Mediating the Act of Reading through Picturebooks and Fictional Readers

The ways in which acts of reading are represented, and books are culturally situated within books, reveal a great deal about a given society's expectations and beliefs about literacy practices. Within children's literature in the Western world, there is a long history of characters who are readers or who have become readers by the end of the book, deriving benefit and pleasure in the process. Most of these texts emphasize the message that the act of reading is a significant and esteemed activity. They also tend to stress the importance of books in the traditional codex form and endorse them as powerful objects, whether it be as tools for social mobility, as cultural capital or as magical artefacts. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that given the anxieties around the perceived decrease in children's reading and the pervasiveness of digital technology (along with fears about the "death" of the printed book), the turn of the century has been marked by the production of contemporary children's literature, and particularly books aimed at emerging readers, that directly and heavily emphasizes the value of reading and books.

This emphasis can be seen in the plethora of picturebooks in English that have been published since 2000 which are about readers, reading and the printed book. Yet, as Jessica Pressman points out, the "aesthetic of bookishness" is not new and "the fetishized focus on textuality and the book-bound reading object" has historically been a response to the feared "death of the book."[1] However, she observes that in (adult) novels published since 2000, there is a different "tone and ambition" that emerges from the novel's constant innovation "in relation to its contemporary environment of popular culture and media, [and] so too do these novels expose how the literary book needs the threat of its demise as stimulus for its defense."[2] I would argue that this defense also applies to children's fiction, where it comes across with even more urgency and employs the medium that most appeals to those who must

be converted into readers as soon as possible and that is unique in its double impact: the picturebook.

Following the well-established tradition of children's fiction, picturebooks about readers and reading are vehicles for the cultural assumptions and ideological aspirations that reflect the desires adults project upon childhood. Claudia Nelson has accurately noted that these texts represent what adults wish childhood reading to be.[3] As a result, there is often an idealised celebration of the act of reading print in these picturebooks which leaves the reader in no doubt that books are worthy and captivating, and that reading them is necessary but also fun.[4] Erika Hateley sums up the impact this is meant to have on the construction of the child's subjectivity:

> Children's literature predominantly seeks to convey a positive understanding of reading, modelling for the implied child reader an idealised reading experience that shapes the self and improves the subject's relation to the world.[5]

With characters that children can relate to, images that even very young children can understand and affordances that draw attention to the book and the act of reading itself, picturebooks are perfect intermediaries between emerging readers and the world of books and reading. In addition, these texts can help develop critical literacy skills as they encourage reflection on what it means to be literate. Finally, they ostensibly leave the "modelling" to fictional child readers (sometimes in the guise of animals) who teach their peers how books should be treated, read and enjoyed. This allows for the child characters' agency, as adults can "hide behind the bookshelves" and only appear when required, but it also supports real readers who may not have parents or carers that can perform this mediating role.

Picturebooks are not the only form of children's literature that provides a reflection on reading. Recent young adult (YA) fiction also often deals with issues around the control of reading, censorship and/or "dangerous" books,[6] although fictional readers have been

appearing in children's and YA literature for many decades and their metafictive devices have drawn the attention of scholars such as Claudia Nelson, Poushali Bhaudry and Joe Sutliff Sanders.[7] These devices are usually intended to help create an awareness of how books and fiction work and at the same time are a sophisticated form of play. Nelson notes that metafictional texts tend to feature messages about the pleasures of narrative in general: "Among their defining traits is a shared emphasis on the delight associated with immersing oneself in story, a delight that the complexity of their construction seeks to replicate for the reader."[8] While the narratives in most metafictive picturebooks are necessarily shorter and tend to address less challenging topics, the visual possibilities create other complexities that show that the relationship between children and books is not always straightforward, and they raise equally complex philosophical questions to do with reality and fiction.

In this chapter, I will argue that the act of reading printed books, as visually represented by fictional readers in picturebooks, is a form of mediating that ideal vision that adults have of a reader's engagement with the codex in childhood. Although other scholars have drawn attention to aspects of the role of reading, books and metafiction in picturebooks (Frank Serafini; Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario; Nina Goga; Erika Hateley and Morag Styles and Mary Anne Wolpert), they all refer to a limited range of texts.[9] Through an analysis of a *corpus* of picturebooks in English published since 2000, this chapter extends the critical exploration of the phenomenon of fictional readers and reading in picturebooks within the literary field, focusing on the following common traits: the book as object; the physical performance of reading; the social and affective act of reading; book culture (vs. popular or digital culture) and intertextuality.[10] These traits call attention to significant changes in traditional images of the reader (in Western culture) in terms of personal qualities as well as to the associated cultural practices and the social consequences of the act of reading. As a result of their affordances, some of these picturebooks are also becoming essential

intermediaries between the changing status of the book in its historical codex format and the younger "digital" generations.

The legacy of historical perceptions of reading

Underlying the invitation to children to imagine themselves as readers who enjoy stories, make friends and explore real and fantastical worlds, are perceptions of the act of reading that are rooted in history. They subscribe to different but related aspirations of Western society in the construction of childhood and are not only deeply embedded in the cultural imaginary but also in the socio-economic context. The most prominent vision draws on the "romance of reading" narrative that emerges from Romantic conceptions of childhood and tends to be imbued with nostalgia. The representations of reading in children's literature are also related to moral values that tend to position readers and the act of reading as virtuous, with characters who are morally "good" engaging in this positive activity. Vivienne Smith and I have argued that in contemporary texts that celebrate reading, what seems to be happening is "a re-manifestation of the romantic ideal of childhood" where electronic literacy is seen "as a threat to the innocence of the child" and thus, "the book itself, the artefact not the content, has become a symbol for what we want childhood to be."[11] This vision is linked to the contemporary belief that children who were not read to when they were very young or do not read are somehow missing out on childhood itself. While this belief can be contested, it can have profound consequences for a child's education given the book-centric notions that persist in schools and other educational and cultural spaces, along with particular expectations, such as bed-time stories or visits to the library, of literacy-related behaviours.[12]

The "romantic" vision of a child absorbed in a book (text and/or pictures) is not without its contradictions, as it can also imply that a child is out of reach, "escaping" into

another world and perhaps becoming "lost" in it. Historically, fictional young female readers who ignore the advice of their elders in terms of the content of their books and the amount of time spent on them suffer for this, as in the famous examples of *The Female Quixote* by Charlotte Lennox (1752) or *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen (1817). There is also the issue of content, with censorship occurring at many different levels and applied to wildly differing topics (from gothic novels to Disney princesses or LGBTQ themes). Underlying most contradictions, however, is a historic tension between the need for literacy for educational empowerment and a suspicion on the part of the establishment of what this empowerment might lead to in social, cultural and ideological terms.

This leads to a second perception of the act of reading which has a more pressing agenda: the production of a (emerging) literate subject and the learning of "ways of taking from books" that are valued in society.[13] Literacy learning is linked to the function that schools, libraries and bookshops play in education and in narratives of social mobility and cultural capital. In the United Kingdom, these narratives can be traced back to the first appearance of fictional readers in books intended for children in the 18th century. Patricia Crain confirms that this perception of the act of reading was present in early children's books, which presented the pragmatic benefit of learning to read and write, not only for the character but for society and the economy, such as *The History of Little Goody Two Shoes* published by John Newbery in 1765.[14] In this text, there is a personal benefit in that Goody not only becomes a rich lady due to her learning and virtue,exos but also, as Crain shows, derived from the text is an economic benefit to the developing print marketplace and the world of commerce in general.[15] Publishers benefitted from new ideas about childhood which encouraged education and reading as well as from the growth of the middle class which meant that parents could afford to buy books for their children.[16]

Valuing and treating books properly was a part of this literary and cultural education, and children's relationship to these material artefacts was important because these were commodities they could consider their own.[17] Many of these early books depict children as active readers having conversations around books and playing games or creating performances based on their reading, and we know from historical accounts that children of the educated classes would have done the same as their fictional counterparts.[18] Grenby notes that publishers were creating books that were both playful and aesthetically appealing, for example, in terms of format and illustration, with the result that "the pleasures of children's literature could be more material than textual."[19]

By the beginning of the 21st century we have a wealth of children's literature that offers a variety of topics, formats, aesthetic modes and reading experiences, but we also have serious competition for readers' time in the form of electronic gadgets that offer an overwhelming choice of different activities, many of which still involve reading but in diverse ways. Margaret Mackey speculates that because children now meet printed books as "one option out of many," the "bookness" of the book has become more visible and authors and illustrators have consciously played on this change by inviting readers to note the elements that make a book a book, from its physical construction to its aesthetic possibilities.[20] In other words, this trend responds to the need to introduce, or even re-introduce, the elements of a printed book to children. Based on the historical link noted by David Lewis between the development of the early picturebook and the development of the trade of games and toys,[21] Hateley observes that the development of computer games and other forms of interactive reading and playing in the 21st century is linked to the publication of picturebooks on "metareading." She defines "metareading" as "reading about reading" and argues that it "invites young readers to identify with the 'right' kind of reading, not only in terms of content but also of medium;"[22] however, she notes that not all books about books are

books about reading and what it signifies.[23] Do Rozario similarly argues that the representations of books in books, where they are valued as material objects, are deliberate and a result of "a publishing environment increasingly looking toward the e-book and the dematerialization of text and illustration."[24] She concludes that "it is the ability to synthesize this materiality with narrative itself that distinguishes picturebooks."[25] From the perspectives of Mackey, Hateley and Do Rozario, picturebooks thus have a significant role to play in mediating the change between "old" and "new" technologies and the perceptions that accompany this change.

"Bibliophilic picturebooks"

Erica Hateley (2013) uses the term "bibliophilic picturebooks" to refer to picturebooks that profess and encourage a love of books. It is ironic that the visual has become one of the main modes for impress on the reader the importance of reading given that, before the digital turn, there was an anxiety that the "visual turn" and the move from the "dominance of writing" to the "dominance of image" in books for children (among other cultural artefacts) would have an adverse effect on readers.[26] However, it is not just the visual but the overall affordances of the picturebook that means it has become one of the main literary artefacts for exploring the "bookness" of books. Mackey notes that the features of postmodern picturebooks, which include metafiction, fragmentation and a mixing of genres, among others, "virtually put readers *inside* book systems" and that "to read these books coherently, it is necessary to know these systems and to bring their possibilities and constraints into play."[27] Morag Styles and Maryanne Wolpert also consider play and performance in a selection of postmodern picturebooks,[28] looking at the how the "invitations, challenges and affordances" of key texts "have shaped new understandings of what we mean by reading, what this means for

readers."[29] This chapter extends the work of Mackey and Styles and Wolpert by expanding the *corpus* and building on the idea of how picturebooks have been "shaping" new understandings of reading and how fictional characters mediate the act of reading to those beginning their reading lives.

The corpus for this project comprises 36 picturebooks published in the UK or the US between 2000 and 2018[30] that have readers, reading and/or books at the core of the story and which are easily available through bookshops or online purchase.[31] The focus on fictional readers means that fictionalized biography and realistic stories about characters who acquire literacy skills (such as those explored by Kuhlman and Lickteig or Mathis and Patterson) were excluded.[32] Initially only picturebooks with the words "reading," "book" or "library" were included, resulting in a selection of 32 books. However, four other books have also been included despite not meeting the title criteria, because readers, reading and/or books are at their core and some of their features proved significant for this study: *Wolves* and *Again!* by Emily Gravett and *Look!* by Jeff Mack are classic metafictive stories about reading, with paratextual features referring to books and libraries; and *Detective Dog* by Julia Donaldson (illustrated by Sara Ogilvie) was included because it is the only picturebook that shows a classroom and a teacher. The resulting *corpus* includes well-established author/illustrators as well as newcomers to the publishing field. Inevitably, the collection is incomplete because it was not possible to identify and locate every single picturebook related to the topic and because it was not possible to set a rigid line in terms of quantifying their representations of reading.[33] In any case, the objective of the project was not to create an exhaustive list but to widen the range of picturebooks that have been the object of other studies and to consider publications from the beginning of the 21st century. Each picturebook was coded according to a series of basic questions around who reads, what, where and with whom, which were extended to more complex questions around the purpose and consequences of reading and the

literary and visual devices most commonly used to represent the reader, the book and the act of reading.

No matter their focus, all these picturebooks celebrate reading (whether it is fiction or non-fiction) and imply that books are enjoyable, especially when they are linked to play and shared with others. Some of the common patterns that surfaced have to do with the positioning of the intended audience as emerging readers. This positioning includes knowledge about the "bookness" of books, about intertextuality, about libraries and bookshops, what each of these spaces offers and how to behave within them. Out of the 36 picturebooks, 22 have elements of metafiction and make use of metalepsis to emphasize the parallels between the story and the book held in the readers' hands and to increase readers' understanding of how books and fiction work. Intertextual links to fairy tales are another commonality. All the books are set within a Western cultural background; the majority of the human children represented are white and none suggest that any of the fictional readers live in poverty.[34]

It would seem that, overall, the intention of contemporary authors and illustrators is to merge "romantic" and "pragmatic" notions into that "idealised reading experience" for the child,[35] where reading is not only linked to the emotions, the imagination and virtue but also to a skill that allows access to knowledge and increases intellectual prowess. Both images and text mediate this ideal notion in a way that suggests that children who are engaged with books are clever and are also having fun, usually with their peers. Yet, a closer examination of this idealization, reveals, five notable gaps or absences in this picturebook *corpus*. They are briefly noted here because of their significance, but I will discuss them in more depth later in the chapter.

The first of these gaps is the presence of adults as mediators. Despite the fact that with a few exceptions these picturebooks will mostly be read *to* children *by* adults – most of whom

are librarians – it is fictional children that encourage reading or teach other fictional children or anthropomorphic animals about books. Linked to this need for a mediating fictional reader is the lack of images of solitary readers absorbed in a book.[36] Even when a reader is shown to have their nose (or snout) in a book, they tend to be surrounded by other readers, either children or animals, but not adults. The third absence is perhaps more striking: that of the school or classroom and of teachers while, on the other hand, libraries are common settings (perhaps as a reaction to library closures). A fourth absence has to do with the lack of ephemeral texts from popular culture texts. Finally, also striking, is the conspicuous absence of digital devices.[37]

Along with revealing absences, the analysis of the *corpus* identified the ways in which these picturebooks are positioning books and reading as a social and shared pleasure and as potential transformative tools. However, before entering into the discussion of how this positioning is done, it is worth referring to Robin Bernstein's argument that however much children's literature is considered a potential model or tool "to achieve a special effect highly desired -- by adults,"[38] there are cases where this effect cannot be achieved without the child's participation. Bernstein examines the case of the "going to bed books," but this can also be applied to "get reading" books. Forcing someone to get in bed or to read may be possible, but forcing someone to sleep or to read for pleasure is not. Nor is it possible, as parents and teachers well know, to force a child to become a reader. Extrapolating from Bernstein's argument, "get-reading-books," just like "going-to-bed-books," reveal the limit of adult power and other methods must be employed so that these textual "tools" achieve their goal. In the case of the picturebook, it is the persuasive use of its affordances that can help the adult to get a child to read and enjoy it. Therefore, by examining the affordances, it is possible to identify the ways in which adults, particularly those with vested interests such as

authors, illustrators and publishers, use these affordances to attempt to shape the relationship between children and books.

Picturebook affordances

The features that allow the picturebook to carry out this mediating role so effectively emerge from the distinctive characteristic of this genre: the crucial interaction between words and images. From the title to the back cover, both words and images must work together with the reader to construct the narrative; if the reader can dispense with one or the other, then the work cannot be defined as a picturebook.[39]

The overall design of a picturebook presents its creators with the opportunity to use the peritext in ways that would be more difficult in a purely text-based narrative. The size and shape of some hardcover versions of books in my corpus draw attention to the book as an object. Dust-jackets, textured hardcovers, endpapers, back covers, dedications, gutter and even publishing information can be used to call attention to books as objects and reading. For example, in *The Red Book* attention is focused on the object of reading starting from the moment the reader looks at the cover where the lack of a title on the dustjacket, along with its red colour and the image of a child running with a red book under their arm, refers to the book which held by the "real" reader. In *Look!*, the title page double spread includes a realistic library card with a due date of 2050, a broken book spine and a rather crumpled page on which an endearing gorilla gazes directly at the book in his hand. The endpapers of *This Is Not a Picture Book!* contain words telling the book's story, although in the front endpapers the letters of each word are not in the right order, making the reader sympathize with the duckling's struggle to read a book with no pictures. Several books have more than one title

page, and some front or back covers make use of *mise en abyme* such as in *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book?* and *Charlie Cook's Favourite Book*.

Supported by a range of bright colours and large fonts, the covers of these picturebooks present the most immediate appeal to potential readers. They tend to immediately signal what they will be about through the title and the cover image. *Look!* and *This Is Not a Picture Book!* draw attention to visual reading and, as it does in another six titles, the exclamation mark denotes a demand or strong emotions. It is notable that the word "read" only appears in one title (*Bears Don't Read!*), perhaps to avoid any associations with educational demands. With few exceptions, there is usually an image of a book on the cover and they tend to be held by one or more characters. The immediate suggestion of a link between books and shared happiness is obvious in that although among the 36 book covers, only one character, Red Reading Hood, is actually looking down at the book; all the rest look at another character or out at the reader. In addition, of the characters who are holding books, all look content or are smiling, with two exceptions: Ralfy, the Rabbit Burglar (*Wanted!*), who has been caught stealing books, and the duckling who is upset because the book has no pictures (*This is not a Picture Book!*).

Presenting a character on the cover holding a book calls to mind stereotypes about readers; usually, that they are "different" in some way and this is confirmed by most of the stories. As the title suggests, in *Bears Don't Read!* George is first misunderstood by other bears because he seems to want more from life than they do and later by all adults except Emily's mother when he becomes interested in learning to read. Like George, readers (or would-be readers) are often isolated at the beginning of the story (interestingly, they tend to be animals rather than children), but by the end they are surrounded by friends who also love reading. Overall, there seems to be a move away from using eyeglasses to indicate that a character is a reader; only two of the protagonist (child) readers wear them: Princess Marta in

Prince Ribbet and Peter, the owner of Nell, the Detective Dog. The suggested link between glasses and cleverness remains, but this does not mark characters who wear glasses out as "different" to their peers. This differs from Serafini's findings in his picturebook analysis, which suggested that reader characters who wear glasses and are often "closeted bookworms" cannot be "normal" and engage in activities such as sport or watching television.[40] Whether this is because Serafini was analysing books from before 2000 and the more recent *corpus* represents a new trend is a hypothesis that would require further exploration.

Running through the design, images and text of the books in the corpus are the twin threads of humour and playfulness, both physical and imaginative.[41] Humour ranges from slapstick to parodies of existing book titles (a nod to the adult reader). For example, in the most complex text within this corpus, *Wild about Book*s, where animals take to reading (and later, writing), the author uses animal characteristics and book types to raise a laugh:

> Giraffes wanted tall books and crickets craved small books,
> While geckos could only read stick-to-the-wall books.
> The pandas demanded more books in Chinese.
> Molly filled their requests, always eager to please.
> She even found waterproof books for the otter,
> Who never went swimming without Harry Potter.[42]

Other books mentioned in the text or which appear in the images are *Uncle Vanya*, *Candide*, and *The Grass* [*sic*] *Menagerie* all read by llamas "while eating their llunches [*sic*]." Giraffes read about basketball, crocodiles read *Peter Pan*, raccoons read "Trash" and baby bunnies read *Goodnight Moon*. This type of textual and visual intertextuality will be discussed in

more detail below, but *Wild about Books* is an example of how messages about reading can be supported through the amalgamation of images and words.

Playfulness is linked to the two most commonly used literary features in this corpus: metafiction and visual metalepsis. In particular, visual play on the book the reader is holding in their hands and the boundaries between storyworlds invite the imagination to take a more active role. This role involves the construction of the narrative, but it also leads to a reflection on how stories are constructed and the reading process itself. The majority of these picturebooks highlight the nature of the book as a material object, made of sheets of paper that are bound together and which exist alongside other objects in children's everyday lives that can be played with, broken or ignored and which occupy specific spaces in room, bookshelves, the floor or tables. Through their metafictive and metaleptic devices picturebooks make us question the ontological status of readers and of the object they have in their hands; they problematize and challenge the relationship between the imaginary, the fictional and the real and what we do as readers not only around the act of reading but also during the act of reading.

Authors and illustrators invest books with lives of their own or imagine lives going on inside the books themselves, even when there are no readers to open the books. The book characters perform metaleptic jumps, looking for a different or better story to "move into," as in *Otto the Book Bear*, or moving by mistake as Bella and Ben do in *We're in the Wrong Book!* (they find themselves in different genres including a sticker book and a fairy tale story app). If, rather than a character coming out of a book, the fictional reader somehow ends up in the book they are reading, they not only impact on the narrative but also cause a physical change in the images through this intrusion: in *Interrupting Chicken*, the little chicken "interrupts" the fairy tales being read to her by her Papa in order to ensure the safety of characters such as Hansel and Gretel, thus changing the well-known endings. In *Who's Afraid*

of the Big Bad Book, Herb causes mayhem for characters, words and pictures in the books he is reading but manages to put things as right as he can before returning to his own storyworld.

Visual metalepsis is a main feature in these picturebooks as it allows characters from different storyworlds or diegetic levels to be seen in the same space.[43] We often see both the diegetic narrative and the extradiegetic narrative on the same spread, as in *Interrupting Chicken* or in Emily Gravett's picturebooks, especially in *Again!* and *Wolves*, where we can see both the reader reading in the foreground and what the reader is reading (or looking at) in the background. *Mise en abyme* confuses reality and fiction in *Baxter's Book*, when it is revealed that the "special book" Baxter longs for is the book that real readers already have in their hands (and a careful reader will note that even as Baxter is looking for ways to "be in a book," his Owl friend is already reading *Baxter's Book*). The coupling of different diegetic planes works not only to make a point about the connection between fiction and reality during the act of reading but also signals the multiple possibilities of humour and book-play a picturebook can offer a perceptive viewer, preparing them for more complex textual literary metafiction. Together with the other affordances of the picturebook, it also prepares them for understanding the "bookness of books" as it calls attention to the book as visual and narrative object.

The book as material object

In these picturebooks, books appear as physical artefacts that invite contemplation and are mainly associated with pleasure and play. These associations can be found in a picturebook intended for the very young*, Books Always Everywhere*, which reflects the theories of educators and psychologists who stress not only the emotional importance of sharing books with babies but also the cognitive and aesthetic importance of the physical exploration of

books at these early developmental stages.[44] Even more than the illustrations, the simple but effective rhythm and rhyme of the text and the coupling of the repeated word "book" with nouns, verbs and adjectives, convey the materiality and potential for engagement with this object: "Book build/ Book mat/ Book chair/ Book hat."[45] In the rest of the picturebooks, the focus is on moving from the book as a toy to play with, towards other pleasures related to books, such as sitting comfortably and quietly close to a friend and carefully turning the pages. In fact, readers are clearly encouraged to treat books with care, such as in *Look!*, where the gorilla learns the consequences of trying to juggle books. There is no suggestion in any of the picturebooks that books are too valuable to play with; they are mostly "treated casually," as Nina Goga found in her analysis of the placement of books in Scandinavian picturebooks. Her finding can also be applied to this *corpus*: books "are there to be used, to be read, to be held in and to be part of daily life."[46]

It is access to as many books as possible in order to read them rather than to possess them that is shown to matter in these picturebooks, reflecting an awareness of the socio-economic and cultural implications of this access. While bookshops appear in three of them (both the ones in *Baxter's Book* and *Maisy Goes to the Bookshop* present enticing book displays), the only instance of a character buying a book and a reference to paying money is in the Maisy book. There are few overt mentions, among these 36 books, of the pleasure of book ownership, and even when Maisy does buy a book, it is to give as a gift. Baxter leaves the bookshop with a load of books, but he is so happy that he does not even notice a few have fallen off his cart. Taking other people's books, however, is frowned upon even if it is done because the thief loves reading and they did not mean to "keep" them as in the cases of the Snatchabook; Ted, in *The Detective Dog,* and Ralfy in *Wanted!*. The Snatchabook has no mother or father to read to him, Ted was just "borrowing" them, and Ralfy explains, "I just can't get enough books." This is the opportunity for characters (especially Ted, who comes

across as a rather scruffy adult without much education) and readers to learn that there are public places called libraries where reading is "free."

Excessive consumption of books is also not recommended, a point made literally and humorously by Oliver Jeffers in *The Incredible Book Eating Boy*, where the character eventually learns it is better to read books than to eat them. Jeffers places the intended reader as a book lover who knows better than Henry: "Henry loved books. But not like you and I love books, no. Not quite… ."[47] Jeffers also shows that by eating books, Henry is being selfish because then "no one else can enjoy them." On the other hand, readers are warned that books can be consuming, sometimes also "literally," as in *This Book Ate My Dog* or *Wolves*, with the latter suggesting that it can be dangerous to read about certain topics. Finally, there is a suggestion that these dangers could be avoided by sharing the act of reading with others, a significant activity within the examined corpus which will discussed further on.

Reading as physical performance

In the interaction with a picturebook, a reader's body plays a central part in the act of reading, as do the bodies of fictional readers represented in the images in these books. None of them sit up straight; they lean forward, their head bent at an angle. They lie or sit, on the floor, on beanbags, swings, beds, comfy chairs or even on the books themselves. The look on their faces is usually that of interest and concentration, and the expression of those who are listening or reading along with them is of contentment, wonder or surprise. The frequent use of the word "love" in relation to book or stories is reflected in the act of holding books close to their bodies with their hands or paws, smelling them, touching them and especially hugging them.

Because of this close interaction, the reader makes a physical impact on the book. Through the characters of Herb (*Beware of Storybook Wolves* and *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book*) or Little Mouse (*Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears* and *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts*) and Cedric, the baby dragon (*Again!*), the reader becomes an active agent in the process of what, depending on the point of view, could be considered as either destructive or artistic re-writing. Sometimes, this "de-sacralization" of the book can have unexpected consequences because it results in a new creation which suits the reader better, as in the case of Little Mouse who deals with fears or dangerous beasts in this way. Thus, pages are torn or scribbled on, images are cut out and glued back in, spines are broken, holes are gnawed or burnt through pages, and spines can be broken as readers use hands, claws or teeth to create alternative narratives. The traversing of fictional boundaries brings home these transgressive book behaviours even more strongly because of the illusion that it is the very same book that "real" and "fictional" readers have in their hands and can physically interact with.

In the series created by Richard Byrne (*This Book Ate My Dog!*, *We are in the Wrong Book!* and *This Book is out of Control!* – note the exclamation marks) he uses the affordances of the picturebook together with metafiction to persuades the reader carry out this interaction by shaking, blowing, "swiping" and "pressing" buttons in order to help the characters "out" of the book, back into the "correct" book or just to regain control of the stories. The appeal to the reader to interact with the material object they have in their hands implies these readers have the power to "change" the outcome in the storyworld. Although the physical interaction is an illusion, it also calls attention to the potential power that a reader has for creating alternative narratives, which can have social and affective consequences.

The spaces for the social and affective act of reading

The answers to questions about where fictional readers read, and with whom, led to the conclusion that in this *corpus* these two aspects are closely linked, and they point to reading as a highly social and affective act. Fictional readers in these picturebooks end up making friends (with peers – either humans or animals) and reading with them, usually in communal spaces. The absent or marginal role of adults has already been noted, but it is worth exploring further. In *Books Always Everywhere*, the babies are reading in the company of animals, peers or perhaps siblings, but there are no adults. Of the five books that show "children" reading with "parents," only two pairs are human (Luna and her father in *Luna Loves Library Day* and Herb and his mother in *Beware of Storybook Wolves*), and it can be assumed they are all reading at bedtime, in their respective "bedrooms." These images conform to more traditional expectations of parents or carers reading before bedtime, although both Cedric (*Again!*) and little chicken (*Interrupting Chicken*) subvert the bedtime story by interrupting or demanding the story be read again and again.

Apart from these parents, the other adult mediators, with one exception, are (female) librarians who suggest titles to shy or reluctant readers, as in the case of *A Book for Bear*. These librarians, including "The Little Librarian" who is represented as a child in *The Midnight Library*, are accepting of any would-be reader, whether it is a lion, a bear or a mouse and invite them to help or join story time. The librarian in *Wild about Books* is used to "conquering resistance" to reading and cunningly starts by reading aloud to encourage the animals to come nearer. Other adult characters tend to be either helpless or naive, such as the bookshop keeper in *The Little Bookshop…* or they misunderstand the desire for books and stories that drive the actions of some of the animal characters, such as Ralfy the Rabbit, Library Lion, George the Bear and Franklin the Dragon, among others. These characters are viewed with suspicion by most human adults because they want to read, learn to read or share stories within the human world. While a couple of understanding adults provide some help, it

is either children or other animals who ensure a happy ending by saving the bookshop, finding the lost books or the right books and even encouraging writing.

A teacher appears in only one out of the 36 books, *The Detective Dog*, but he is not shown reading to or with a child and he is useless at finding the missing books. This is also one of the only two books in the *corpus* that contains an image of a classroom. The focus of this classroom is definitely on books and reading as well as on writing and art activities that are tied to the books. The other book that shows a classroom scene is *The Incredible Book-eating Boy,* but no books are included in it. None of the images in any of these picturebooks show an adult teaching a child to read. Emma's mother supports the idea of George the Bear learning to read, but it is Emma who teaches him (with her mother in the background) in her garden. *The Detective Dog* thus seems to be the exception that proves the rule that school is not about enjoying books or reading for pleasure. Although it could be argued that most intended readers are pre-school children and therefore any social or affective positioning of reading occurs in the space of the home or the library, the absence of the school space raises questions about how it is currently perceived in relation to reading and to overall book culture.

Reading is strongly promoted as a social and affective act. In *This is not a picturebook!* the duckling and the bug learn an important lesson together: reading words creates images and makes you feel things (sadness and fear as well as joy). Although there are a few images of readers evidently enjoying books on their own, there is an associated suggestion of loneliness, and the endings strongly imply that reading is more of a pleasure when it is shared, or at least done in a shared space. Ralfy is shown reading on his own at the start of the picturebook, but this solitary reading gets him into trouble which is only sorted when he finds a "book buddy." Dog is surrounded by fictional characters when he reads ("When he read, he forgot that he was alone,"[48]) but he only really looks happy when a girl

walks into the shop and reads and plays with him. The crying wolf reader in *The Midnight Library* is consoled when the sad book is shared with The Little Librarian and the owl assistants who (of course) knows the book has a happy ending. It may be that this communal aspect of reading is an attempt to mitigate the reality of readers who do not have parents or carers with the economic means to buy these expensive books, the time or the linguistic or cultural skills to read them. These readers are perhaps assumed to have more "need" of this mediation. So, despite encouraging a strong attachment to books, these books gently push the solitary reader towards a community space where the affection for books, the pleasures of reading and book culture can be (safely and inexpensively) shared.

Book culture vs. popular and digital culture

Each of these picturebooks acts as a mediator between emerging readers and book culture, stressing bits of knowledge that can help children become more familiar with it. The child who is learning about this culture is placed as more knowing than the animals who want to be part of the reading community but need the "keys" to access it and be accepted. As well as being "different" in other respects, Library Lion, George the Bear and Library Mouse, are all "new" to this book culture and their initial efforts are regarded with suspicion. Franklin the Dragon and Dog already love books and stories, but it is only children who recognize and share their passion.

Some books focus on what books can do: provide enjoyment, feed the imagination, offer information and facts. Reading aloud and re-reading are represented as extending this enjoyment. Because Library Mouse read so much, "his imagination brimmed over with wonder and fantasy" and he becomes an author himself.[49] Readers are able to "travel" to different places through the fictional version of *The Red Book*. Several picturebooks highlight

the links between reading, creative writing, art and music, showing fictional readers painting or writing their own books. Others draw attention not only to the elements that constitute a book (publishing information, title page, blurb etc.) but also to other texts that surround the practices of reading books (even if some of this is now obsolete): library cards, library stamps, book labelling, ex-libris, book prizes, book ratings and even book reviews. While the pleasure and value of owning books is less important than access (Ralfy Rabbit and Charlie Cook are the only obsessive book collectors), overall, the texts in the *corpus* suggest that having books around contributes to learning and literacy and creates links to art and general culture. All of these reminders of what books can "do" encourage implied readers to develop "their understanding of books as a cultural and literary formative arena."[50]

Book culture includes the way books are handled and treated. The librarian in *Wild about Books* gives specific instructions to the animals about looking after their books. The fairy godmother in *Who's Afraid…* scolds Herb in no uncertain terms: "What do you expect when you go about scribbling and snippering and generally causing mayhem? This is no way to treat a book, you know!"[51] At least five characters damage books, with the illustrators of these picturebooks ironically setting a "bad" example themselves by "literally" showing and creating the effects of breaking spines, cutting or burning holes, spilling food and taking bites. Finally, book culture also means knowing about libraries and how to behave in them, especially not making loud noises, although libraries are also shown to be hospitable places where other activities can take place (e.g. playing music in the "activity room") and where understanding librarians help find the "perfect" book, share stories or teach how to borrow books.

Although all of these picturebooks seem to be trying to avoid an explicit link between reading and intellectual or cultural snobbery, the inferences are clearly there. The implied reader is culturally positioned as someone who will benefit from accessing this knowledge,

becoming “clever” enough to avoid certain behaviours on the one hand and display a familiarity with this culture. However, it remains completely book-centric. Other types of print and/or screen media culture are for the most part ignored: there are very few examples of texts such as magazines, comics, recipes, leaflets or newspapers. Only one of the characters watches television, but even he is forced to abandon it for a book when a book-loving gorilla knocks the set over.

Digital culture is also ignored. Only one book, *We Are in the Wrong Book!*, refers to an app, but it does not make the reference explicit in words; readers are expected to understand, through the illustrations and app commands, that the characters have ended up in the story app of Little Red Riding Hood. Only two books show a computer: In *Wild about Books*, a librarian also brings a computer to the zoo, presumably to enter borrowing data, but the animals show no interest in it at all. There is also a computer in *Maisy Goes to the Library* which visitors can use. *It’s a Book!* is of course about this precise tension between the printed page and screen, with the technologically savvy Jackass discovering what books can do. Yet there is a conspicuous absence of any digital devices in both the background and the foreground. This points to the tension between the codex and digital technology and the anxiety referred to at the beginning of this chapter about children abandoning the latter for the former. It suggests that there is a need to make sure the reading of books is visibly entrenched in a child’s mind before they move on to texts afforded by digital technology. Although their perspectives and genres differ, both Pressman and Bhadury suggest that the recent focus on “bookishness” or “self-reflexive narrative” (whether in the case of the adult novel published after 2000 for Pressman or in the case of metafictional children’s books for Bhadury) has to do with the codex adopting characteristics of digital technologies, hypertextual texts and interactive reading practices that “implicitly gesture toward other media.”[52] While a discussion of the digital and interactive features in the picturebooks is

beyond the scope of this chapter, some of the picturebooks included in this corpus, particularly Richard Byrne's series, are even stronger examples of this trend and it could be argued that they mediate not only between the codex and the screen but also between the knowledge which children acquire early as "digital natives" and knowledge of printed books.

Intertextual knowledge

Within these picturebooks there is another message about book culture: the pleasure of intertextuality. The inclusion of titles, characters, and other textual or visual references that an intended reader is likely to recognize is one way of cementing a character as a fictional reader. It can also be an invitation to continue reading, with one book introducing another. However, as Peter Hunt has noted, in the past authors could more safely assume that readers would recognize intertextual references.[53] To ensure readers respond to his invitation, which is about re-introducing readers to "classics" of children's literature, Jeffers therefore clearly states the titles of these classics in the endpapers of *A Child of Books*.

Along with real titles, "fake titles" also appear as a humorous device in some of the picturebooks, such as those read by Charlie Cook ("Joust Joking" or "Improving Stories for Wicked Thieves") or by Luna ("Marabella's Book of Magic Mayhem"). These devices, such as the rather belaboured titles in Ralfy's reading lists ("The Rabbit with the Dandelion Tattoo" and "Gone with the Carrots"), are often aimed at the adult readers. In *Books Always Everywhere*, the images also include "joke" book titles that adults will appreciate ("Sitting Pretty" and "100 Best Highchairs"). Most book covers in the illustrations, however, tend to be generic references either to typical children's non-fiction topics (ballet, fish, trucks, bears, dinosaurs, "things to draw and paint") or stories about fictional characters such as mermaids, pirates, knights and dragons.

Intertextual references involve not only titles and images but also characters, mostly from fairy tales or popular childhood rhymes. Red Reading Hood is of course reading *Little Red Riding Hood*. In *Charlie Cook*, the "Chinese box" structure of one story within another includes Goldilocks and Dr Foster (who went to Gloucester). Herb has unpleasant encounters with not only Goldilocks but also Hansel and Gretel and other fairy tale characters in *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book*. The "Origami Army" that saves "The Little Bookshop" is composed of well-loved book characters such as Alice in Wonderland and the White Rabbit, Elmer the Elephant and characters from *The Wizard of Oz* and other classics who help stop the destruction of the bookshop with the aid of William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens (Dickens carries a book with his name on it as a shield – presumably to make sure he is recognised at least by some adults). The references therefore become a device to introduce characters that the readers may not recognize.

Presented in these diverse ways, intertextual references support the picturebook in mediating between readers and books. They strengthen the idea of connections between texts and suggest there are many more books to move on to; however, not only do authors/illustrators steer children toward particular texts,[54] but the focus also remains book-centric. In addition, this intertextuality implies an ideal reading situation where an adult reader is able to help the child notice and gradually understand the references. The allusions assume an adult reader that possesses "cultural and linguistic competences" and is familiar with "the dominant culture,"[55] including English language children's culture (e.g. nursery rhymes and fairy tales).

From personal pleasure to social transformation: the consequences of reading

This article confirms two of the claims "made on behalf of reading" that Hateley identified in the five picturebooks she discusses: "the reading of specific texts is identified as valuable" and "reading is a social practice constituent of sociocultural agency."[56] Both claims align with the positioning of books and reading as a vehicle for personal and shared pleasure and as a vehicle for transformation as seen in the picturebooks in this study. This positioning emerged from the two questions asked of the picturebook corpus that addressed the consequences of reading: What did the act of reading change? and What did it lead to? The answers are in all cases underpinned by the value accorded to books and reading. In some picturebooks, the message about this value is conveyed more subtly and has personal consequences for the fictional reader; in others it becomes a rallying cry for society to help preserve book-centric culture.

For the most part, the immediate pleasures of reading are to do with providing a space for the child reader to have imaginary adventures in which books and elements connected to book culture (e.g. fictional readers) play a vital role. The boy in *Look!* who is passively watching TV and ignoring his gorilla friend eventually realizes it is more fun to look at a book together. "Bookishness" is encouraged as a source of pleasure, as is imagining alternative narratives (the wolf in *Little Red Reading Hood* discovers he does not have to be bad). Reading is encouraged not only for the fun and pleasure it can bring but also because it helps the reader become a "better" person, provided we are really able to access and make "proper" sense of what we read.

As well as implying that the readers in the stories will continue to read into the future, a few of these books show that the characters' experiences with reading will, as Heath concludes, "influence their process of bringing imagination into action" and lead to other creative activities.[57] Heath specifically refers to examples that include activities such as building, drawing, singing, dancing or acting. Examples from this selection include George

the Bear who, along with learning to read, seems to have also taken up art and music. Dog's love of books inspires him to open his own bookshop and some characters such as Library Mouse and little chicken in *Interrupting Chicken* start writing their own stories (little chicken also draws pictures). The wild animals in the zoo also write poetry and literary reviews as well as novels and, in the end, literally construct their own library. Thus, the consequences of reading are shown to be personal and social as well as intellectual and cultural, both in the shorter and longer term.

It is clear that knowledge acquired from books is useful and this is shown through characters who use this knowledge to change their lives. Little Mouse's knowledge about the world garnered from books and other texts allow him to take control over dangerous beasts and his own fears. Otto the bear's map reading and ability to plan and write allow him to find another book in which to "live" when he arrives, exhausted and cold, at a library, described as "a place that looked full of light and hope."[58] Finally, familiarity with an army of fictional characters in childhood can help children to triumph over ideological and commercial attempts to limit access to books and reading spaces, such as the closure of places through which that familiarity is developed (e.g. bookshops and libraries): "They are only made of paper," yells the Mayor who wants to develop the land where the bookshop exists. The Origami army replies: "We are not just made of paper. We are made of IDEAS!... And IMAGINATION! ... We are made of things you can *never* destroy!"[59] Thus, the ways in which the visual images and other affordances of these picturebooks position books and the act of reading in children's thinking are crucial to the society that produces them because, through their interaction with these material artefacts, children learn to embody the social, cultural, educational, economic and affective narrative of literacy itself and therefore ensure the continuation of this narrative.

NOTES

[1] Jessica Pressman, "The Aesthetic of Bookishness in Twenty-First-Century Literature," *The Michigan Quarterly Review* 48, no. 4 (2009), 465-482, 465.

[2] Pressman, "The Aesthetic of Bookishness," 465.

[3] Claudia Nelson, "Writing the Reader: The literary child in and beyond the book," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (2006), 222-236, 223.

[4] While the act of writing or learning to write also appears in picturebooks, it is less common and is more usually found in books directed at children who are beginning to write or in literature for older readers who are beginning to keep diaries or write literature themselves.

[5] Erica Hateley, "Reading: From Turning the Page to Touching the Screen," in *(Re)imagining the World. Children's Literature Response to Changing Times*, ed. Yan Wu, Kerry Mallan and Roderick McGillis (Berlin Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2013), 1-13, 3.

[6] Evelyn Aripe and Vivienne Smith, eds., *Children as Readers in Children's Literature: The power of text and the importance of reading* (London: Routledge, 2016).

[7] Nelson, "Writing the Reader;" Poushali Bhadury, "Metafiction, Narrative Metalepsis, and New Media Forms in The Neverending Story and the Inkworld Trilogy," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 37, no.3 (2013), 301-326; Joe Sutliff Sanders, "The Critical Reader in Children's Metafiction," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 33, no. 3 (2009), 349-361.

[8] Nelson, "Writing the Reader," 226.

[9] Frank Serafini, "Images of reading and the reader," *The Reading Teacher* 57, no. 7 (2004), 610-617, 616; Rebecca-Anne Do-Rozario, "Consuming books: Synergy of materiality and narrative in picturebooks," *Children's Literature,* no. 40 (2012) 151-166, 151; Nina Goga, "Learn to read. Learn to live: The role of books and book collections in picturebooks," in *Picturebooks. Representation and Narration,* ed. Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer (London:

Routledge, 2014), 201-2012, 212; Hateley, "Reading;" Morag Styles and Mary Anne Wolpert, "What else can this book do?" in *Children as Readers in Children"s Literature: The power of text and the importance of reading*, ed. Evelyn Arizpe and Vivienne Smith (London: Routledge, 2016), 93-106.

[10] This chapter originated from papers presented at the RSE Susan Manning workshop "Mediating Children's Reading," The Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh, 21 June 2016, and the UKLA (United Kingdom Literacy Association) Conference in 2016 (with Vivienne Smith). It extends the work Arizpe and Smith carried out for the project "Reading Fictions" (funded by the British Academy), which resulted in the edited book, *Children as Readers in Children's Literature: The power of text and the importance of reading* (ed. Arizpe & Smith, Routledge 2016). I am grateful to Vivienne Smith for the contribution to the ideas in this chapter and our continuing conversations on this topic.

[11] Arizpe and Smith, *Children as Readers*, xi-xxvi, xiii.

[12] Shirley B. Heath, "What No Bedtime Story Means: Narrative Skills at Home and School," *Language and Society* 11, no.1 (1982): 49-76 and Shirley B Heath, *Ways with Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[13] Heath, "What No Bedtime Story Means," 49.

[14] Patricia Crain, *Reading Children. Literacy, Property and the Dilemmas of Childhood in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

[15] Crain, *Reading Children*, 30.

[16] Andrew O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[17] Matthew O. Grenby, *The Child Reader, 1700-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[18] (Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles with Shirley B. Heath, *Reading Lessons from the Eighteenth Century: Mothers, Children and Texts* (Lichfield: Pied Piper Press, 2006).

[19] Grenby, *The Child Reader*, 283.

[20] Margaret Mackey, "Postmodern Picture Books and the Material Conditions of Reading," in *Postmodern Picturebooks. Play, Parody and Self-Referentiality,* ed. Lawrence R. Sipe and Syliva Pantaleo (London: Routledge, 2008), 103-117, 105.

[21] David Lewis, "Pop-ups and fingle-fangles: the history of the picture book," in *Talking pictures: pictorial texts and young readers*, ed. Victor Watson and Morag Styles. (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1996), 5-22, 13.

[22] Hateley, "Reading," 2, 3.

[23] Hateley, "Reading," 11.

[24]Do Rozario, "Consuming books," 151.

[25] Do Rozario, "Consuming books," 165.

[26] Gunther Kress, *Literacy in the New Media Age* (London: Routledge, 2003), 51.

[27] Mackey, "Postmodern Picture Books," 115.

[28] Some of the books they discuss, mainly *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book* by Lauren Child; *Wolves* by Emily Gravett; *The Incredible Book-eating Boy* by Oliver Jeffers, and *It's a Book!* by Lane Smith, have been the subject of much scholarly attention, so although they were included the current *corpus*, I have tried to refer less to these and more to less well-known ones.

[29] Styles and Wolpert, "What else can this book do?," 95.

[30] Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey,* ed. Anne Henry Ehrenpreis (London: Penguin, 1972).

Bonny Becker and Kady MacDonald Denton, *A Library Book for Bear* (London: Walker Books, 2015).

Jane Blatt and Sarah Massini, *Books Always Everywhere* (London: Nosy Crow, 2013).

Hrefna Bragadottir, *Baxter's Book* (London: Nosy Crow, 2016).

Anthony Browne, *I Like Books* (London: Walker Books, 2009).

Richard, Byrne, *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Richard Byrne. *We Are in the Wrong Book!* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Richard Byrne, *This Book is Out of Control!* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Jen Campbell and Katie Harnett, *Franklin's Flying Bookshop* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2017).

Lauren Child, *Beware of Storybook Wolves* (London: Hodder Children"s Books, 2000).

Lauren Child, *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book?* (London: Hodder Children"s Books, 2002).

Emma Chichester Clark, *Bears Don't Read!* (London: HarperCollins, 2014).

Kate Cleminson, *Otto the Book Bear* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011).

Joseph Coelho and Fiona Lumbers, *Luna Loves Library Day* (London: Andersen Press, 2017).

Lucy Cousins, *Maisy Goes to the Bookshop* (London: Walker Books, 2007).

Lucy Cousins, *Maisy Goes to the Library* (London: Walker Books, 2017).

Helen Doherty and Thomas Doherty, *The Snatchabook* (London: Alison Green Books, 2013).

Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, *Charlie Cook's Favourite Books* (London: Macmillan Children"s Books, 2005).

Julia Donaldson and Sara Ogilvie, *The Detective Dog* (London: Macmillan Children"s Books, 2016).

Michael Foreman, *The Little Bookshop and the Origami Army!* (London: Andersen Press, 2015).

Emily Gravett, *Wolves* (London: Macmillan Children"s Books, 2006).

Emily Gravett, *Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears* (London: Macmillan, 2007).

Emily Gravett, *Again!* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011).

Emily Gravett, *Little Mouse's Big Book of Beasts* (London: Macmillan, 2016).

Oliver Jeffers, *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (London: HarperCollins, 2006).

Oliver Jeffers and Sam Winston, *A Child of Books* (London: Walker Books, 2016).

Kazuno Kohara, *The Midnight Library* (New York: Roaring Book Press, 2014).

Daniel Kirk, *Library Mouse* (New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2007).

Michelle Knudsen and Kevin Hawkes, *Library Lion* (Sommerville, MA.: Candlewick Press, 2006).

Barbara Lehman, *The Red Book* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004).

Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote or The Adventures of Arabella*, ed. Margaret Dalziel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Jeff Mack, *Look!* (New York: Philomel Books, 2015).

Emily MacKenzie, *Wanted! Ralfy Rabbit, Book Burglar* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

Lucy Rowland and Ben. Mantle, *Little Red Reading Hood* (London: Macmillan, 2018).

Sergio Ruzzier, *This is Not a Picture Book!* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2016).

Judy Sierra and Marc Brown, *Wild About Books* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2004).

Lane Smith, *It's a Book* (London: Macmillan Children"s Books, 2010).

David Ezra Stein, *Interrupting Chicken* (Somerville: Candelewick, 2010).

Louise Yates, *Dog Loves Books* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2010).

[31] That is not to say that this theme is not found in picturebooks published in other languages.

[32] Wilma D. Kuhlman and Mary J. Lickteig, "Literacy as Change Agent: Messages about Reading and Writing. Children's Literature," *Journal of Children's Literature* 24 no. 2 (1998): 84-93. Janelle B. Mathis and Lindsay Patterson, "Literacy to inform and transform: Empowering lessons from children's literature," in ed. J. Worthy, *53rd yearbook of the*

National Reading Conference (Oak Creek WI: National Reading Conference, 2005): 264-280.

[33] There are plenty of picturebooks where books or reading appear as incidental to the plot.

[34] *Books Always Everywhere* and *Detective Dog Nell* make a point of including diverse looking children and Luna, in *Luna Loves Books* has a white mother and a black father (although it seems they have separated). However, in the latter, the main character is Peter, a white middle-class boy whose dog is well bred enough to be allowed to go to school to be read to.

[35] Hateley, "Reading," 3.

[36] An iconic image that Crain considers a "scopophilic cultural imperative" and which defined childhood in the nineteenth century (Crain, *Reading Children*, 2).

[37] This absence is reflected in picturebooks more generally.

[38] Robin Bernstein, "'You Do It!': Going-to-Bed Books and the Scripts of Children's Literature," *PMLA* 135, no. 5 (2020), 877–894, 883.

[39] Although there are picturebooks that work without words "there is a significance in this lack which contributes to the overall meaning of the narrative" which means the definition still applies (Evelyn Arizpe, "Meaning-making from wordless (or nearly wordless) picturebooks: what educational research expects and what readers have to say," *Cambridge Journal of Education* 43 no. 2 (2013), 163-176, 165.)

[40] Frank Serafini, "Images of reading and the reader," 616.

[41] With a few exceptions the text is usually short, with at the most four sentences per page. Five out of the 36 books are in verse, suggesting that the intended audience are still young enough to be considered to be receptive to rhyme and rhythm.

[42] Judy Sierra and Marc, Brown *Wild About Books* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2004): n.p.

[43] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980).

[44] For example, Catherine Snow and Anat Ninio, "The Contracts of Literacy: What We Learn from Learning to Read Books," in *Emergent Literacy: Writing and Reading*. ed. William Teale and Elizabeth Sulzby (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1986), 116–138., or Jackie Marsh and Elaine Hallet, *Desirable Literacies: Approaches to Language and Literacy in the Early Years* (London: Sage, 2008).

[45] Jane Blatt and Sarah Massini, *Books Always Everywhere* (London: Nosy Crow, 2013), n.p.

[46] Goga, "Learn to read. Learn to live," 204.

[47] Oliver Jeffers, *The Incredible Book Eating Bo* (London: HarperCollins, 2006), n.p.

[48] Emma Chichester Clark, *Bears Don't Read!* (London: HarperCollins, 2014), n.p.

[49] Daniel Kirk, *Library Mouse*(New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2007), n.p.

[50] Goga, "Learn to read. Learn to live," 210.

[51] Lauren Child, *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book?* (London: Hodder Children's Books, 2002), n.p.

[52] Pressman, "The Aesthetic of Bookishness;" Bhadury, "Metafiction," 302.

[53] Peter Hunt, "Taken as read: Readers in books and the importance of reading, 1744-2003," in Arizpe and Smith, *Children as Readers*, 16-27.

[54] Nelson, "Writing the Reader," 228.

[55] Pierre Bourdieu, "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction," in *Power and Ideology in Education*, ed. Jerome Karabel and A.H. Halsey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 487-511, 494.

[56] Hateley, "Reading," 6. However, there is little evidence to support her third claim of "shared or mediated adult-child reading experiences" and especially in relation to "familial relationships."

[57] Shirley B. Heath, " 'This is my show!' Beyond reading to envisioning and enacting," in Arizpe and Smith, *Children as Readers*, 119-131, 124.

[58] Kate Cleminson, *Otto the Book Bear* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), n.p.

[59] Michael Foreman, *The Little Bookshop and the Origami Army!* (London: Andersen Press, 2015), n.p.