page of each double spread and full-bleed illustration on the right side. The only exception to this repetitive pattern is the first illustration of the story, the disappointed adult thrown into the armchair, a bound image realized by a framing device which is part of the image itself, the shade which the portrait casts against the white margins of the page. Painter, Martin and Unsworth define this type of frame as experiential bearing symbolic attributes (108) which in this case suggest the dark shadow of depression and disillusionment cast over the unemployed father's psychological state and, consequently, his outlook on life.

A second example of the experiential frame is found in Charles's story; even though most pictures in the third narration are framed with firm, strong lines, the picture on the right page of the third double spread showing the two children, Charles and Smudge, swinging on the climbing frame, is bound with the climbing frame itself as well as a patch of luscious, tropical vegetation grown at the bottom side of the picture which Charles's feet can almost touch. The style in which this part of the frame is illustrated alludes to Rousseau's exotic landscapes that create a connecting thread to Sendak's fantastical illustrations of wild nature taking over Max's bedroom in *Where the Wild Things Are.* This is the visual recording of a small but significant victory of the two children's games instigated by their playful and creative imagination over the adult's, that is the female character, perception of the world as a space of social division and classification in a manner analogous to Max's rebellion against parental control. The same rationale applies to the use of the experiential frame on the left page of the third double spread in Smudge's story. The brim of the depicted fountain forms the bottom part of the frame of this highly surreal image with the gorillas in their underpants having replaced the statues of ancient deities which would have decorated the structure. The two dogs playing together in the water

operate blissfully unaware of the adult rules of proper behaviour and social division and in compliance with the surrealistic effect of the half-naked apes dismantling any potential resemblance or reproduction of a realistic setting.

Returning to the technique of the free-hand drawn frame, its use is accentuated in the fourth story, Smudge's narration, and imbued with a double symbolic meaning. On the one hand, the frame of the illustration highlights its imaginative content representing the child's view of the world as a playful landscape, a field available for unlimited action filled with bright colours and pleasingly peculiar characters. On the other hand, the free-hand drawn frame in combination with the informal, handwritten font in "FOURTH VOICE" reflects Smudge's defiance of rules and formalities and her indifference toward social standards of propriety, which is in accordance with the carefree, spontaneous style of her verbal narration:

I got talking to this boy. I thought he

was a bit of a wimp at first, but he's

okay. (n. pag.)

Probing into the illustrations of the four characters' day at the park, Browne's surreal take in terms of the multiple intervisual references to famous but out-of-context works of art expands the interactive relationship between the verbal and the visual text and creates representations inclusive of and dependent on the power of fantasy and imagination; the reader's understanding of the meaning of the story and characterization also depends on understanding these intervisual references. Hateley extensively analyzes the influence of surrealism and especially Magritte on Browne's work. Hateley acknowledges the richness of the intervisual play in Browne's picture books as well as the remarkable "aptness at incorporating Magrittian citations" into his works (327). However, the critic argues that these citations "are not in themselves Surrealist" because they are deprived of the analogical representation which marks Magritte's work, and which lays the foundation for the revision and reconceptualization of previously known objects in a new framework (326). Hateley cites several of Browne's picture books including *The Tunnel* and *Zoo* but not *Voices in the Park*, as examples of the writer's practice of using art as a product intended for consumption (327) rather than an attempt on providing an alternative representation of reality.

However, my reading of the visual text in *Voices in the Park* contradicts Hateley's assertions and validates the surrealist imagery in the book and its

connection to the subversive power of fantasy and imagination which the critic dismisses. The parody of *The Laughing Cavalier* and *Mona Lisa* and the universally cherished figure of Santa Claus illustrated in the opening double spread of the second story emphatically manifest the contrast to the representation of reality in the first narrative in the book. The depiction of the classic artworks as symbols of social degradation bears no relation to the orderly representation of reality in "FIRST VOICE" which the female figure of bourgeois authority maintains or contends to maintain under control. A chronotope of misery is constituted through the tiresome expression on the face of the man in the first picture of the double spread; the decrepit paintings lying on the filthy sidewalk next to the impoverished Santa Claus who has a "wife and millions of kids to support"; the gloomy background of the run-down buildings against an autumn landscape. All these features outline a perspective of reality vastly different from the aesthetically pleasing, bright spring chronotope of the first story. Browne deploys visual intertextuality in order to create an analogy to the marginal social status of the father and the wider problem of the social annihilation and isolation of the unemployed.

Although the surrealist imagery in the second narrative clearly privileges fantasy over realism in the representation of the problematic aspects of reality and the experience of the individual struggling against them, the visual text does not provide counterpoint to the verbal narration; the power play between the text and the image falls under the category of enhancement and elaboration, according to the terminology proposed by Scott and Nikolajeva to describe the relationship of the illustration expanding and enriching the content in the verbal text (17).

> I needed to get out of the
> house, so me and Smudge
> took the dog to the park. (n.pag.)

The syntax of the text is simple, the words are few and plain and there is not a hint of surrealism to be traced among them, nevertheless, the feeling of helplessness and isolation experienced by the man is clearly conveyed in the narration which corresponds with the illustration on the opposite page; the father, Smudge and their dog walking next to *The* -no longer- *Laughing Cavalier*, *Mona Lisa* in tears and the homeless Santa. The dramatic change of scenery in the last double spread is evident both in the verbal and the visual text, though more strikingly emphasized in the illustration.

Then it was time to go. Smudge

cheered me up. She chatted

happily to me all the way home. (n. pag.)

The surrealist image is transformed from a depressive back alley into a brightly lit performance stage for the portrait characters to come to life and happily dance away their sorrows while the intervisual reference to the cinematic King Kong on top of the building in the background directly alludes to the father's uplifted mood and morale. The function of the intervisual surrealist elements is by no means restricted to ornamental citations to famous artworks; the deployment of surreal fantasy invests the text with powerful visual metaphors which underscore the change in the father's perception of reality and, hence, captures the subjective character of experience.

The interaction between the word and the image assumes a role in structuring the process towards the respective endings in the four interrelated plots in the book. Although the four characters narrating their version of the visit to the park are given equal space in voicing their perspective of events, the last story told by Smudge inevitably functions as the concluding chapter in this modular narrative. The last page in "FOURTH VOICE" with its framed picture and accompanying text underneath the illustration provides the ending, though not necessarily the finite resolution to the issues raised by the four interacting voices. Each story is rounded off in a full-bleed illustration on the right page of the last double spread forming a repetitive pattern which leads the reader to identify the end of the story with this final illustration, or as Cheryl McMillan points out "thematically, the narrative climaxes with this illustration" (126). The repetition of this last image signifying the end of the story deserves special attention; Hsien-Yuan Chiu and Ta-Long Lin stress the function of repetition as a rhetorical device "used to achieve an expected psychological and immersive effect" (133), in this case the reader's expectation concentrating on the upcoming ending of the story. In "FIRST VOICE" the full-page illustration of the mother, Charles and Victoria leaving the park in order to return home and, thus, put an end to Charles's deviant behaviour, confirms the parental authority over the young boy and functions in agreement with the corresponding text on the opposite page.

"Charles, come here. At

once!" I said. "And come

here, please, Victoria."

We walked home in silence. (n. pag.)

The only discord to this demonstration of the power of parental rule is the burning tree in the background of the image, which as Browne has stated, is symbolic of the mother's anger stimulated by Charles's attempted revolt against the constrictions of his upbringing ("In-depth Written Interview"). This surrealist pictorial element of the tree in flames creates a crack in the female character's facade of self-control and essentially questions the truthfulness of her account. "SECOND VOICE" comes to its end with the full-bleed image of the surrealistically improved landscape creating an analogy to the father's cheered-up disposition. The full-page illustration of Charles's family walking away from the park provides closure to "THIRD VOICE" in a manner similar to the ending in the previous stories. The rhythm of repetition is unexpectedly broken in "FOURTH VOICE" where the full-bleed illustration on the left page of the double spread showing Charles reluctantly leaving the park with his mother while looking behind his shoulder in search of Smudge is not, in fact, the last illustration in the book. The turn of the page reveals one more, final page with Smudge's last narrative lines:

When I got home I put the flower in some

water, and made Dad a nice cup of tea. (n. pag.)

The short piece of text placed underneath the framed image brings the fourth story, and practically the entire book, to an end but not much closer to a resolution of the difficult relationship between Charles and his mother or the father's marginal social position; most importantly, it does not promise a future encounter of Smudge with Charlie, as she calls him. The illustration is contained within a thick, yellow frame which reflects Smudge's generally happy disposition and narrative style but still carries the restraining effect of the use of frames. The depicted cup with Charlie's flower in it, which has a picture of the two dogs drawn all over its cylindrical surface, combined with the bright colours of the image leaves the story open-ended but allows some optimism regarding the evolution of the two children's lives. The placement of the concluding word and image in the book disrupting the pattern followed in the preceding plots, the indeterminacy of the conveyed message in this last scene of the story strongly allude to the last scene in Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* which also resists the much anticipated by the audience, as Sipe notes, closure and resolution ("Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects" 37). The little girl's "nice cup of tea", much like

Max's supper, maintains the power struggle between what is real, what we desire and what we perceive to be real, *still hot*.

6.2.2 *Border-crossing anthropomorphic apes*

Anthropologists' attention to the relationship between humans and animals towards the end of the twentieth century inspired other disciplines including biology, geography and cultural studies to display renewed interest in the topic (Mullin 201). Scientific and technological evolution problematizing the distinction between humans and animals but also humans and machines, society and nature underlies the interrogation of the fundamentally anthropocentric binary opposition between humans and animals. In response to the contemporary cultural context, picture books such as Jill Murphy's *A Quiet Night In* (1994), whose protagonists are a middle-class family of elephants, and Cynthia Paterson's *The Foxwood Treasury* (1997), a collection of the Foxwood community members' tales and adventures, join the long tradition of children's books featuring anthropomorphic animals as key characters in the narration. The presence of apes and primates is a salient feature in many of Browne's picture books; *Gorilla* (1983) and *Zoo* (1984) deal with the highly unbalanced relationship developed between the objectified wild animal in a cage and the dominant human being observing it; *King Kong* (1994) addresses modern human's inability to perceive the position of humankind among all other natural beings rather than above or apart from them; *Little Beauty* (2008) interrogates the power of the human/nonhuman opposition focusing on the ability to communicate through language and its association, in the humanist context, exclusively with human beings.

The anthropomorphic representation of the four central characters in *Voices in the Park* is deployed towards the exploration of social issues against a surrealistic visual background. Approaching anthropomorphism in the book from the perspective of posthumanism, it is argued that the portrayal of gorillas as humans imaginatively challenges the concept of the "human" defined "within categories marked by exclusionary practices" which promote discrimination (Ferrando, "Philosophical Posthumanism" 4). In a posthuman framework of analysis, hierarchical dualisms such as child/adult, poor/wealthy, low-class/bourgeois, human/animal are seriously

interrogated and, in this context, the inclusion of the marginalized others' experiences is foregrounded.

Voices in the Park depicts a landscape emphatically devoid of human presence. Animals are the only live participants in this fictional world where paintings and sculptures in "SECOND VOICE" and "THIRD VOICE", elusive human figures of princesses and flying nannies barely discerned strolling round the park in the background of the illustrations on the second and tenth page respectively serve as the sole references to humanity and the human body. Although the absence of humans from the centre of the plot renders the human-animal encounter less obvious or obscurely manifested, it does not diminish its powerful effect on the construction of the verbal and the visual text or its impact on the reader's conceptualization of the interdependence between human and non-human nature. The Bakhtinian carnivalesque context, which has become such a familiar feature in children's literature and, as Elick contends, provides the framework for the young reader to understand the power hierarchies defining the relationship between humans and beings from other species (9-11), does not apply in this case. Bakhtin's carnival as a temporary space of anarchy, a "temporal liberation" from rules and conventions ("Rabelais and His World" 10) is prevalent in earlier chapters; Sally and her brother are offered an escape from the oppressive domestic reality during their mother's absence through the Cat's subversion of all divisions separating reality from fantasy and human from animal; Max overturns the adult/child hierarchical relationship by transporting to the fantastical land of the Wild Things where the boundaries between the real and the imaginary, culture and wildness, human and monster are disrupted. The illustrations of the story in *Voices in the Park* are based on the premises of fantasy assigning the role of the protagonists to animals behaving like humans and blurring the human/non-human boundaries beyond discern. In this light, the pattern of the contemporary empowerment of the animal over the dominant human which underscores the carnivalesque is undermined. The writer refrains from depicting his anthropomorphic characters as grotesque figures mocking and dismantling human concepts of social order and conformity in the manner that Seuss illustrates the transgressive carnival figure of the Cat; Browne's representation of the animal characters bears no connection to Sendak's portrayal of the anthropomorphic Wild Things as the alter ego of a repressed child lacking substantial power or authority

outside the carnival setting. In the fictional world of *Voices in the Park* the anthropomorphic apes are the lead characters that narrate the story and occupy the centre of the verbal and the visual space of actions defying "the purported subsidiarity of the nonhuman" (Iovino 11) which lies at the core of the anthropocentric ideology.

Carolyn Burke and Joby Copenhaver argue that the construct of anthropomorphism deployed in children's literature provides for children "a buffered engagement with a message of cultural significance" (210) which alleviates the tension in tackling complex social issues. They refer to *Voices in the Park* as an example of children's fiction dealing with issues of social class through the use of anthropomorphic animal characters (211) and, thus, adding the essential "face-saving emotional distance" for the reader of the book (213). Examination of anthropomorphism as a device of enhancement of the reader's understanding of unresolved problems tantalizing human societies but of no resonance to animals or other non-human species is one way of reading Browne's narrative tactics and of a primarily anthropocentric focus. Nevertheless, the function of anthropomorphism in facilitating the young audience to comprehend the serious and rather perplexing issues of unemployment, social classification and discrimination also serves the purpose of illuminating the human/animal confrontation and bringing the man/nature power play into the foreground. The representation of the social conflict between bourgeois and low-class adult gorillas and their monkey children in a posthuman framework reveals a different aspect of the anthropomorphic depiction. Indeed, animals and humans do not engage in a direct conflict or confrontation in order to expose "Western philosophy's objective to establish a notion of an exclusively human subjectivity" (Ratelle 4); however, the hybridity of the four main characters acting like humans but simultaneously embodying the "otherness" against which humans define themselves points towards a posthumanist perception of the interrelation rather than opposition of species.

My analysis of Browne's hybrid characters as the embodiment of the human/non-human linkages draws on Birgit Spengler's deployment of Bakhtin's "intrinsically chronotopic" image of human fictional characters ("The Forms of Time and Chronotope" 85) towards the destabilization of anthropocentric concepts. Spengler traces a connecting thread between the Bakhtinian chronotope, the intersection of time and space emphasizing "the situatedness of human beings and

human knowledge" (67), and the relationship between the "human(-made) and 'world'" or "literary and extra-literary chronotopes" (68); artistic chronotopes as "an expression of the fundamentally chronotopic nature of our existence" represent our imaginative and physical life in terms of interdependencies and exchange between and across different species (68). In agreement with Spengler, I take the stance that the characters in *Voices in the Park* are chronotopic symbolically exemplifying through their hybrid nature the human-animal interdependence as, in analogy to the literary-extra-literary intersection, they pinpoint the continuities between human and non-human existence. The intermingling of the fantastic and the realistic throughout the book, the cross identity of the true, but at the same time surreal, human-animal protagonists in the text function as an implicit form of criticism of practices of division between human and non-human, culture and nature, and, consequently, all forms of socially constructed separations. Segregation among members of the same species is reflected in the upper-class woman's narration in "FIRST VOICE" and eloquently depicted through their overwhelming influence on the working-class man in "SECOND VOICE". The unnatural practice of social discrimination is accentuated in the third double spread of "THIRD VOICE" where the picture shows the statues of a man and a woman wearing the adult characters' hats, while the two dogs "raced round like old friends" (n. pag.). These scarce reminders of human presence playing only a supporting role as part of the setting in the visual narrative suggest the arbitrariness of the cultural taxonomy of animals below superior humans dominating the entire natural world. Browne makes special reference to these two statues, the symbolic representations of the fictional man and woman "set in stone" and incapable of ever changing ("In-depth Written Interview"). The implication is that social classification is equally absurd whether from the perspective of an animal or a human and that its foundational static perception of the world in oppositional binaries literally immobilizes any attempt for interaction among members of the same or different species.

6.3 Smudge, Charlie, and "the silly twit": childhood and adulthood in battle

In this section I explore the child-adult relationship which is central to Browne's works and plays an essential part in the construction of adulthood and childhood subjectivity in *Voices in the Park*. My analysis focuses on the potential of surrealism to act as a strategy pinpointing the absurdities of the adult world and encouraging children to question the practices of this world which "often seems bewildering and its rules illogical" (Reynolds 60). Additionally, I explore the dynamics of the parent-child relationship through the lens of aetonormativity and examine whether the representation of family member roles reproduces or challenges contemporary ideology.

6.3.1 *The writer-reader interaction: empowering the child to see from a different perspective*

"Most adults stop drawing and then looking at pictures; they feel that that's part of their childhood. They feel they need to go onto other, more serious things" ("In-depth Written Interview"). Browne's remark resonates Macaulay's statement that "seeing necessitates looking and thinking" and that "unless true seeing occurs" from the part of the picture marker as well as the reader of the visual text "nothing can be intelligently or intelligibly recorded" ("Caldecott Medal Acceptance"). Browne's comment on adults' reluctance to draw pictures, look at pictures and generally engage with visual representation attributing to it a childish, and implicitly less serious, quality functions in a twofold manner. On the one hand, it highlights the gap separating the child and the adult in terms of their respective perception of the world underpinned by the superior adult's condescendence towards the naive minor; on the other hand, it establishes the significance of the active participation of the audience in the relationship with the image. The reader/viewer of the picture book is challenged to observe and really see the picture in order to figure out its connection to the verbal text and make sense of the complicated word/image interaction.

Nel challenges Browne's extensive use of visual techniques from surrealist works as a means of promoting the child's involvement in the meaning-making process of the verbal/visual text and questions the awakening effect of these avant-garde strategies on the young readers ("Surrealism for Children" 268). According to

the critic, children already see the world in a more surreal perspective than adults, as a result, blurring the boundaries between the real and the fantastic, the possible and the impossible does not alter their perception of the world but simply reflects it (268). Nel, in effect, questions the impact of the avant-garde on raising children's awareness against the absurdity and arbitrariness of adult rules and restrictions and, thus, liberating the child's vision from the impediments of adult perceptual habits.

Conversely, studies conducted by children's literature researchers such as Serafini, Elisabeth Swaggerty and Caroline McGuire et al. on how children respond to the postmodern picture book genre show that the literary devices deployed in such texts facilitate the young audience to cope with the challenges presented by the complicated plotlines, the symbolism in the illustrations and the word/image interaction (McGuire et al. 194, 196-197; Serafini, "Paths to Interpretation" 119-120; "Voices in the Park" 57-58; Swaggerty 28). In this light, the reader's active engagement with the text creates possibilities for the development of the child's critical and analytical thinking, thus, privileging the child in the power struggle with the adult.

Character identification in picture books depends on the illustrations as much as the verbal text. The use of visual metonymy, that is the partial representation of the character through the depiction of a salient feature such as body part, shadow or clothes, additionally to explicit visual recognition and repetition requires the viewer to pay thorough attention to the visual clues provided by the text; as Arsenio Moya-Guijarro points out, visual metonymies complicate the process of character identification as the child reader is required to make more inferences ("Textual Functions of Metonymies" 394). Guijarro's studies on nonverbal metonymies in picture books by Browne show that young readers are capable of grasping the meanings transmitted by metonymic character representation (390). I would add that it is the use of metonymy in combination with the surrealist features in *Voices in the Park* which encourages the young audience to see the symbolic function of the metonymic manifestations not only as a part of the character's appearance but also an expression of the character's personality and power position in the relationship with the other fictional participants. "THIRD VOICE", through Charles's version of the visit to the park, Guijarro continues, is abundant with visual elements referring to the boy's mother; the phenomenon culminates in the second illustration which not only keeps Charles's face concealed as he has his back turned on the audience facing the

park ahead of him, but, most importantly, depicts Charles's figure completely covered by his mother's shadow (397). The mother's trademark hat, an intervisual reference to Magritte's surrealism, leaves no doubt as to the identity of the shadow's owner and, at the same time, underscores the unequal distribution of power between the child and the adult. The verbal text confirms Charles's problematic relationship with his oppressive mother:

> There was a very friendly dog in the park and
>
> Victoria was having a great time. I wished I was. (n. pag.)

As Guijarro notes, the effect of the mother's authority over the child is accentuated through the repeated use of the hat outline in the illustration of most objects in the picture, the shape of the tree, the lamp posts, even the clouds in the sky (397). In this highly surrealistic, dream-like scenery, the child viewer is stimulated to consider the meaning behind the deployment of the hat and realize its function not simply as a piece of clothing but also as a symbol of the adult character and the extent of her influence on the child.

The device of breaking the frame of the visual text draws attention to the boundaries separating the imaginary world of the picture from the reality of the page as a constructive element of the materiality of the picture book; the fictional spell of the narrative is broken, and the reader/viewer is propelled to a metafictional level which foregrounds surrealist oscillation between fictional imagination and reality. The frame of the fourth picture in Charles's narrative is disrupted by the slide in it as the bottom part of the construction is situated outside the illustration creating the illusion that Charles, who is about to begin descending the slide, will land right in front of the reader's feet. The slide as a medium confounding the distinction between the imaginary world the book projects and the actual space of the book page the illustration occupies, narrows the distance between the child character and the child viewer; even though the image is focalized from an external point of view, the child viewer is facilitated to see things from the child character's perspective as well.

The fifth picture in "FIRST VOICE" is, according to Nikki Gamble, an example of the author's subtle, non-didactic commentary on the mother's anachronistic, discriminatory social views reflected in her attitude towards Charles and everybody else at the park (48). Expanding Gamble's interpretation, I find that the visual text is quite playfully handling the issue of the power of the mother's voice literally and figuratively in order to destabilize the validity of her ideas. As she

screams for Charles to return from wherever he is playing at the park, her voice becomes so insufferably loud and surrealistically powerful that the trees in the right upper part of the picture sway to the point of breaking the frame, leaning and dropping leaves outside the illustration. Her remark on "the frightful types" you get "in the park these days" (n. pag) is ironically contradicted by her own frightful image placed right above the verbal text. Her voice might be strong and imposing but her words and the ideas embedded in them are seriously questioned through her visual representation; the audience is invited to examine both perspectives, the verbal and the visual, and draw conclusions regarding the character's stance and ideals.

The dreamlike setting in the last illustration in "SECOND VOICE" evokes the association between art and the contemporary social frame of reference and urges the viewer to question the power structures which define the adult character's place in the world. Deconstruction of cultural stereotypes based on socioeconomic status is attempted through the parodic allusion to famous artworks and cultural symbols which in the book become reflections of the male character's desperate social and personal state in the first double spread and emotional uplift in the last double spread. The dancing figure of Mona Lisa, the Laughing Cavalier and Santa Claus operate as the surreal representations of the father's change of outlook, a visual manifestation of the individual's power to remove the ideological blinkers which equate unemployment and economic hardship with personal failure and see life through a more optimistic lens. The artist's parodic play with these cultural icons triggers an alternative view of their function and sets an example for the young reader to experiment with different ways of seeing the world.

6.3.2 *Portrayals of power relations through the aetonormative lens*

Charlie picked a flower

and gave it to me.

Then his mum called

him and he had to go.

He looked sad. (n. pag.)

The unresolved tension between the parent and the child lingering on till the end of the book is one of the fundamental aspects of the adult-child power struggle which this section examines as part of a wider demonstration and discussion of the complex web of family and social relations profoundly shaping the lives of Charles, Smudge and their parents.

The arrangement of the four stories, adults' versions first and children's narrations following, immediately draws attention to the gap which separates the parent and the child determining a binary opposition as the premise of their relationship. McMillan maintains that the structure of the book points out the "attitudinal split between adult and child versions" (125) and exemplifies Kress and Van Leeuwen's principle of the left-right structure representing a space of the "Given" and of the "New" respectively (Kress and Van Leeuwen, "Reading Images" 55; McMillan 125). Expanding McMillan's argument, I contend that the arrangement of the four stories functions on a double level; on the one hand, it foregrounds the thoroughly unequal relationship between the child and the adult, the constant privileging of the adult over the child according to Nikolajeva's theory of aetonormativity ("Theory, Post-Theory, and Aetonormative Theory" 16); on the other hand, this child-adult oppositional binary is rendered more complicated as the bourgeois woman's viewpoint is contrasted to the low-class man's perspective signifying a disruptive breach in the all-controlling adult normativity. The male grown-up's defeatism is brought against the male child's poor self-esteem, their stories presented in sequence, and the young girl's dynamic personality and defiant attitude towards adult rules and conventions contradicts and effectively questions the mother's authority with the fourth and last story providing her version of events. Issues of gender representation and social inequality, specifically addressed in the next section of the chapter, pinpoint adults' vulnerability and, thus, their power of authority is undermined rather than sustained.

Although the destabilization of rigid social conventions undermining the position of the younger, as well as the more mature, protagonists in the book is of paramount importance to the formation of the relationships among the represented participants, Nel's analysis raises the point that the belief in the child's potential to

challenge dominant ideologies promoted by the adult world rests in the Rousseauian concept of the idealized, eternally innocent child who remains uncorrupted by the social world and, in that sense, immune to its ideologies ("Surrealism for Children" 269-270). Nevertheless, far from being protected from or aloof to social limitations, Browne's child characters are constantly confronted with the restrictions and demands social rules and roles place upon them. Hannah, the child protagonist in *Gorilla*, is faced with the harsh reality of the uncaring parent whose adult responsibilities and lifestyle do not allow space or time to be devoted to her. The symbolic replacement of the father figure with a toy gorilla denotes an implicit criticism towards the character's prioritizing of work and adult leisure activities over the young girl's concept of fun, a visit to the zoo, and subsequent failure to build a healthy relationship with the child. Similarly to Hannah, Charles experiences emotional neglect and lack of support from his parent; in addition to that, his mother's controlling behaviour leaves little space for him to establish his own social and emotional experience and develop a sense of autonomy. Charles's disempowered position is made evident in the verbal and visual text in several instances. His mother always uses the imperative to address him: "'Sit', I said to Charles. 'Here.'" (n. pag.) and "Charles, come here. At once." (n. pag.) even though she does say "please" to issue orders to Victoria, the pedigree Labrador. Charles's barely visible figure practically hidden behind his mother in the first and the last illustration in "FIRST VOICE" completes the portrayal of the unbalanced relation to the parent. The intravisual reference to the inverted image of *The Scream* surrealistically mirroring Charles's illustration in the second double spread in "THIRD VOICE" not only accentuates the feeling of apprehension clearly consuming Charles as he sits on the top of a really high slide, but also connects the young boy to the central adult character in "SECOND VOICE" where *The Scream* is first cited. The analogy created between the emotionally fragile child and the equally weak and poor adult links the different forms of oppression experienced by the two characters and highlights the complex nature of aetonormative relations by questioning the validity of equating authority with adulthood or associating childhood with oblivion to social constrictions.

Smudge's presence has a catalytic effect on Charles's, or Charlie's as she affectionately calls him, attempted revolt against parental authority. Unlike Max who sought liberation in his imaginary transfer to the fantastical world of Wild Things,

Browne's young male protagonist rebels against adult rules and conventions with a new friend and ally on his side, a girl whose physical strength and energy is in accordance with her spirit and fierce sense of independence and in dire contrast to Charles's hesitant, timid character. Charles resembles Sally and her brother, the siblings in Seuss's picture book who were desperate for fun and some sort of upheaval but felt too insecure to disrupt their middle-class domestic space of confinement on their own and watched, instead, the Cat, their braver and less obedient alter ego, break all rules for them. In an analogous manner, Charles finds his strength and becomes empowered in his quest for self-determination by his alter ego, Smudge who, in a way echoing Macaulay's adolescent protagonist responding to the duty of saving her Problem Parents from temporary insanity, seems to have taken up the responsibility of providing support and encouragement to the socially and personally undermined young boy and her adult father.

The verbal and the visual text in "FOURTH VOICE" offer keen insights into the multiple aspects of childhood effectively challenging the othering of the child in the relationship with the adult. The opening illustration in "FOURTH VOICE" immediately draws attention to the difference in the two children's viewpoint. Smudge's optimistic outlook is reflected in the uplifting, bright summery colours dominating the setting, the comforting round shapes of the depicted objects and the pleasantly surrealistic large pieces of tree-sized fruit and candy-resembling lamp posts in the park; the first illustration in "THIRD VOICE", on the other hand, shows Charlie surrounded by the dark, gloomy cross-hatched walls of his lonely home, looking at the world from his window not daring to take a step outside without his mother's permission.

The left-facing picture in the first double spread in "FOURTH VOICE" is quite enlightening regarding Smudge's liberated attitude towards adult authority. Charlie may be intimidated by his mother, a child already succumbed to adult rules and limitations, but Smudge shows no fear of her; in fact, Smudge, despite her young age, is mature enough to discern the exaggeration to the point of absurdity in the mother's snobbish behaviour. The rather unflattering portrait of the angry mother, whose inflated ego is probably the cause for her swollen figure appearing too big to be contained in the picture, is accompanied by the verbal text underneath referring to "the angry silly twit" (n. pag.) after having eloquently described Albert's, Smudge's

dog, ritual of sniffing the other dog's bum. When the notion of adult authority is stripped of seriousness and importance and its status is verbally and visually ridiculed and diminished, then its impact is seriously injured and the power balance between the child and the adult positively disrupted.

Contestation of a monolithic perception of childhood in the narrative is also achieved through emphasis on the stasis/mobility oppositional binary and the role it assumes in the portrayal of the two child characters. Throughout the book, Smudge is illustrated climbing, swinging, hand-walking, the symbolic embodiment of action and mobility. The use of action lines, a distinct characteristic of comic book genre, under Smudge's swinging legs in the sixth illustration in "THIRD VOICE" not only creates the illusion of movement but read along with the look of absolute exhilaration on her face communicates the girl's dynamic, restless personality. In total contrast to Smudge's image, Charlie is depicted in a state of stillness looking as if he has been tied up to the climbing frame afraid to participate in the physical activity the game demands. The repeated motif of Charlie's motionless, still image in the first, seventh, eighth, ninth and twelfth double spread underlines the physical restrictions imposed on the child by the overprotective mother and simultaneously addresses the feeling of alienation and disconnection overwhelming Charlie and disabling his emotional and psychological evolution. As the afternoon goes by and the two children become more acquainted with each other, the motif of stillness is broken, Charlie becomes more active and his disposition lightens up. The full-page illustration in the penultimate double spread most demonstratively displays the metamorphosis in Charlie's demeanour as he joins Smudge and the dogs dancing around the colourful bandstand, doing handstand hops, turning his body and his mother's rules upside down. This bodily manifestation of the change from a state of stillness to mobility is also expressive of the non-static power of the child in the context of the aetonormative relation to the adult. Alluding to Beauvais's point that the child in the relationship to the adult cannot systematically be the powerless party ("The Problem of 'Power'" 77), the visual text suggests the fluidity of the power balance between the children and the adults in the book and the potential of the child to subvert adult hegemony.

When I got home I put the flower in some

water, and made Dad a nice cup of tea. (n. pag.)

The bittersweet ending in *Voices in the Park* neither promising a future to the children's newly founded friendship nor excluding the possibility of a new encounter at the park is consistent with the illustration of the child-adult relationship as unstable, subject to change and inversion. Karin Murris observes that the visual closure in this scene is equally indeterminate as the image on the cup of the two dogs happily playing together can receive more than one interpretation which does not gratify the adult's compulsive need for a concrete ending ("The Posthuman Child" 166). Carefully following in the footsteps of Seuss, Sendak and Silverstein, Browne establishes the concept of diversity as central to the representation of childhood, affirms the fluidity of the child-adult power balance and, like his contemporary Macaulay, abstains from providing conclusive answers to the questions which the book poses.

6.4 "You get some frightful types in the park these days!": social constructions under interrogation

The social, political and economic landscape of the UK in the 1990s functions as the ideological background against which *Voices in the Park* illustrates the social roles and power status of the young and adult characters represented in its context. Margaret Thatcher's policies between 1979 and 1990 blurred class boundaries and weakened the power of the old, inflexible class system, but class divisions and prejudices were never wiped out (McDonough 181-182). Despite the election of a Labour government in 1997, "the system underpinning British politics was still based on a neo-liberal free market economy" (Searle 5). After the recession in the early 1990s the economy improved by the end of the decade, however, as David Lapido and Frank Wilkinson report, the official unemployment rate in Britain at the turn of the millennium was still higher than that of the prosperous 1950s and 1960s (23). According to the PSE (Poverty and Social Exclusion) Survey carried out in Britain in 1999, by the end of the same year approximately one quarter of the British population, the highest number ever recorded in British history, were living "in or on the margins

of poverty" (Pantazis, Gordon, and Levitas 1). Research findings of a later survey conducted in 2002 showed that for a significant percentage of the population poverty was not a transitory state but a persistent problem of long-term duration (Devicienti 328). Those experiencing poverty were also subjected to different forms of social exclusion and isolation such as inability to engage in common social activities, absence of contact with family members outside the household and poor practical and emotional support (Pantazis, Gordon, and Levitas 2).

Variations in gender roles also play a substantial part in the formation of the contemporary social and economic landscape; a significant shift in the power balance between men and women is noted in the last half of the decade with the gender employment gap decreasing (Scott and Clery 117) and attitudes in support of traditional gender role division gradually becoming eliminated in the UK (Scott and Clery 121). According to the media and culture researcher Vicky Ball, discourses of female success and empowerment circulating in the wider culture during the 1990s decentre men as "the norm which defines everything else" (249); however, at the same time, they "privilege neo-liberal discourses of choice and individualism" which produce a destabilizing effect on central categories such as class and gender without fostering their reconfiguration (250). *Voices in the Park* addresses issues of social division and gender roles and stereotypes through different viewpoints suggesting a multiplicity of perceived realities even within the same cultural framework.

6.4.1 *Unemployed, excluded, marginalized*

"SECOND VOICE" illustrates the impoverished, unemployed adult man's experience of social marginalization and deploys both the verbal and the visual text towards effectively communicating the man's social isolation. Unlike the other characters' narrations, the father's verbal description of the walk to the park barely acknowledges the surrounding environment; he solely concentrates on Smudge and the family dog and completely ignores the upper-class mother looking down on him or the boy playing with his daughter, thus, symbolically asserting the connection between impoverishment and exclusion from social participation. The visual text also

depicts the man in isolation sitting alone in his armchair in the introductory illustration and again reading his newspaper alone on a park bench which the audience knows from "FIRST VOICE" that the mother is reluctant to share with the run-down stranger. The final picture with the revived characters from the paintings dancing in the magically lit setting is a visual verification of the change in mood and outlook recorded in the verbal text, but it does not provide substantial evidence of the more permanent change of the man's powerless social position.

Hinting at a different type of isolation from the surrounding social context based on prejudice rather than financial disadvantage "FIRST VOICE" verbally and visually demonstrates the mother's rigid perception of social class boundaries. The use of terms such as "frightful types" and "rough-looking child" (n. pag.) referring to the visibly poor visitors of the park along with the character's persistence to prevent Charles from any contact with a child from a lower background are indicative of her unyielding convictions regarding social division; these convictions separate the adult character even from her own son and, although they establish her social status as privileged, they simultaneously condemn her to isolation. The mother's alienation despite, or perhaps due to, her elevated social and financial position alludes to the grown-up Boy in Silverstein's *The Giving Tree* whose character has also embraced the consumerist ideology and as a result of his self-centredness and fixation on contemporary materialistic trends experiences a deep existential split with his own self and the surrounding natural world.

The mother's divisive logic permeating her worldview is most eloquently displayed in the left image in the second double spread of "FIRST VOICE". As Serafini explains in his analysis of visual images in picture books, Browne extensively uses the street lamp in his imagery as a visual symbol of separation and isolation ("Understanding Visual Images" 18). The vertical line formed by the lamp post in the picture of the second double spread completely divides the setting in two distinct parts; one part is occupied by the father sitting on a bench next to a garbage bin with litter scattered on his side of the image and the other markedly cleaner side is dominated by the imposing presence of the mother standing over the bench while looking for Charles. Serafini comments that the illustration suggests irreconcilable differences between the two adults ("Understanding Visual Images" 18) which agrees with Sue Saltmarsh's reading of social class location in the text as an inevitability

which restrains children and adults (110). Saltmarsh acknowledges the role of the children in the book as potential disruptive factors of the prevailing social order but concludes that the power of the status quo undermines "the possibility of anything beyond superficial childhood explorations" (105-106).

This section argues that Browne's verbal and visual techniques subtly but firmly question contemporary neo-liberal practices of social discrimination against the financially disadvantaged and leave open the possibility of the child characters' breaking down social barriers. Creating a contrast to the correspondent image in the second double spread, the third illustration in Charlie's story, "THIRD VOICE", also displays the lamp post as a physical and symbolic barrier between the two child characters but a significant differentiation occurs dismantling the isolation effect of the vertical line. The lamp post only partially divides the setting in two halves leaving the bottom part of the picture to be filled with the horizontal lines of the bench which the children share. As Serafini points out, the horizontal bench lines serve to eradicate the social and actual distance between the two characters and bring down the disparities separating them ("Understanding Visual Images" 18), thus, foregrounding a further destabilization of the social restrictions imposed on them by adult authority. The recurrent image of Charlie and Smudge standing together in the background of the park just before the visit comes to its end in the front cover and the fourth double spread inside the book is for the first time compatible with the accompanying verbal text which explains the action performed in its context:

Charlie picked a flower

and gave it to me. (n. pag.)

The long-standing tradition in European landscape painting in which dark foregrounds are disrupted by emphatically illuminated spaces of interest in the background (Baker 507) is deployed in the illustration in order to draw attention to the image of the two children sharing a moment and a flower, as the text reports. The darkness surrounding the two characters is counterpointed by a distinct space of light radiating the powerful effect of the children's positive bonding experience against the gloomy social landscape their parents have inflicted on them. The last image in the book with Charlie's flower in the cup provides delicately complex but tangible proof of the children's diverse understanding of social reality giving rise to optimistic expectations

that the two characters can become potential agents of social change through challenging existing norms and conventions.

6.4.2 *Gender representation and women's voice*

Third-wave feminism which developed in the early 1990s in the US and towards the end of the decade and early 2000 in the UK (Evans 416), adopted the concept of intersectionality amplifying the ways in which "the intersections of various dimensions of inequality influence life opportunities" and determine women's position in the social structure (Aguilar et al. 133). Roberta Trites identifies children's literature as a form of intersectionality exposing the interaction of aetonormativity with other factors of oppression ("Twenty-First Century Feminisms" 32).

Smudge's portrayal effectively reflects the interactive relationship between intersectional categories establishing social boundaries and systems of marginalization; thus, examination of her character through the lens of intersectionality connects her representation to questions pertaining to gender, social class and age-normativity impacting the individual's position in the social power spectrum.

She told me her name was

Smudge – a funny name, I know,

But she's quite nice. (n. pag.)

Several theorists agree that literary characters' names are carefully chosen by writers in order to match and convey the individual traits, personal past and cultural background of the characters (Black and Wilcox 120; Papantoniou and Konstantopoulos 2155) "since the proper names of persons or of places impinge upon so many other aspects of life" (Algeo 93). "Smudge" means stain or smear, and, although only a nickname and not the girl's actual name, which is never revealed probably because it does not carry the same functional weight, it serves the purpose of implying to the audience the socially and economically deprived position of the

female child character. In the mother's perspective, Smudge's lower-class position should form an impenetrable barrier that would prevent the two children, Smudge and Charlie, from approaching, literally and figuratively, each other. At the other end of the scale, and at the mercy of unemployment, is Smudge's father, who has practically resigned to social exclusion and marginalization underpinned by the very same ideology which Charlie's mother supports. The assumptions and practices of the representatives of the adult world, whether close relatives or total strangers, poor or rich, foreground little prospect for Smudge's empowerment. The young girl's identity, and future for that matter, is defined by the intersecting forces of class, age and gender, if Charlie's initial stereotypical reaction towards the only available company being "unfortunately, a girl" (n. pag.) is to be taken into consideration; yet, Smudge, refuses to be taken for granted as powerless or of a fixed inferior position and resists authority and its restrictions with might.

The interpretation of Browne's young character as mighty and actively resistant draws upon Beauvais's conceptualization of the notion of power deployed in Nikolajeva's aetonormative theory. Beauvais captures the nuances of power in the child-adult relationship connecting might with the child whose "potent, latent future [is] to be filled with superior action" and the power of authority to the adult whose strength lies in the experience and expertise gained in the passing of time ("The Problem of 'Power'" 82). Smudge utterly ignores the hierarchical structure imposed in the aetonormative context; she is the perfect embodiment of "girl power" emerging as a central concept in the feminist discourses of the 1990s which, as Angelica Setianto and Maria Win point out, establish a space in which young women and girls can "produce their own take of self-representation" (577). Smudge's self-determination is manifested in the text through the antagonistic relationship between her and Charles's mother stemming from the difference in the two characters' age and social status. The mother's imposing personality exercises enormous influence on her son; the visual text blatantly demonstrates the adult female character's truly gigantic dimensions, a symbolic representation of the gravity of her presence on a psychological level as well. Nevertheless, Smudge defies the mother's power and Charlie gradually escapes maternal control happily adopting the young girl's playful, more liberated behaviour model.

Further display of the subversive effect of Smudge's might over adult authority and social elitism is exhibited in the verbal/visual text in "FOURTH VOICE". Smudge does not allow her age, gender, or social position to become an impediment in her interaction with the world; she takes up the initiative of approaching first the posh child, "I got talking to this boy" (n. pag.) she narrates, completely ignoring the stern supervising adult and she confidently expresses her opinion of Charlie, "a bit of a wimp at first, but he's ok" (n. pag.), and his mother "the silly twit" (n. pag.). The hand-lettered font choice in "FOURTH VOICE" plays an important role in reinforcing the image of the empowered female child character which the verbal text constructs. In her analysis of David Shannon's *No, David!* (1998), Denise Matulka contends that the hand-lettered font adds credibility to the story of the child character as it can be inferred that the markings are his own work (51). I would add that the reproduction of parental instructions and admonitions constantly ignored by David in the child's own handwriting underlines the boy's rebellious attitude towards adult control and authority. Miriam Martinez et al. point out the significant part which font choices play in conveying meaning in picture books; the theorists use *Niño Wrestles the World* (2013) by Yuyi Morales to exemplify the function of hand-lettered fonts not adhering to horizontal lines, as is the case with Smudge's verbal text, in advancing and bringing to life the child protagonist's energy (230). Niño prevails over all other characters in the visual text and through the use of hand-lettered fonts the boy's empowerment is further elucidated. Although Smudge's take on things is not privileged over the other three voices, her viewpoint emerges as of substantial credibility and power of influence over the reading audience.

Enhancing the verbal text, the visual text connects the notion of visibility with the depiction and manipulation of the public space of the park illustrating Smudge's claim to social membership and participation. The public space as an arena of interpersonal relationships is the socio-spatial territory where ideological and behavioural patterns are followed or challenged (Hatuka and Toch 987). Mattias De Backer argues that visibility in social space presents itself in the intertwined modes of recognition and control (309). In line with De Backer's argument, I contend that the visual text in "FOURTH VOICE" resists Smudge's social marginalization as a direct outcome of her deprived domestic background and instead asserts recognition of her

subjectivity through manipulation, thus, control of the representation of the park setting. In stark contrast to the gloomy illustrations of the park in "SECOND" and "THIRD VOICE" and far more vibrant and colourful than the autumn setting in "FIRST VOICE", the visual representation of the public space of the park in "FOURTH VOICE" is an expression of the optimistic, imaginative, bold viewpoint from which Smudge sees the world around her. The park is not a hostile social framework from which Smudge is excluded or in which she is diminished and unseen but a space of interaction and interconnection in which Smudge's individual vantage point matters allowing her to define her subjectivity in terms of change and mobility.

Shifting focus from Smudge to the adult female character, the representation of motherhood in the book also raises issues regarding women's position in the social context. According to Vanessa Joosen, the father figure in Browne's works has been extensively and systematically discussed, however, mothers have received less attention despite the significance of their contribution to the plot in many of his stories ("Look More Closely" 146). Joosen's analysis of several picture books including *Piggybook* (1986) and *Zoo* (1992) but not *Voices in the Park* views the mother as a factor of stability and emotional well-being for the fictional family (145); the mother's presence is invested with love, empathy and a deep interest in the child's activities though, in some cases, as with the frustrated Mrs. Piggot (151), demands for individual space do emerge (157). The character of the mother in *Voices in the Park* with her despotic behaviour and smothering control over Charlie does not quite fit in the maternal pattern outlined in his other books, although stability is one aspect of her conservative, inflexible point of view which greatly determines the domestic setting and the child-adult power balance in the family.

Examined in comparison to the model of motherhood reflected in picture books of previous decades, from *The Cat in the Hat* to *The Giving Tree*, similarities as well as differences in the portrayal of the mother can be detected. Mothers' representation in children's literature mainly emerges from the children's perspective while the mother's voice is rarely heard or recognized as central (De Sarlo, Guichot-Muñoz, and Hunt-Gomez 3). The visual text in *The Cat in the Hat* only shows a fragment of the mother's figure and, indeed, the male child character uses his voice to relate the events of the story, so it is through his descriptions that the mother is perceived; nevertheless, though physically absent from the centre of action, the

influence of her authority over the children is constantly alluded to in the verbal text which is suggestive of the gravity of her role in the family's life. Although the actual mother figure is visually absent in *Where the Wild Things Are*, the symbolic representation of maternal influence over the child on an emotional and psychological level through the recurring image of the moon signifies the pervasive power of female authority in the family context. The Giving Tree as mother in Silverstein's picture book provides a more complicated image of motherhood implicating eco-feminism and linking the subversion of the binary between men and women to the destabilization of the patriarchal, consumerist ideology permeating the relationship between nature and humanity. Macaulay, Browne's contemporary, on the one hand, presents the mother in "Problem Parents" through the teenage daughter's perspective in the verbal narration; on the other hand, the multiple visual points of view reduce up to an extent the impact of the child character's outlook and allow for the reader to see the events unfold through the mother's frame of reference as well. In addition, the role of the mother is extended beyond the domestic context and, in contrast to the picture books previously discussed, both adults, mother and father, collaboratively destabilize the power balance in the family household by subverting the rules and practices supporting adult normativity. The representation of the mother in *Voices in the Park* does not depend exclusively on the perspective of the child, although both Charles and Smudge more or less implicitly contribute to her depiction. The mother is the first character in the book to present her own take on events as she voices her views, thoughts and concerns in the narrative space in "FIRST VOICE". The centrality of her character, though inevitably linked to the negative, oppressive aspects of her power over the child, is manifested through the repeated visual allusions to her figure in "THIRD VOICE", Charles's version of the story. As her rigid social convictions seem to define the core of her existence, it is very difficult to separate this strand of her identity from the rest of the features, including gender, which shape her character. In this sense, her depiction as a powerful female figure is obscured and her own narrow-minded perception of the world undermines her authority sabotaging her ability to form relationships.

The juxtaposition of the portrayal of the mother to the image of the father with reference to gender discourses circulating in contemporary culture elucidates Browne's balanced perspective on gender informed by issues of social class and

economic status. A perceived crisis in masculinity emerged in Britain, as well as the US, in the 1990s (Monk 157; Ruxton 5) mainly because of changes in the labour market; the concept of a "fundamental shift in power from men to women" (V. Ball 249; N. Wolf 19) destabilizing male privilege began to expand in public debate. The representation of Smudge's father centres around his inability to perform the conventionally defined role of the family breadwinner; he, thus, experiences loss of status and disempowerment which pose a definite threat to his social identity. Charles's mother is everything that the father is not, wealthy, upper-class, in full control of her family, yet, as this chapter has displayed, incapable of sustaining her authority when challenged by her younger female counterpart. The structure of the narrative text with the father's narration immediately succeeding "FIRST VOICE" draws attention to the characters' contrasting images. In the case of the two children, the repetition of this pattern, male character's story vis-a-vis the girl's version, produces the opposite effect. Unlike their parents, the two children do not hesitate to approach each other despite their differences and, so, the succession of "THIRD VOICE" and "FOURTH VOICE" denotes the interactive relationship built between them on the basis of mutual acceptance of each other's identity. *Voices in the Park* does not resolve the complexity of gender identity but it addresses the issue highlighting its integration into social and economic factors. The image of the omnipresent red hat lying upside-down on the ground in the back endpaper illustration is suggestive of these complications; it is a final reminder of the resilience of the mother's authority and the impact of the social role she performs but at the same time it functions as a visual pointer to the potential of the younger generation for social change and subversion.

6.5 Concluding remarks

Voices in the Park reflects the socio cultural context of its time and participates in the ongoing discussion of persistent social problems such as unemployment, poverty, social discrimination and marginalization. Through the

intersection of different forms of suppression and discrimination, in terms of social status, gender and age norm, the illustration of the characters in the book becomes quite emblematic of the complicated system of power relations underpinning its representation through the text/image interaction. The power balance between the child and the adult which lies at the core of the verbal and the visual text is rendered unfixed and destabilized as the participants in the relationship deeply affected by the social and personal circumstances shaping their lives constantly adjust, alter and even question and subvert their respective roles. The figure of Beauvais's "mighty child" embodied by Smudge emerges as a powerful force questioning adult authority. Borrowing Lisa Sainsbury's remark in her analysis of *Annelie in the Depths of the Night* (1987) by Imme Dros, Browne's child character makes a move "into mighty childhood that has the potential to liberate itself from the authority that threatened to hold it back" (199).

The surrealist visual counterpoint of the four anthropomorphic characters' personal accounts of the walk in the park signifies, as Murris suggests, the artist's choice to blur "the distinction between fact and fiction, truth and fantasy" ("Posthumanism" 60); thus, it fundamentally problematizes all binary distinctions imposed by adult world between the child and the adult, the real and that which is perceived as real by the individual. The hybridity of the human/animal fictional characters openly challenges the power hierarchies positioning humanity above all other species and points out the need to conceptualize relations among beings in different ways. The perspective of the book on gender, class and socio economic status as constructions liable to dispute and, potentially, change, emphasizes the fluidity of the notion of power which permeates and decisively impacts all types of relationships portrayed in *Voices in the Park*.

7. CONCLUSION

The main area of focus of my research has been the dynamics of the word/image synergy as an expression of the power relations in the picture book and at the same time a form of power play itself. Sendak remarks that "a picture book has to have that incredible seamless look to it when it's finished. One stitch showing and you've lost the game" ("Interview with Walter Lorraine" 326). The metaphor of the "seamless look" most effectively conveys the sophistication in the creative process of the word/image transaction rendered integral to the picture book. The implicit reference to the complexities of the interaction between the verbal and the visual as the imperceptible "stitches" binding together the picture book captures the equally complicated nature of all power relations shaping the genre; the child-adult power relation, the tension between fantasy and reality and the struggle of the individual against the pressure to conform to social norms and conventions relating to power structures such as race, gender and class. The identification of these recurrent themes and motifs constantly emerging in the analysis of the picture books amplifies the significance of devoting this final chapter to drawing connections which stress the five authors' treatment of similar concerns through their extensive comparison and contrast.

The question of the fragility of the power balance between the child and the adult persistently addressed in children's literature either through the representation of the ambivalent power status of the child in the family and wider social context or figured as the author-child reader model of opposition holds a central position in the five picture texts of the thesis. Several theorists ranging from Rose and Nodelman to Lesnik-Oberstein and Ben Screech point out the irony or paradox of children's literature stemming from the fact that adults who write for children control the terms through which childhood is constructed. In this light, both the child depicted in the book as well as the implied child reader are dominated by the adult, identified against adult normativity as the inferior "other" and, inevitably, silenced (Lesnik-Oberstein, "Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child" 87; Nodelman, "The Other" 29; Rose 78; Screech 106). Nikolajeva asserts the imbalance of power in the child-

adult relationship in children's texts but also acknowledges the potential in contemporary children's literature for subversion of "its own oppressive function, as it can describe situations in which the established power structures are interrogated" ("Power, Voice and Subjectivity" 10). In alignment with Nikolajeva, Victoria Ford Smith stresses the significance of emerging critical conversations interrogating "adulthood's ideological freight by refusing to presume adult power" (3), thus, creating the space for the empowerment of the child. In agreement with both theorists, I have argued that the picture books under discussion create the space for the interrogation of the adult-child oppositional binary challenging the subordination of the child to adult authority, rules and conventions, thus, empowering childhood subjectivity.

The tensions operating throughout the interaction between the adult writing the book and the child reading it have received thorough attention in the dissertation as they play a definitive role in understanding the manifold and complex aspects of the child-adult relationship. Although the power to create the text undoubtedly lies with the author/illustrator, the deployment of various narrative techniques on which the construction of the word and the image is predicated provides the framework for the negotiation of meaning between the text and the reader/viewer. The intense engagement of the child reader with the narrative and its interpretation is a form of contestation of absolute authorial control of the meaning of the text; the writer's power position is destabilized and, consequently, the adult's dominant role is rearranged.

The diverse choices regarding focalization in the verbal and visual text offer an insight into the five artists' mutual non-didactic vision of children's literature and the depiction of childhood in its context. The account of the verbal narrative in *The Cat in the Hat* is presented in the first person through an internal, fixed point of view provided by the male child character; the visual text presents the story from an external point of view which allows the young reader to adopt a perspective located outside the child character's angle of vision and, consequent, zone of influence. Swinging between internal and external focalization in the verbal and the visual discourse of the picture book respectively, the audience is placed at a distance from the narrator/speaking subject and is, therefore, in a position to verify or question the validity of the text.

In the case of *Where the Wild Things Are*, the controlling effect of the omniscient narrator on the child reader is disrupted through the text/image interaction; the diverse picture frames, the frame-breaking device and the full-bleed images culminating in the wild rumpus scene manifest an antagonistic relationship in the context of which the power of the images often dominates over the text. The absence of verbal text directing the audience's understanding in the full-page illustrations of the wild rumpus celebration compels us to turn to the image in order to form our own view and, consequently, interpretation of the story developments. The technique of direct eye contact in the visual text addressing the audience further empowers the child to become actively engaged in the process or reading.

The Giving Tree is also narrated through an external point of view but, as the thesis has displayed, the use of irony, paradox and satire alerts the audience to the tension between the verbal and the visual text and pinpoints the incongruities in the meanings represented in them. External focalization in the visual text liberates the reader from the influence of the omniscient narrator and creates the essential distance from the fictional characters and the events narrated so that personal evaluation of the story and its participants is enhanced and facilitated.

Macaulay and Browne use multiple narrative and visual perspectives emphasizing the constructedness of reality through subjective points of view and, thus, questioning the authority of the writer as the sole constructor of meaning in the text. The fictional character of the masked runaway thief in *Black and White* functions as a metafictional narrative device bringing together plots and images and blurring the boundaries between text and peritext. The reader is allowed to decide how to move from one story frame to another, how to draw connections among them and, most importantly, how to construct meaning in the reading process. Browne also relies on the alternation of focalization to shed light on the various aspects of the same visit to the park and, in this manner, encourage the reader to view things from different, even contradictory, perspectives.

The theory of aetonormativity raising "an awareness of age as a form of otherness" (Trites, "Twenty-First Century Feminisms" 32) has played a fundamental role in my analysis of the representation of contemporary notions of childhood subjectivity constructed in the context of the unstable, fluid power relation between

the adult and the child, the self and the "other", social propriety and disruption. Directly questioning the invincibility of the sovereign adult determining the position of the child as fixed and powerless, the fictional Cat literally and figuratively mobilizes Sally and her brother into rebellious, disobedient action. The Bakhtinian chronotope of fantasy, chaos and disorder established by the Cat within the boundaries of the domestic chronotope pushes the limits separating adult-controlled reality from disruptive imagination and redefines the position of the child in the shifting power relation to the adult. Sendak also makes use of the Bakhtinian chronotope of fantasy as a device transporting the child character into an extraordinary liminal world breaking rules and conventions away from adult supervision. Unlike the siblings in Seuss's picture book, Max relies on his individual power of imagination in order to embark on a journey of solitary exploration and finally embrace his wild otherness as part of his complicated, still changing, identity.

Silverstein elucidates the problematic position of the child struggling to belong in a world dominated by adult rationality through the confrontation of the young Boy with his adult self in the course of his relationship with the Giving Tree. By bringing into the foreground the process of transition from childhood to adulthood Silverstein further destabilizes the fragile child-adult power balance. The gradual mutilation of the fantastical character of the tree by the Boy, who is growing into an adult, leads to the transformation of the fantasy landscape into a setting dominated by the grown-up Boy's pragmatic view of life. From the aetonormative perspective, this shift would amount to the privileged position of the Boy, however, as the text makes evident, the experience of adulthood is connected to disillusionment rather than empowerment.

In accordance with his predecessors, Macaulay takes a critical stance towards the hierarchical power structures shaping the child-adult relationship. Nevertheless, the writer refrains from adopting the pattern of the transgressive child bringing down adult rules either through transportation to a chronotope of fantasy like Max or through the disruptive presence of her alter ego, the anarchical, anthropomorphic Cat in the Hat. *Black and White* reverses the respective roles of the child and the adult as it is the parents' transgressive behaviour that disturbs domestic order and the teenage daughter, a character totally immune to aetonormative perceptions of the vulnerable, disempowered child, who faces the crisis and strives to bring things back to their prior state of balance.

The notion of diversity is crucial in Browne's representation of childhood which is significantly influenced by the intersection of age, gender, class and socio economic status. Alluding to the siblings, Sally and her brother, who project on the Cat their suppressed desire for subversion of parental control, Charles, the socially privileged but insecure, hesitant child, relies on Smudge, the socially inferior, yet, mighty child, to become empowered in his act of resistance against adult control. Smudge is, therefore, linked to the Cat as a force of destabilization of social constrictions and limitations but, at the same time, her protectiveness towards her father is connected to the sense of responsibility displayed by the teenage daughter in *Black and White*.

The relationship between the adult and the child in the five picture books is essentially manifested in the relationship between the mother and the child. The importance but also the complexity of the bond connecting the child character to the maternal figure is highlighted and attention is drawn to the concept of motherhood and its representation in the text. The absence of the mother from the visual text in *The Cat in the Hat* renders her character rather enigmatic and her role in the family context equally fluid. Her representation in the verbal text is performed through the son's point of view while her actual voice is not *heard* until the very end of the story. It is not unusual in the picture book genre for the child character to provide the perspective through which the mother is perceived, however, the effect of this device is counterbalanced through the repeated allusion to the figure of the mother as a point of reference for domestic stability by the other members of the household. The powerful impact of maternal authority over the children constantly implicated throughout the verbal text does not suffice, though, to bridge the generation gap separating adult from child which is reflected in the boy's hesitation to relate his disruptive experience to the mother.

The theme of absence establishes a connection between the picture books by Seuss and Sendak regarding the representation of the mother in the respective texts. Max's mother is never physically present in the illustrations and she only addresses Max once in the verbal text identifying him as a wild thing; nevertheless, the intensity of her utterance implied in the use of capital letters and an exclamation mark followed by Max's severe punishment suggests the tension in the mother-child power relation. On the other hand, conflict and contradiction do not exhaust the complexities in the

relationship between the rebellious child character and the mother as a figure of authority. In his encounter with the Wild Things Max employs his mother's methods of exerting power; throughout his adventure in the land of fantasy the cosmic element of the moon symbolically representing the mother denotes the centrality of her power over the child even during the Wild Rumpus scene where Max's detachment from the adult world is culminated.

In contrast to the previous two texts, the constant presence of the allegorical figure of the mother Tree in Silverstein's picture book does not axiomatically empower her position in the relationship to the Boy. As the child character grows older, in a way, he stops seeing her as an indispensable active participant in their relationship; in the Boy's perspective which is, however, undermined through the use of irony and the word/image counterpoint, the Giving Tree is objectified serving as a source of income. The analogy between the mother-child relationship and the nature-humanity binary underpins the verbal and the visual text further problematizing and complicating the representation of motherhood.

Black and White openly acknowledges the role of the mother beyond the domestic context as, in reflection of the rise in women's employment in the 1990s, both parents are depicted jointly undertaking duties inside and outside their home. Even against this backdrop, though, the mother's role is implicitly emphasized; it is the mother who tears the school report into pieces, a highly symbolic gesture of her subversive behaviour deeply and immediately affecting the power balance in the relationship to the child and, in the penultimate double spread, it is the again the mother who brings food, and order for that matter, back to the family.

Voices in the Park portrays the relationship of the child and the mother from various and diverse viewpoints in a manner analogous to *Black and White*. The mother's voice is most emphatically heard in the verbal text while her image is metonymically referred to throughout the visual text in the book and especially in Charles's narration signifying her powerful impact on the child. The mother's overtly controlling attitude towards Charles literally and metaphorically immobilizes the child denoting her perception of the child's position as fixed and completely dominated by adult authority. The blossoming friendship between Charles and Smudge despite the mother's disapproving stance, Charles's attempt for rebellion against maternal

authority, the change in the landscape depicted in the visual text in manifestation of the children's more liberated outlook on life suggest the destabilization of the mother-child power balance and, as with the previous picture books, the possibility for substantial change is never off the table.

The examination of power relations in the dissertation has also focused on the use of anthropomorphism as a construct interrogating dualistic thinking and contributing to the apprehension of complex concepts and social issues such as diversity and exclusion by the child reader. Drawing on notions of hybridity, the picture books discussed, with the exception of *Black and White*, deploy the practice of anthropomorphism in order to represent their non-human protagonists, thus, determining to a great extent their interaction with the rest of the fictional, human or non-human, characters. These anthropomorphic beings display human-like behaviour and attributes emphasizing the role of fantasy in all four picture books but their respective analysis indicates the diverse ways in which each writer has chosen to depict the anthropomorphic animal, thing or tree in the story.

Ascribed the capacity of speech the hybrid Cat firmly establishes the power of his verbal omnispresence in the text as he is the one to respond to the warnings of the fish on behalf of the children who are not sure "what to say". Perfectly embodying the Bakhtinian carnivalesque, the subversive Cat makes mischief and suspends the hierarchical barriers of adult-controlled reality. On the other hand, the fish, the anthropomorphic adversary of the Cat, is depicted as the substitute parent never accomplishing empowerment precisely because, rather than challenging adult authority, he completely identifies with it. Still, the fish remains a hybrid figure bearing qualities which contest the human/animal binary division. Viewed through the posthuman lens, the disruptive effect of anthropomorphism goes beyond the inversion of social conventions dictating the child-adult relation and creates the context for the interrogation of mainstream ideologies about the exclusiveness of human subjectivity. The representation of Sendak's Wild Things pinpoints the liminal quality of their existence undermining the human/beast dichotomy as they appear both human in their capacity to speak, walk on two legs, wear clothes and comb their hair, but also monstrous with pointed teeth, fangs and claws and a desire to devour Max if given the opportunity. The Wild Rumpus scene, in which Max is crowned king of the Wild Land subverting the division between the self and the elusive "other", highlights the

prevalence of the Bakhtinian carnival and connects the deployment of anthropomorphism in the book to the anthropomorphic representations in *The Cat in the Hat*. The reality/imagination interplay in Silverstein's picture book is focused on the relationship between the human-like tree and the Boy. The Giving Tree is established as an anthropomorphic character both verbally and visually performing the double role of an agent of fantasy and nature as well. In a posthuman framework of analysis, the text addresses anthropocentric views of subjectivity generating a hierarchical model of power relations and challenges the boundaries separating reality from fantasy and human from nature. The destructive results of the gradual mutilation of the Giving Tree by the Boy for both characters underline the distorted perception of humans as dominant over non-human "others", and nature as eternally owned, controlled and exploited by humans.

Unlike the previous texts there is no encounter between humans and animals in *Voices in the Park* as the four protagonists are anthropomorphic apes and only interact among each other. Nevertheless, in a manner similar to the other four picture books, the fictional characters wonderfully intermingle the fantastic and the realistic and through their hybridity distort the division between the human and the non-human. In the posthuman perspective, the deployment of anthropomorphism in the book gives insight into the process of othering that underpins the human/animal power play, and patriarchal, anthropocentric attitudes and perceptions which fail to acknowledge diversity and pluralism as integral features of the world. Applying an intersectionality lens, the anthropomorphic representation of the four main characters aims at challenging all hierarchical dualisms such as child/adult, human/animal, wealthy/poor which support and promote social practices of exclusion and marginalization.

A theme consistently raised in the five picture books is the position of the individual in the power spectrum of contemporary society. Social issues such as gender roles, racial stereotypes, social exclusion, commercialization and the mass media influence have been thoroughly analyzed in the thesis as they are directly connected to the construction of individual subjectivity. Gender representation and the development of gender identity are explicitly addressed in the texts by Seuss, Sendak, Silverstein and Browne, while Macaulay implicitly touches upon the subject through the depiction of the teenage female narrator/character in "Problem Parents".

The Cat in the Hat brings into focus the ambiguity of women's power position through the representation of the mother and points out the ambivalent power balance between the boy and the girl in the postwar American middle-class family. The rather deficient representation of the mother in the verbal and the visual text signifies the inadequacy of dominant discourses to voice female subjectivity outside the domestic context. Sally's identity is scarcely revealed to the reader as she remains silent and the verbal text offers no clues to her feelings, thoughts and ideas. Even so, Sally is not assigned the position of the boy's inferior subaltern since the power of his voice is also questioned through the technique of external focalization. Furthermore, the depiction of the two children's conduct does not reflect stereotypical gender traits promoting one character's empowerment over the other. In the same line with *The Cat in the Hat*, which does not support the oppositional model of gender promoted in the 1950s US cultural context, *Where the Wild Things Are* exposes the limitations of the gender binary system and amplifies the multifaceted nature of gender. Max's gender role as the typical male heroic conqueror is undermined through his gradual identification with the Wild Things whose hybrid, gender-unidentified bodies resonate his own liminal and, most importantly, not finitely defined subjectivity. In this light, the masculine gender traits of the conventional male protagonist of adventure stories cannot sufficiently capture Max's contradictory character; his representation blurs the boundaries of his gender expression highlighting rather than obscuring the conflicting aspects of his identity. Silverstein addresses gender roles by emphasizing the non-static, dynamic nature of the female/male relationship in the context of which both participants evolve and shift their power position. The writer abstains from criticizing or embracing the Boy's exploitation of the tree and, consequently, the patriarchal ideology and norms underpinning it; nevertheless, the text definitely amplifies the complicated, ambivalent intersection of empowerment and disempowerment which the tree and the Boy experience in the course of their interaction.

Moving on to the 1990s, the shift towards evidently less oppositional concepts of gender roles is indicated in the equal participation of Problem Parents in the work-home relationship and the implied disconnection between gender roles and the performance of duties traditionally considered as exclusively feminine or masculine. Additionally, the fictional character of the teenage daughter is also invested with the role of the narrator which admittedly adds gravity to the impact of her representation

on the reader's understanding of the text but the specific subject of gender inclusion and gender roles is not pursued any further in the book. Browne's perspective on gender is inextricably linked to issues of social class and economic status and it is through the intersectionality lens that gender roles are outlined in the book. The adult male character's disempowered position is largely defined by his low social status due to unemployment; the contrapuntal interplay between Smudge and Charlie is based on the integration of gender, class and individual differences while Smudge's conflicting relationship with Charlie's mother suggests that men and women are not homogeneous and that gender is configured by other dimensions of subjectivity as well.

Gender representation is not the only social issue examined in regard to the shaping of collective and individual identities. Racial issues are reflected in the representation of the Cat in the Hat; the part-black, part-white illustration of the Cat does not clarify the character's racial identity, on the other hand, the Cat's costume and performance allude to blackface minstrelsy. These complications in the Cat's portrayal at a visual level, resisting unitary meaning, pinpoint the inherent contradictions in the character's hybrid nature. The subversive effect of the Cat's presence and particularly his disruptive performance establish the character as a force of deconstruction rather than preservation of racial stereotypes embedded in dominant socio cultural practices.

The female/male relationship in *The Giving Tree* alludes to the nature/humanity relationship with the tree symbolically embodying the archetypal mother nature and the Boy as a representative of Western patriarchal culture. The Boy's attachment to money, acquisition and consumption of goods reflects the consumerist, materialistic values prevailing in the contemporary social and cultural context and their consequent effect of alienating humans from the natural world.

The problem of the alienation of the individual from the surrounding world in relation to contemporary materialistic ideological trends is also raised in *Voices in the Park* though not in an ecofeminist conceptual framework. The father feels alienated, excluded from the world due to his inability to meet the standards of the consumerist society in which he belongs; the mother is incapable of reaching out to the people surrounding her because of her highly elitist, materialistic mindset; both cases exhibit

the intrinsic connection between the problem of alienation, on a social and personal level, and materialistic values.

Black and White directs attention to the dominant role of mass media in the average person's life through the recurrent presence of television and the newspaper in the visual text. Special emphasis is placed on the function of the newspaper as a source of influence over the individual's perception of the surrounding world; the representation of the newspaper as an artefact suitable for the carnivalesque decorations in "Problem Parents" and "A Waiting Game" establishes its contribution to the inversion of reality rather than its accurate representation, therefore, its validity as a dependable medium of communicating reality and shaping individual views and beliefs is disputed.

At this point, I would like to bring my dissertation to a closure circling back to the beginning, the aim and research questions stated in the introduction. The shifting concepts of childhood shaping the child-adult power relation which the research questions pose for examination have been thoroughly analyzed in connection to the changes in the social and cultural structures underpinning them; the integration of a vast range of theoretical approaches has reinforced the elaboration on the diverse workings of all power relations in the five texts shedding light on the verbal and visual deconstruction of their traditional binary representations. Wild Things, wild kids, a thief, a tree and a cat illustrate a multicoloured, multivoiced world where words and images interact, fantasy life and factual life intermingle and the power dynamics between the adult as the normative, dominant party and the child as "the other" are seriously questioned and potentially subverted.

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η διατριβή διερευνά τις σχέσεις εξουσίας/δύναμης σε εικονογραφημένα βιβλία του δεύτερου μισού του εικοστού αιώνα. Εξετάζονται τα έργα πέντε σημαντικών Αμερικανών και Βρετανών δημιουργών της περιόδου: *The Cat in the Hat* του Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss), *The Giving Tree* του Shel Silverstein, *Where the Wild Things Are* του Maurice Sendak, *Black and White* του David Macaulay και *Voices in the Park* του Anthony Browne. Το αντικείμενο της έρευνάς μου είναι η συνέργεια της λέξης και της εικόνας ως πυρήνας όλων των σχέσεων εξουσίας/δύναμης που εξετάζονται σε αυτά τα βιβλία. Η εξερεύνηση της σχέσης εικόνας και κειμένου βασίζεται στη θεωρία της διαμεσολάβησης του Lawrence Sipe, με κεντρική έννοια τη συνέργεια, και την ερμηνεία του W. J. T. Mitchell για τη σχέση λεκτικής και οπτικής αναπαράστασης μέσω της έννοιας του εικονοκειμένου.

Το βασικό επιχείρημα είναι ότι η συνέργεια λέξης και εικόνας λειτουργεί ως έκφραση των σχέσεων εξουσίας/δύναμης στο εικονογραφημένο βιβλίο ενώ αποτελεί ταυτόχρονα μια μορφή παιχνιδιού εξουσίας που αντικατοπτρίζει αλλά και αμφισβητεί τις κοινωνικές και πολιτισμικές πρακτικές που διαπνέουν το λεκτικό και οπτικό κείμενο. Η ανάλυση των πέντε βιβλίων βασίζεται στην εφαρμογή μιας σειράς κριτικών θεωριών λόγω της πολυπλοκότητας των κοινωνικών, πολιτιστικών και αισθητικών διαστάσεων του εικονογραφημένου βιβλίου. Ζητήματα σχέσεων εξουσίας/δύναμης εξετάζονται στο λεκτικό κείμενο έναντι των ακόλουθων συμβάσεων της παιδικής λογοτεχνίας: σταθερή εστίαση, γραμμικότητα πλοκής, το παιδί ως βασικός χαρακτήρας της ιστορίας, φανταστικοί και ανθρωπόμορφοι χαρακτήρες, οριστικό και ευτυχές τέλος. Η διαδικασία αναζήτησης νοήματος στην εικόνα στηρίζεται στη μελέτη του σχεδίου, του ύφους και της οπτικής γωνίας με βάση τις θεωρίες Visual Art και Visual Social Semiotics (σημειωτική θεωρία). Οι θεματικές που μελετά η διατριβή αφορούν το παιχνίδι εξουσίας/δύναμης μεταξύ φαντασίας και πραγματικότητας, την έννοια της παιδικής ηλικίας και της υπόστασης του παιδιού, την αμφισβήτηση της εξουσίας των ενηλίκων, και, τέλος, την κοινωνική ταυτότητα του ατόμου μέσα από δομικά στοιχεία όπως η φυλή, το φύλο και η κοινωνική τάξη.