

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

UNDERSTANDING GRAPHIC NARRATIVE  
THROUGH THE SYNTHESIS OF  
COMICS AND PICTUREBOOKS

REBECCA PALMER

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of Anglia Ruskin University  
for the degree of PhD

Submitted: August 2016

(part 1/3)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have conducted or completed this research without the support of a number of institutions and many generous individuals. I am grateful to Professor Martin Salisbury and Will Hill, who supervised this research, for their guidance and encouragement throughout. The advice of Dr. Mel Gibson at Northumbria University during the first years of research helped me to refine my ideas. Her interest in this research motivated me to submit work for publication at an early stage.

I am indebted to the AHRC for their generous funding, and to Anglia Ruskin University for awarding the studentship that enabled me to conduct this inquiry.

Much thanks to family and friends for their interest and help with the project, especially to Daisy, whose willingness to critique the work, debate the ideas and read endless drafts has been immensely helpful.

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNDERSTANDING GRAPHIC NARRATIVE  
THROUGH THE SYNTHESIS OF  
COMIC AND PICTUREBOOKS

REBECCA PALMER

August 2016

This study was undertaken to develop a better understanding of comics, picturebooks, and their relationship through progressive attempts to combine them in practice. The study was motivated by an interest in hybrid forms as a site where narrative techniques from different forms are put to alternative use in a new context. The research contributes to current scholarly discussion of graphic narrative from a practitioner's perspective.

Reflective practice offers unique potential as a method for critical study. Comparative analysis of changes over time throws light on each form's typical mechanisms for graphic storytelling, and demonstrates their function in different contexts. Problems arising in practice are catalysts for a process of dynamic, analogical theory-formation and -testing, which often challenges or supplements existing knowledge, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the forms with which practice engages.

Findings evolved, firstly, from the insight that conventions for graphic storytelling function differently depending on the mode of reading and the formal context. Secondly, the degree to which the practitioner is constrained by formal limitations was found to demand a disciplined distillation of content that deliberately creates space for different kinds of readerly engagement.

The study concluded that, due to their adaptation towards solitary reading, comics exert greater control over their readers, whereas picturebooks tend to be more flexible in order to accommodate different modes of reading. The way readers engage with a work impacts on the function of conventions and techniques for graphic storytelling as much as a change in formal context. Moreover, the discipline of the picturebook form demands greater economy, which can create more space for reader participation. However, neither distinct modes of reading nor differing degrees of constraint constitute grounds for definitive distinction between comics and picturebooks: instead, they offer alternative frameworks for the critical consideration of graphic narratives.

Key words: graphic narrative, comics, picturebooks, reflective practice

# Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	i
ABSTRACT .....	ii
<b>Table of Figures.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Chronology of Events .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Main Research Focus.....	1
1.2 Contribution to knowledge .....	1
1.3 The thesis .....	2
1.4 Terminology .....	4
<b>Chapter 2. Research through practice: theoretical framework and methodology.....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Practitioner research: context and precedents .....	5
2.2 An interdisciplinary approach .....	8
2.3 The framework for research.....	10
2.4 Reflective practice as methodology.....	14
2.5 Methods .....	17
2.5.1 Forms for practice, reflections and analysis.....	17
2.5.2 Reading, imagined and real.....	17
2.5.3 Presentation of the thesis .....	21
2.5.4 Ensuring trustworthiness.....	21
<b>Chapter 3. Professional, cultural and academic context.....</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1 Personal, educational and professional context .....	23
3.2 Historical and academic context .....	25
3.3 “The definitional project” .....	34
3.4 A description of formal characteristics .....	37
3.5 Graphic narrative as a dramatic art.....	38
3.6 Medium and genre in relation to practice.....	43
<b>Chapter 4. <i>The Grand Old Duke of York</i>.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Chapter 5. <i>Rudolphus &amp; Brown</i> .....</b>	<b>62</b>
5.1 Germination and growth .....	62
5.2 Pruning .....	69
5.2.1 Narrative text and speech balloons.....	69
5.2.2 The comics grid.....	76
5.2.3 The page as diagram .....	80
5.2.4 Pace.....	82
5.2.5 To explain, or not .....	86
<b>Chapter 6. Conclusions .....</b>	<b>90</b>
6.1 Areas for further research.....	94
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Appendix 1. Planning for Rudolphus &amp; Brown .....</b>	<b>115</b>

## Table of Figures

### *Part 1*

Figure xi.....	44
Figure xii.....	44
Figure xiii.....	44
Figure xiv.....	45
Figure lii.....	69
Figure liii.....	69
Figure liv.....	70
Figure lv.....	71
Figure lvi.....	71
Figure lvii.....	71
Figure lviii.....	71
Figure lix.....	72
Figure lx.....	72
Figure lxi.....	73
Figure lxii.....	73
Figure lxiii.....	74
Figure lxiv.....	74
Figure lxv.....	74, 82
Figure lxvi.....	76, 83
Figure lxvii.....	77
Figure lxviii.....	78
Figure lxix.....	78
Figure lxx.....	78
Figure lxxi.....	79
Figure lxxii.....	79
Figure lxxiii.....	81
Figure lxxiv.....	81
Figure lxxv.....	81
Figure lxxvi.....	81
Figure lxxvii.....	82
Figure lxxviii.....	83
Figure lxxix.....	84
Figure lxxx.....	86
Figure lxxxi.....	86
Figure lxxxii.....	87
Figure lxxxiii.....	87

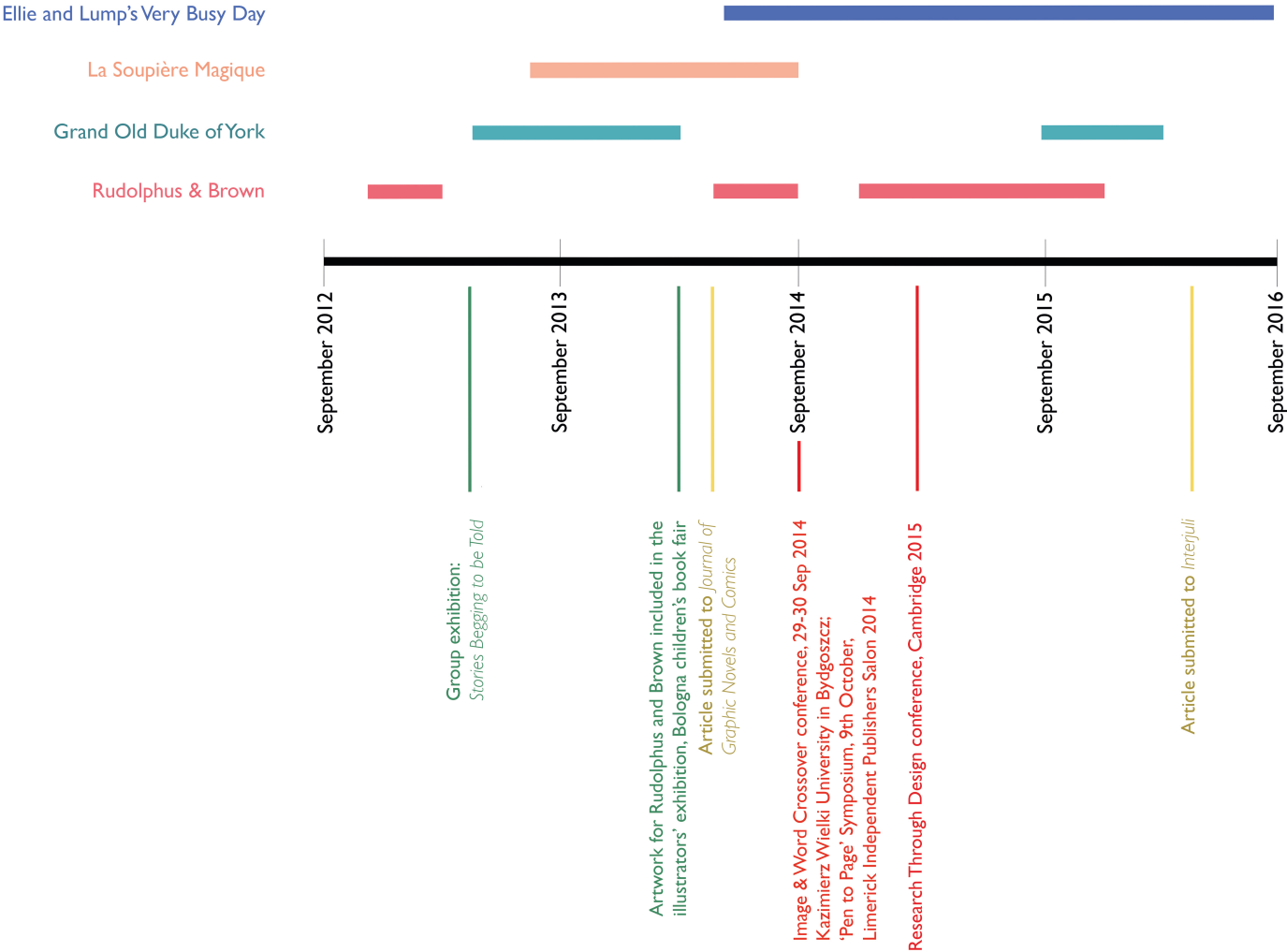


## *Part 2*

Figure i.....	2
Figure ii.....	2
Figure iii.....	3
Figure iv.....	4
Figure v.....	4
Figure vi.....	5
Figure vii.....	5
Figure viii.....	6-7
Figure ix.....	6
Figure x.....	7
Figure xv.....	9
Figure xvi.....	9
Figure xvii.a.....	10
Figure xvii.b.....	10
Figure xvii.c.....	10
Figure xvii.d.....	11
Figure xvii.e.....	12
Figure xviii.....	13
Figure xix.....	14
Figure xx.....	14-15
Figure xxi.a.....	16-17
Figure xxi.b.....	18-19
Figure xxi.c.....	20-21
Figure xxi.d.....	22-23
Figure xxi.e.....	24-25
Figure xxii.....	26
Figure xxiii.a.....	27
Figure xxiii.b.....	28-29
Figure xxiv.....	32
Figure xxv.....	32
Figure xxvi.....	33
Figure xxvii.....	34
Figure xxviii.a.....	34
Figure xxviii.b.....	34
Figure xxix.....	35
Figure xxx.a.....	35
Figure xxx.b.....	35

Figure xxx.c.....	36
Figure xxx.d.....	36
Figure xxx.e.....	36
Figure xxx.f.....	37
Figure xxx.g.....	37
Figure xxx.h.....	37
Figure xxxi.a.....	38
Figure xxxi.b.....	38
Figure xxxii.....	38
Figure xxxiii.....	39
Figure xxxiv.....	39
Figure xxxv.....	40
Figure xxxvi.....	40
Figure xxxvii.....	41
Figure xxxviii.....	41
Figure xxix.....	42
Figure xl.....	42
Figure xli.a.....	43
Figure xli.b.....	43
Figure xli.c.....	43
Figure xli.d.....	43
Figure xli.e.....	44
Figure xli.f.....	44
Figure xlii.....	45
Figure xliii.....	46
Figure xliv.....	46
Figure xlv.....	47
Figure xlv.....	47
Figure xlvii.....	47
Figure xlviii.....	48
Figure xlix.....	48
Figure l.....	49
Figure li.....	49

# Chronology of Events



# **Chapter 1. Introduction**

This thesis presents the results of research that uses reflective practice as a critical tool and site for developing a better understanding of comics and picturebooks. This mode of enquiry is effective on two levels:

1. Combining conventions and techniques for graphic storytelling from comics and picturebooks brings their potential for producing a synergy of words and pictures under sustained scrutiny. The potential for generating different iterations of a work-in-progress for comparative analysis is unique to practice, and creates a privileged perspective from which to examine how particular mechanisms function in altering contexts as the work is refined.
2. Exploratory attempts to combine comics and picturebooks in the creation of original work use the problems that arise in practice as a focal point for analysis, which gives rise to new frameworks for understanding these forms and the relationship between them. Finding good design solutions often requires us to reconfigure our understanding of the whole as well as its components, since problems often occur when prior knowledge and understanding is inadequate or inaccurate.

## **1.1 Main Research Focus**

The thesis examines what new understandings emerge from exploratory practice that aims to synthesise comics and picturebooks. It focuses on:

- research through practice as a means to understand the individual characteristics of comics and picturebooks.
- what light such research throws on their interaction when combined for narrative purposes.
- how problems arising in practice help us to reframe these forms and the relationship between them productively.

## **1.2 Contribution to knowledge**

The fields of picturebook and comics research developed as separate areas of study, but scholarship has of late begun to address the relationship between these forms. This growing interest is, in part, a response to an increasing blur in the distinction between the two as graphic narratives incorporating elements from both picturebooks and comics have

become more common. Such hybrids are also increasingly discussed in academic and industry literature. As yet, however, few studies have attempted to fathom how they function, and none have done so from the practitioner's perspective. Research such as this is therefore both timely and unprecedented.

Practitioner research is still relatively under-represented in the fields of comics and picturebook studies. Inquiries into and through the making of graphic narrative, focusing on work-in-progress for what it can show us, are particularly scarce. It is an area of research that warrants further exploration, however, for the critical reflection necessary to the development of work-in-progress can generate valuable insights, contributing to current scholarly and practitioner understanding of graphic narrative and its making, as this thesis aims to demonstrate.

### **1.3 The thesis**

The submission consists of three parts, two visual and one written. The visual parts comprise a document containing a record of practice, and a set of maquettes, or 'dummy books'. The written part offers a contextualisation and a critical analysis. The latter took place in the course of practice as well as retrospectively, feeding back into the work-in-progress. Written and visual elements are therefore intimately related, and are designed to be read alongside one another.

The maquettes are assembled as is customary when presenting book proposals to a publisher for consideration, the only difference being that many of the roughs are worked out in greater detail and colour than usual in a proposal. Final artwork for two illustrations is included to indicate how the book might be realised (pages 11 and 14 in maquette 5). However, since the object of this study is to investigate the inner workings of graphic narrative, rather than to develop finished outcomes, the completion of artwork has not been a principle concern.

The visual document includes sketches and other development work alongside the work of other artists where relevant to the discussion. This document shares the structure of the written part of the thesis, beginning at chapter 3. The research was principally conducted through two narrative projects, *The Grand Old Duke of York* (also referred to as *GODOY*) and *Rudolphus and Brown (R&B)*. These two projects are discussed separately in the written thesis, and are therefore divided accordingly in the visual document, although the investigation moved between projects throughout the period of research (see chronology of events, page vii).

The writing is divided into six chapters, of which this introduction is the first.

**Chapter 2** outlines the context and precedents for practice-based research in sequential and narrative illustration, and sets out the theoretical framework for this study. It offers a description of reflective practice as a methodological basis for research, and details specific methods used in conducting this inquiry.

**Chapter 3** presents the professional, cultural and academic context. It offers an account of the personal and professional background to practice, and considers the cultural, historical and academic contexts with which the personal dimensions intersect. Drawing on existing theory and criticism, it goes on to describe the typical characteristics of comics and picturebooks, relating them to my perceptions, as reader and as practitioner, of their respective strengths and capacities. The experiential dimension is further examined in relation to the practitioner's interaction with genre norms.

**Chapter 4** gives a critical account of the *Grand Old Duke of York* project, in which I set out to investigate how the rhythms and reading modes of comics and picturebooks could be brought together effectively. In its first iterations, the work took shape as a series of short, experimental sequences, developing into a hybrid book at a later stage. This chapter, which incorporates reflective analyses that were instrumental to developments in practice, represents the initial phase of dynamic theory-formation and -testing in practice.

**Chapter 5** analyses the *Rudolphus & Brown* project, which forms the major part of the visual record and critical analysis. The chapter details the development of a hybrid book from its first beginnings, using the evidence of sketchbooks to analyse the intuitive thinking that takes place during the immersive generation of visual stories. It goes on to study themes that emerged in chapter four in greater depth, focusing on problem areas in the ongoing refinement of the book in order to highlight and illustrate the insights that enabled, or proceeded from, their solution.

**Chapter 6** reflects on the research and the analysis, offering conclusions, and suggesting potential areas for further research.

**A note on page numbering in maquettes and picturebooks:**

As it is not usual to number the pages in a picturebook, I have not done so in the maquettes. The page numbers referred to in the written thesis are counted from the first page of the story, not the title page or endpapers. The same is true of page numbers in

the picturebooks cited. To facilitate the reader's engagement with visual and written elements of the thesis, I include thumbnail images of the maquette pages referred to in chapter 5, so that they may be found more easily.

## 1.4 Terminology

A few terms used in the thesis will benefit from a brief explanation.

**'Work'**: it is now common practice to use the word 'text' to describe any object designed for human communication, including examples of graphic narrative. This can lead to confusion when describing artefacts that include both (written) text and pictures. The word 'work' offers a simple alternative, since it is already in use to describe cultural objects (such as 'works of art'). It is also apt in the context of this thesis, which discusses the life of a work-in-progress before it is brought to completion and published for other readers.

**'Graphic narrative'**, 'graphic sequence' and 'graphic storytelling' are all used to describe, in general terms, works that communicate principally through visual sequence, often collaborating closely with text to convey meaning. These terms are increasingly adopted in academic literature on the subject (e.g. Kunzle, 1990; Eisner, 1996; Chute and De Koven, 2006; Chute, 2008; op de Beeck, 2010; Nel, 2012a). Despite objections to the word 'graphic', which some see as tautological (Briggs, quoted in Cooke, 2008, n.p.), while others note its lurid connotations (Wolk, 2007, p.62), it is more directly relevant than its counterpart 'multimodal', which is often applied to picturebooks (e.g. Nikolajeva, 2010; Geringer and Zbaracki, 2014; Arizpe et. al., 2014). Multimodality is above all a concept intended to emphasise the many levels at which any work conveys meaning (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p.183), and in that sense it effectively highlights the complexity of our interaction with graphic narrative. Yet it can be applied to any form of literature to emphasise its materiality (Rowse, 2013), and is therefore not specific enough to be meaningful as a description of the kind of literature discussed here.

**'Picturebook'**: although 'picture-book' and 'picture book' are also regularly used, the compound form is now common in scholarship on the subject because, as David Lewis (2001, p.xiv) notes, it reflects "the compound nature of the artefact itself." I therefore follow Lewis and others in my spelling of the term.

## Chapter 2. Research through practice: theoretical framework and methodology

### 2.1 Practitioner research: context and precedents

As Christopher Frayling (1993-4, p.3) points out in his seminal paper on research in Art and Design, all artists and designers conduct a type of research in the context of their work. Prolonged engagement in practice will often take them beyond an immediate concern with the job in hand to a more systematic study of particular phenomena, whether it be the materials and idioms they work with, aspects of the surrounding or interior world they wish to represent, or the relationship between the two. Much of the evidence for this research is in the visual and tactile work they produce in the process. A significant number have also attempted to communicate their findings more explicitly, bringing them together in a coherent form for distribution or publication, especially where the artist is also an educator, as Josef Albers and Paul Klee were. In doing so, they have made significant contributions to the advance of knowledge, often in areas beyond the purely artistic (Frayling, 1993-4, p.4). Thus artist and designer research has a long history, and has been invaluable to other practitioners as well as to scholarly inquiry.

Theories concerning graphic narrative by those who make it have often had a significant, even formative, impact on academic debate. Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993) is a groundbreaking example, in which McCloud proves the adaptability of comics as a medium by using it to demonstrate his findings. His work builds on Will Eisner's analysis of the form in *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985). Both seek to establish a theoretical framework for the discussion of comics, and at the same time provide guidance for aspiring cartoonists. Other works intended to instruct would-be narrative artists, such as Uri Shulevitz' *Writing with Pictures: how to Write and illustrate Children's books* (1985) and Ivan Brunetti's *Cartooning Philosophy and Practice* (2007), are grounded in these narrative artists' systematic understanding of their form.<sup>1</sup> *What It Is* (2008) by Lynda Barry, a cartoonist, writer and teacher,<sup>2</sup> is also a guide for those wishing to draw and write stories, but is unusual in that it focuses on the source of stories and

---

<sup>1</sup> Brunetti (2007, p.4) writes: "[teaching] helped me sort out and codify some of my thoughts on this creative endeavor upon which I had wasted most of the evenings and weekends of my adult life."

<sup>2</sup> Barry has worked in many other areas of the arts besides, and is currently involved in research into image-making as a cognitive process with the science departments at the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery, University of Wisconsin.



images, presenting a reflective analysis of the phenomenological, emotional and cognitive aspects of narrative image-making.

The findings of narrative artists' enquiries through practice are increasingly available in other forms, too. Molly Bang (2000) and Suzy Lee (2012) communicate their research in case studies that present progressive stages of an experimental process, which in Bang's case share the page with her responsive analysis of the work as it develops. Simon Grennan (2011) points to Matt Madden's *99 Ways to Tell a Story* (2005) as a book that communicates a theory indirectly through a series of anecdotal comics. Quentin Blake incorporates knowledge of effective visual story-telling into an illustrated retrospective in *Words and Pictures* (2013). Many narrative artists are also eloquent essayists (among them Maurice Sendak and Shaun Tan), and increasingly we can 'see inside' the visual research of a range of artists online, some of whom post written thoughts and analyses as well as images of sketchbooks and development work (e.g. George Shannon; David Wiesner). In addition, collected case studies or interviews with artists working in particular fields present a form of comparative research into people and processes (see, for instance, the *Picturebook Makers* blog and Dan Berry's podcast *Make it Then Tell Everybody*).

Given this rich tradition, it is perhaps surprising that academic research by practitioners of art and design, and graphic narrative in particular, is a relatively recent phenomenon. Historically, however, a greater distinction existed between practitioner knowledge and knowledge derived from academic research, practice being understood as a conduit for the application of theory in real world contexts (Schön, 1983, p.34). Whether practitioner research can meet the criteria for academic research, which requires that the knowledge it produces is in some way generalisable, has often been called into doubt, since practice by its nature engages with the irreproducible and particular. Debates surrounding practitioner research in art and design continue to raise the tricky question: what constitutes knowledge? Some universities offering PhDs to design practitioners accept a submission in purely visual form, whilst others see a contextualising statement or explanatory thesis as indispensable. Such self-questioning is important to scholarship in all areas, but it does prolong the struggle to establish practice and its methods as valid research. This has not been helped by the fact that many institutions offering research degrees to practitioners have yet to develop specific training programmes for new researchers in the field (Yee, 2010, n.p.).

Despite such challenges, the number of PhDs undertaken by artists and designers has grown exponentially in the decades since Frayling's paper on art and design research was

published (Yee, 2010, n.p.). As practitioner research in art and design continues to expand, conferences focusing exclusively on design research are increasingly common, providing important fora for the exchange of ideas between researchers and industry professionals. In the UK, for example, the RTD (Research Through Design) conference brings together researchers, designers and graduate students from many parts of the world to discuss a wide range of research and methods. The annual PhD by Design conference offers graduate students and educators an opportunity to discuss doctoral research in design, share experiences and resources, and address common challenges. Moreover, conferences focusing on a genre or theme that would traditionally be the domain of more established fields of scholarship now often bring together researchers working across disciplines, including practice. Speakers at Falmouth University's Graphic Novel Forum in 2013 were largely narrative artists or practitioner-researchers; a significant number of delegates at the 2014 Word and Image Crossovers conference in Bydgoszcz, Poland, where I presented some of my results, were also artists conducting practice-based research; Birkbeck's annual Transitions Symposium and the Confia conference on illustration and animation in Portugal both attract a similar mixture of research interests and expertise. The number of publications intended for the dissemination of practice-based research findings has also risen, with *VaroomLab*, the research arm of *Varoom!* Magazine, specifically aiming to foster research in illustration, and the University of Florida's new research journal *Sequentials* recently launching its first CFC ("call for comics").

*Sequentials* takes its lead from Scott McCloud's work and other "visual comics scholarship" by artist-researchers such as Neil Cohn and Nick Sousanis. Sousanis' *Unflattening* (2015) presents the outcomes of his PhD research: excepting the endnotes, the book communicates his ideas entirely through comics. The viscosity of the form and the interdependence of word and image are intended to demonstrate his propositions in a seamless integration of practice and theory. Simon Grennan (2011) similarly uses graphic sequence to answer theoretical questions posed in the course of practitioner research. Sousanis' and Grennan's theses, alongside McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, have been helpful in clarifying that the research I present would not be best communicated by a thesis where a theoretical position is proposed and argued in graphic sequence. Rather, the body of visual work I submit contributes to an understanding of graphic narrative "as work-in-progress, and not as finished artefact", as Katherina Manollessou puts it (2011, p.2). It is evidence of the dynamic theorising that responds and feeds back in to work-in-progress.

Manolessou's thesis represents one of several recent practice-based studies focusing on the picturebook: others include Sungeun Kang (2014) and Laura Little (2015). Little's research into the relationship between artists' books and picturebooks is especially relevant, since it also investigates the fuzzy area between one category and another through exploratory practice aiming at a fusion of the two in her work. The research brings her aesthetic preferences and formal interests when making artists' books into the context of a narrative picturebook. In this, our studies are also similar: I started from a preference for telling stories through comics, and have attempted to blend what I value in comics with the possibilities offered by the picturebook form.

## **2.2 An interdisciplinary approach**

This chapter and the next outline two academic contexts for the research: on the one hand, the growing area of practitioner research in art and design, where knowledge derives from thinking through and in response to making; on the other, the fields of comics and picturebook research, in which scholarship has chiefly been shaped by the critical methods and theoretical approaches of humanities disciplines. I propose research through practice as an alternative mode or framework for studying graphic narrative, but examine the work I produce from both disciplinary perspectives, comparing existing theory to my experience and analysis at different stages of practice. In this sense, the research is interdisciplinary.

Just as practitioner research and its purpose can polarise opinion, so interdisciplinarity is welcomed by some, while others view it with suspicion (Lattuca, 2001). In the context of the present study, however, an interdisciplinary approach is hard to avoid: the practitioner-researcher who intends their work to be relevant to the study of comics and picturebooks must engage with scholarship that approaches these forms from the theoretical perspectives of literature, history, education and cultural studies. In fact, William Mitchell (1994, cited in Little, 2014, p.21). suggests that most scholarly discussion of visual arts has been interdisciplinary, applying semiotic, linguistic or rhetorical frameworks to the analysis of form and meaning.

The issue is partly that graphic narrative in all its forms raises questions that stand at the intersection of different disciplines. The practitioner and the literary theorist are both interested to know how graphic narrative communicates meaning, though their motives and methods for finding out are distinct. Equally, the fields of comics and picturebook research have developed separately, so that the question of their relationship is also posed at the border between them: in fact it challenges that border's existence. Bettina

Kümmerling-Meibauer (2013, p.102), surprised at the lack of overlap between comics and picturebooks research, calls for a “consolidation of their respective theoretical frameworks and research results [...] since the multimodal character of these genres begs for an interdisciplinary approach.” Her assumption that such an approach will consolidate frameworks may be based on the idea that integration is a key quality in interdisciplinary research (Rossini and Porter, 1984, cited in Lattuca 2001, p.11). However, Lattuca argues that fully integrating different disciplinary perspective often ignores contradictions and conflicts in favour of a unified theory, and so risks obscuring the complexity of the subject.

The value of retaining different perspectives has become clear in the course of this research. Each one focuses attention on a distinct dimension of graphic narrative, suggesting different criteria by which we may compare individual examples. We are accustomed to think of graphic narratives in terms of common categories such as comics and picturebooks, and may conceive of the grey areas between them as a sliding scale, as Barbara Postema (2014, p.314) suggests. Yet there are other ‘sliding scales’ or spectra that might place graphic narratives in a different relation to one another. For instance, from a practitioner’s perspective, we might think of them in relation to the level of formal constraint imposed: how far form has determined content, or content form. Though it is tempting to try to map such alternative spectra onto dominant categories, to do so would distort our understanding, for they do not correlate. Nor should the new spectrum necessarily replace the old, for the categories ‘comics’ and ‘picturebooks’ are a cultural, social and commercial reality, and inevitably impact on how we make and understand graphic narrative. It is therefore important to retain any models that accurately describe a phenomenon from a particular angle, whether they agree or not, for they add up to a more rounded understanding of the topic at hand. This does not mean that I accept every theory or framework proposed on the subject. Rather, I have tried to resist forcing unity where it does not exist.

Practitioner research has often taken an interdisciplinary approach because a methodology for art and design research has yet to be established. Indeed, it may not be possible to establish a single methodology, given the diversity of inquiries classified as such. Artists and designers are often encouraged to look to other disciplines for models and methods by which to conduct, evaluate and validate the research (Gray and Malins, 2004), creating a “pick and mix” or “bricolage” of methods (Yee, 2010, p.13), for fear that a “designerly mode of inquiry” (Saikaly, 2005) will not be recognised as sufficiently rigorous. Donald Schön (1983, p.308) describes this as “the practitioner’s dilemma [...] ‘rigor or relevance’ [which] tempts the practitioner to force practice situations into molds derived from research.” Assembling methods from disparate disciplines, whose theoretical

framework and purpose will differ, carries the risk that the inquiry will become incoherent, undermining itself in an effort to assert its reliability as academic research.

The diversity of studies conducted goes some way to explain why specific methods vary so widely, and why appropriate definitions, methods, and forms for dissemination continue to be controversial within the field as much as in its broader academic context (as many of the recurring discussions on the JISC online forum *PhD-Design* demonstrate). Yet the designerly mode of inquiry is always grounded in the reflective cycle that Schön unpacks so well in his writings. Though some suggest modifications to Schön's analysis (e.g. Löwgren, 2015), it has stood the test of time as an accurate description of practice and a model for research-through-practice. As underlying methodology, it is both relevant and rigorous, a distinctive and systematic mode of inquiry in its own right.

### **2.3 The framework for research**

Conducted from the perspective of a professional author/illustrator engaged in practice, this study represents a period of reflective development taking place in the context of my ongoing professional work. Various terms exist to describe practitioner research, of which 'practice-led' and 'practice-based' are most common, though there is as yet no absolute agreement as to their meaning. Joyce Yee (2010) describes 'practice-based' as a sub-set of 'practice-led' research, the latter denoting all research "deriving from design practice", whether it is conducted through practice or not, while the former indicates a study "where practice is used as an interrogative process" (Durling, Friedman, and Guntherson 2002, in Yee, 2010, p.4). In this sense, the term 'practice-based' characterises the research presented here.

The research uses problems arising in practice as focal points or 'toe-holds' for analysis. When exploratory attempts to synthesise comics and picturebooks run aground on unexpected obstacles, finding solutions to these difficulties often requires us to reconfigure our understanding of individual parts, and how they work together as a whole. The alternative models that develop from this process supplement or call into question existing theories concerning meaning-making and narrative structures in comics, picturebooks, and in graphic narratives that combine these forms. The focus of this study is therefore on reflective practice as a tool for critical analysis, rather than on arriving at a 'successful' final outcome. Whilst progress in practice always means working towards more effective design, the merits of the final design are incidental to the learning this thesis represents. The critical analysis *is* the outcome, together with the dynamic theory-formation and -revision that drives it. The written and visual parts of the thesis represent

the two halves of that process. It is therefore closest to Molly Bang's model for research and its communication in *Picture This: How Pictures Work* (2000). A better understanding of a particular form or phenomenon is sought by undertaking a period of exploratory practice, and the evolution of that understanding through reflective problem-solving is then made available in the form of a book (or in this case, a thesis) that combines imagery and verbal analysis as evidence of the thinking.

The visual/narrative evidence of practice is essential to a full understanding of the thought process because visual artists' and designers' core cognitive processes are non-verbal, taking the form of:

1. tacit knowledge and intuition. Much of what we know cannot be expressed through language, but this tacit knowledge is nonetheless a vital substrate to many of our actions. Intuition plays a key role in the work of all practitioners (Schön, 1983; Frappaolo, 2008; Daichendt, 2011), and is a mode of thought characteristic of all human expertise (Kahneman, 2011).
2. physical interaction with materials as thought process. Arnheim (1969) and Schön (1983) both suggest that artistic activity is a form of reasoning. Acting on and reacting to materials play a vital role in building knowledge (Chapman and Scrivener, 2004; Jones, 2009).
3. sensory knowledge and visual thinking. Drawing on evidence from diverse disciplines, Rudolf Arnheim (1969) argues that our sensory perception of the world is a cognitive process, and impacts on all our thinking. Knowledge about the world is determined by sensory experience.

Though these modes of thought can be approximately described in words, the visual submission provides richer evidence of their impact.

The conceptual framework for this study has changed as my understanding of the relationship between comics and picturebooks has developed. Initially, I pictured these two forms of visual narrative occupying positions on either side of a divide, and my task as one of building effective bridges between them. It became clear, however, that the two shared far more common ground than that image allowed. With this perception came the idea of explorative research, where my role as practitioner-researcher was one of charting unmapped territory. That model also seemed problematic, however, for it did not acknowledge the making involved.

An alternative understanding grew from an idea planted by Charles Hatfield and Craig Svonkin (2012, p.432). Referring to Sergei Eisenstein's statement that images in a film should be "violently smashed against each other", Hatfield and Svonkin propose this as a metaphor for the close critical comparison of comics and picturebooks. Eisenstein's vivid description led me to think of picturebooks and comics as machines capable of motion, rather than static features in a landscape. What starts as a critical approach in the work of Hatfield and Svonkin is useful to me as a way to conceive of and engage in practical research. The practitioner pools the conventions and techniques that comics and picturebooks offer, as if collecting parts from the aftermath of an 'Eisensteinian' collision, and uses this mixture of mechanisms to assemble new vehicles for narrative.

This analogy for the inquiry remains an apt one, yet its implied outcome - that is, a prototype that is 'fit for purpose' - projects the kind of design research that develops knowledge through "conjecture, exploration, refutation, or [...] proposition, development and test" (Archer, 1999, p.567). This model for research, with the weight of established research behind it, acted with persuasive force on my thinking, and the inquiry could have proceeded along these lines, setting the testing of a hypothesis as the goal of the research.

Fortunately, the development of the practical work made it clear why this would not do justice to the research I was conducting. One strand of the inquiry involved a series of experiments in narrative that responded to a perceived difference between comics and picturebooks (that picturebooks are designed to be read aloud, whereas comics resist it) by proposing to develop comics intended for reading out loud. However, I found that the understanding of comics and picturebooks I gained in the process went far beyond my initial proposition, which took on the character of a starting point rather than a hypothesis that the research aimed to test. I realised that the real focus of my inquiry was this dynamic or 'emergent' model of knowledge, which is led by practice, not knowledge achieved through prototyping and testing in response to a hypothesis, which subordinates making to thinking.

Perhaps the model Eisenstein's metaphor suggested to me should therefore also be discarded as inaccurate. Yet I continued to perceive combining different conventions as a process of adapting tools and mechanisms. It might have been the satisfaction of expanding on an established metaphor: conceiving of practice as the construction of vehicles for narrative held the pleasure of discovering concrete origins for a figure of speech. The philosopher Daniel Dennett (2013) calls such extended analogies 'intuition pumps', which ring true because they conceptualise a situation in such a way that it

speaks to our intuitions. He warns that they may obscure as much as they reveal, but nonetheless concludes that they can help us to arrive at more accurate understandings.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953) uses many such analogies in the *Philosophical Investigations*, which represents the second phase of his philosophical thinking (Kenny, 1973, pp.10-12). He was interested in human communication: his philosophy addresses pictorial, musical, ritual, ceremonial and algebraic as well as linguistic meaning making. Henry Le Roy Finch (1995, p.34) suggests that Wittgenstein's later work is concerned with "the kinds of common agreements that make cultural life possible", of which verbal language is one. In Wittgenstein's writings, I encountered the mechanical metaphor that had stuck with me:

"Think of the tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screw-driver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws. — The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects... what confuses us is the uniform appearance of words when we hear them spoken or meet them in script or print. For their application is not presented to us so clearly." (1953, p.6)

This description applies to the conventions of any communicative system. The observation that 'uniform appearance' should not be mistaken for uniformity of function was borne out in the course of this research. The realisation that speech balloons do not function in the same way when they are read out loud as they do when read in silence (see chapter 4) is a key example. The same tools and mechanisms may be put to different uses, as the narrative artist does, selecting items from a 'toolbox' that contains elements from different forms of graphic communication and literature. These are incorporated as is appropriate to the particular situation, their suitability and effectiveness established through intuitive and analytic judgement, trial and error, and the input of others (including editors and designers, or supervisors and peers in a research setting).

The search for use-value regardless of classification helps to explain the gap between a practitioner's understanding and that common to scholarship. This is what Ben Shahn refers to when he writes: "scholars speak of art in terms of class and category, and under headings of which the artist may never have heard [...] he [the artist] has absorbed visually, not verbally (1990, in Little, 2015, p.17). 'Absorbed' is the key word here: I take Shahn to mean that the artist absorbs the tools of his trade visually rather than learning about them through verbal classifications of the visual.

What does 'absorb' mean in this case, exactly? The theory of cognition that Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sander present in *Surfaces and Essences* (2013) suggests that it can be understood as a process of analogy-making, which is basic to human



cognition and constantly at work in our day-to-day efforts to interpret and to communicate with the world around us. They propose that we begin a constant process of analogising from the moment we are born, our points of reference multiplying and becoming more sophisticated as we grow up and gain experience of shared systems of communication. Hofstadter is an adept observer of this process at work in his own and other people's use of concepts and language. In particular, he sees instances of linguistic misuse, mixed metaphors, and disagreements over category as opportunities to observe analogy-making in action. Likewise, the difficulties we have in understanding the nuances and appropriate applications of words when we learn a new language indicate to him that proficiency develops through observation of language use in action, and its subsequent application in analogical situations. When we no longer need to consider which word or phrase is the right one in a particular situation, we have become fluent, since we are able to analogise intuitively.

Hofstadter's analysis of language learning explains the process that I think Shahn has in mind. Artists and designers who become fluent in their particular mode of communication generally do so by learning from example and by experience, developing a non-verbal understanding through trial-and-error application in practice. This knowledge is manual/haptic as well as visual, for we learn how to handle our materials - what can be achieved by different pressures of a pencil, for example - by experiment, and by observation of its use in the work of others. The process is metaphorical, the mind generating its own dynamic categories, which *need not be verbal* (Hofstadter and Sander 2013, pp.159-161). Rules and classifications imposed from outside can therefore seem somewhat irrelevant to the visual artist, over-determining our experience of the visual by imposing distinctions and hierarchies.

## **2.4 Reflective practice as methodology**

As Schön points out, 'practice' is a word with several meanings, and refers both to a professional's work and to the process of perfecting a skill through repetition and experiment. These meanings are related, since a professional's working methods are arrived at through practice, and in themselves constitute a kind of continuing practice of skills (Schön, 1983, p.60). We might add practice as habit to Schön's meanings - as in 'common practice' - which takes us back to the collective 'agreements' concerning use that we share within cultures and language communities. We learn what constitutes common practice in design for various purposes and genres by encountering it repeatedly, subconsciously connecting those encounters, and processing this information in practice by turning it to our own ends. Likewise, we learn to interpret iconic signs and

understand their symbolic meaning from a very young age (Arizpe and Styles, 2003, p.210; Yannicopoulou, 2004), and continue to develop this skill from day to day, becoming adept interpreters of advertisements, safety information comics, the framing and editing of scenes in a film, and so on. In many cases, that interpretation takes place without conscious effort.

Though most people stop designing and making visual objects as they grow up, those who continue to practice such skills retain and develop an intuition for visual communication as well as interpretation. This is the kind of intuition that art and design research asserts as a valid form of knowledge. Daniel Kahneman (2011) defines it as internalised knowledge that no longer requires conscious thought - what Schön (1983, p.50) calls “knowing-in-action” - which is at work in every learned skill, no matter how simple. The practitioner builds on this tacit, often inarticulable knowledge as their practice evolves, and it plays a vital role in their actions and decisions.

The decision-making process surfaces when the artist wishes to communicate something that challenges the mind and hand to go beyond the patterns with which they are familiar. In such cases, problem-solving comes to the fore as a conscious activity, though still occurring in the midst of practice. Schön (1983, pp.55-69) distinguishes this as ‘reflection-in-action’, and likens it to an evolving dialogue, where the artist and his materials respond to one another. This interaction is also sometimes represented as a spiral of activity, where new knowledge is implemented immediately, thereby generating further knowledge (Gray and Malins, 2004, p.57). Embarking on practice that takes us into new territory will entail a greater conscious effort as we attempt to adapt what we know to the situation.

Beyond this, practitioners who wish to gain a more systematic understanding of a given aspect of their work will engage in a deeper reflection-on-practice - a third mode of cognitive engagement that Schön describes as retrospective. In a sense we are still in the midst of action when we reflect back on past activity, for practice is an ongoing pursuit (Schön, 1983, pp.61-62). Retrospective reflection is distinctive, however, for it seeks some distance: the mind is allowed to digest what has happened, and to make connections backwards to past experience as well as sideways to the work of other practitioners, researchers, and the wider referential context, taking the theory built on this analysis back into practice.

Reflecting on problems with some distance is at times vital for progress, for they may highlight the need for a revised conceptual framework in order to take the work forward. Schön (1983, p.184-187; 1993) calls such alternative frameworks “generative metaphors”,

and describes how an associative leap can lead to a more accurate understanding of a situation, and hence a way forward. Generative metaphors highlight a different set of physical capabilities as well as new conceptual parallels. On several occasions in the course of this research such metaphors have helped to change my understanding of graphic narrative and its components, enabling me to make progress. The process is a dynamic one, since each metaphor-theory is tested and modified again in practice, and further metaphors may become necessary as new problems arise.

All three aspects - knowing-in-action, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action - are necessary to practitioner research as academic study, but reflection-on-action creates the space for analysis that looks outwards to its research context, and brings existing theory to the discussion in practice. It is also where the 'researcher consciousness' of the practitioner-researcher partnership brings a kind of self-awareness to the process, a curiosity concerning how and why decisions are made in the course of practice. This, too, produces insights into the subject of study, since an artist or designer's thought-processes and the context that produces them naturally impact on the graphic narratives she makes. In the social sciences, such self-awareness is known as 'reflexivity' (Scholte, 1972).

Since this study investigates how different forms of graphic narrative communicate meaning, its intentions might be summarised in semiotic terms as an investigation of sign-making as active, context-specific process: what Gunter Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996, p.1) call social semiotics. Kress and van Leeuwen point out that grammars of the 'languages' we use raise awareness of the conventions that allow us to communicate effectively. In their opinion, once a mode of communication is as central to a culture as the visual is now, it becomes "less and less the domain of specialists." They predict that visual communication will in future be increasingly governed by rules (pp.2-3). Whether or not this proves to be the case, an analysis of visual communication can certainly bring useful and potentially powerful knowledge to light (Halliday 1985, in Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p.2). However, Kress and van Leeuwen emphasise that any grammar is a formalised description of an evolving system that pre-exists rules, and is more fluid in day-to-day use than such rules imply. In practice, as Brunetti (2007, p. 6) writes, "rules are really just a safety net [...]; once the pencil hits the paper, everything changes." I hope that the decision to focus on the pencil hitting the paper, by presenting the process of this research as its outcome, will support an understanding of the 'language' of graphic narrative as language-in-use.

## 2.5 Methods

### 2.5.1 *Forms for practice, reflections and analysis*

The narrative and visual work of the inquiry took shape in sketchbooks, rough layout sheets and maquettes, which show progressive stages of different narratives developing. Written notes of my reflections in and on action run parallel to the visual record in the form of research journals kept throughout the process. These, along with rough notes accompanying imagery in my sketchbooks, are a record of my ongoing thought process, and are excerpted in the thesis, where they illustrate my thought process at particular moments.

At intervals, I stepped back from an immersion in practice to reflect on a period of work, using essay writing as a means to organise these thoughts. It proved important not to combine concentrated analysis with attempts to continue with the practical work, for I found, like Manolessou (2011, p.44) that “operating on two levels: that of the practitioner and that of the observer/researcher” inhibited the creative work, a difficulty that Peter Chapman (2004) also encountered during his doctoral research. Because conscious theorising overrode the intuitive and associative processes characteristic of practice, it was necessary to alternate between periods of intensive practice and critical reflection. The writing that resulted from the latter has been instrumental to the research, producing theories and conjecture to take back to the work-in-progress, and forming the basis for the analysis this thesis presents. Two pieces were accepted for publication in the course of research, in the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* in 2014 and *Interjuli's* forthcoming issue on visuality in children's literature. These are combined in chapter 4.

The research progressed through a cycle: the dialogue between myself and the work fed into dialogue with the practice as a whole, which emerged from the shift in perspective that writing facilitates. This in turn informed the next phase of practical work, and so on. Reflection on practice and the practice itself were inseparable, one responding to the other as the inquiry progressed.

### 2.5.2 *Reading, imagined and real*

Michael Rosen, whose PhD thesis presents a practice-based study of his poetry, describes a similar cycle. His thesis aims to:

“1) reconstruct that particular moment of writing-reading-writing

- 2) thereafter with specific poems make connections between
- i) my reading of my work and
  - ii) my (re)writing of it.” (1997, p.84)

Rosen’s summary highlights that the writer/narrative artist acts as their own primary reader:

“We might say that the author is the first reader of his own work; he first gives himself the surprises that he will hand on to us.” (Macherey 1978, in Rosen 1997, p.84)

Rosen goes on to examine how the writer conceives of and responds to the “idealised/imagined reader(s)” who will encounter his work. He suggests that the writer’s reading of their own work is partly

“an active projection into what are imagined and/or internalised responses of other readers. The source of these imagined readers may be various e.g.

- i) the differentiated memory of previous kinds of reading that the writer him or herself did,
- ii) the memory of how other readers have responded to the writer's work
- iii) the memory of what professional readers (critics) have said about their own or other's work,
- iv) the immediate input of the readers who are the first, second (and subsequent) readers of the putative text before it is stabilised (if indeed it is).” (1997, p.86)

Reader and listener reactions encountered during the development of a piece of work need not necessarily be a response to that work-in-progress, nor even to another piece of the writer/artist’s own oeuvre. Our observations of reader reactions to other work are equally likely to influence decision-making. In addition, on moving into a research context, existing research on readers and their readings of graphic narrative began to inform my work (e.g. Meek, 1988; Lewis, 2001; Arizpe and Styles, 2003; Yannicopoulou, 2004; Sabetti, 2011; Arizpe et. al., 2014).

My understanding and approach in practice also shifted in response to Roman Ingarden’s (cited in Holub, 1984, p.24) description of narrative as a skeleton or “schematised structure”, which requires a reader/viewer to fill out the gaps or ‘indeterminacies’ and bring it to life. Wolfgang Iser (2000, p.312) describes the process as an “interaction” between reader and text, while Louise Rosenblatt (1978, p.25) thinks of it as a “transaction.” Rosenblatt proposes that “the literary work exists in a live circuit set up between reader and text; the reader infuses intellectual and emotional meanings into the pattern of [...] symbols and these symbols channel his thoughts and feelings. Out of this process

emerges a more or less organised imaginative experience.” The ‘live circuit’ that Rosenblatt describes is echoed by Shaun Tan, who conceives of words and images in his work as two ends of a battery, creating a “potential voltage” that is realised when the reader’s mind completes the circuit (2010, n.p.). Much current theory and criticism of graphic narrative refers to the reader’s participation in meaning-making (e.g. McCloud, 1993, pp.60-68; Doonan, 1993, p.9; Tan, 2011, p.8; Gravett, 2013, p.63). The necessity of the reader’s imaginative contribution is very tangible in graphic narrative, given the visible ellipses between images in a sequence, and the links that must be forged between word and image.

Second and subsequent readers “can have a time-linked effect on a writer’s work over several years of reading and listening” (Rosen, 1997, p.5). In my research, supervisors and peers (both professional and academic), publishers and other industry professionals, friends and family have been these subsequent readers. The last group includes young relatives and children of friends, whose help has been invaluable to my thinking about reading processes. As Rosen writes, a book is

“firstly, an inanimate material object and, strictly speaking, without the intervention of perception, consciousness and indeed the human labour of looking, eye-turning, thinking, page-turning and the like, cannot, of itself and by itself, ‘do’ things to readers” (1997, p.95).

The emphasis is on the physical and mental exertion, usually overlooked, which makes the reader’s interpretation possible. To expand on Rosen’s attention to the physical act of reading, the various ways we may engage in the act of reading, by ourselves or with others, plays a decisive role in our reception of a work. For the artist/writer, *how* they envisage their work being read will potentially have an impact on their critical reading of work-in-progress as great as that of the imagined reader(s) and their putative responses. How the design of a work can affect the kinds of reading it accommodates is of particular interest to me in this thesis. It has led me to find opportunities to read work-in-progress with young friends and relations, who kindly agreed to listen or try reading them out loud together. These readings led to key insights, which fed back into practice.

Writers and narrative artists whose work is created and/or published for children, and those whose work takes a form associated with young readers, are often asked how they go about addressing their audience, or how they ensure that their work will be understood by young readers. Often the response is ‘I don’t’, and ‘one can’t’, not out of a lack of concern for readers, but because it is a perplexing question to be faced with when we emerge from a black hole of our own making with a story in tow, having written and drawn

in a state that Dan Chaon calls “dreaming awake” (quoted in Barry, 2011, p.128). Allan Ahlberg (quoted in Marantz and Marantz, 1992, p.8) and Luke Pearson (quoted in Cartwright, 2015, p.65) speak of a child reader lurking in their peripheral vision when they make stories, which Pearson attributes to the audience for whom his *Hilda* books are now marketed. Moreover, how our book may be read, and by whom, may enter our thoughts to a greater extent during the reflective editing stage. The vehemence with which many authors claim to write for no one but themselves is perhaps partly an attempt to keep the mental door shut against a readership’s imaginary presence. The honesty and therefore the worth of the work is felt to depend on the freedom to dream awake without trip hazards (Pearson: “I try not to focus on making it for kids; I need to make sure it’s not trash” [Cartwright, 2015, p.65]).

Other creators of books that are (or are interpreted to be) ‘for’ children deal with the perennial question of audience in different ways. Some frame it as writing for their child selves, feeding a notion that children’s authors, through their professional involvement in an activity equivalent to play, are closer to a childlike state (e.g. Lucy Boston, quoted in Wall, 1991, p.220). Others argue that children are as complex as adults, cope with similarly difficult realities, and are therefore able to understand stories that come from creators’ “deepest selves” (Sendak, 1988, p.192). Many regard the question as irrelevant, since their responsibility ends with making the book the best it can be: it will attract its own audience (Goffstein in Marantz and Marantz, 1992, p.107; Tan, 2002, n.p.). Implicit in this perspective is a belief that readers, including children, are all different, covering the full spectrum of backgrounds, tastes and abilities. The best one can do is therefore to make a book that has an internal integrity, and hope that it will speak to others. Yet Tan, a vocal proponent of this position, also speaks of creating space for readers (2011, p.8): in this sense, therefore, he does consider them.

The question, though frustrating, is also fascinating, and its relevance goes beyond the study of children’s literature, for it challenges us to consider whether, and how, different books and forms accommodate specific readers and readings.

In the context of an artist’s research into practice, the focus is on the life of the book before it becomes available to a readership, therefore my attitude in making work is aligned for the most part with Tan’s. However, the way a book or graphic narrative in any form is designed to be read remains relevant, and must enter into an investigation that compares the picturebook and the comic. In the course of this study I therefore do consider the effect that different kinds of reading may have on the potential function and meaning of these forms.

### *2.5.3 Presentation of the thesis*

In presenting the visual/narrative results of practice, I have selected material to provide continuous evidence of developments as they occurred, so that the result communicates the whole as accurately as possible.

The thesis is organised to reflect the interrelatedness of the written analysis and the work-in-progress. As stated in the introduction, the two are intended to be read as a composite work. The parallel to the subject of study is apposite: where words and pictures are used together in graphic narrative, the two depend on one another for meaning. In this thesis, the visual and the verbal likewise collaborate to represent the inquiry.

### *2.5.4 Ensuring trustworthiness*

In their critical analysis of the criteria for trustworthiness conventionally applied to research, Yvonne Lincoln and Egon Guba (1985, p. 304)<sup>3</sup> demonstrate that these are only coherent in the context of a positivist paradigm, and cannot be usefully relied upon to assess research that rejects its axioms. They suggest alternative strategies by which the trustworthiness of research can be established. The first, 'prolonged engagement', where the inquirer is immersed in the situation for a length of time adequate to familiarise them with every aspect of it, is ensured where the inquiry takes place in the course of the inquirer's own practice. The second, 'persistent observation', by which the inquirer identifies and focuses on "those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant," is also characteristic of the process of inquiry in reflective practice. Together, prolonged engagement and persistent observation ensure the scope and depth of the study.

Lincoln and Guba (p.305-9) also note the necessity for outside perspectives to prompt the inquirer to interrogate their own understanding of the situation. This is particularly important where the researcher is an insider to that situation. I have therefore sought out opportunities to see what I do through the eyes of others. Conversations about the inquiry and the work-in-progress as well as exchanges outside the research context have provided me with valuable feedback and alternative perspectives on my work, and on graphic narrative more broadly. They also obliged me to articulate my thoughts clearly. In order to hear opinions from a range of perspectives, I have presented findings at

---

<sup>3</sup> Lincoln and Guba's work sets out a naturalistic model for inquiry in the social sciences, an approach that is close to research through reflective practice, the principle difference being that in reflective practice, the researcher is also to an extent the subject of research.



conferences in the UK and abroad. I recorded conversations and feedback informally in the research journal, and the thesis reflects on their impact where relevant.

Sketchbooks, notebooks and roughs provide visual evidence of events and actions during unselfconscious immersion in practice. Such evidence gives a more accurate insight into the thinking-in-action taking place than my memories alone provide. Close attention to the traces of action can therefore challenge prior assumptions and lead to a better understanding of meaning-making in practice, as I explain in chapter 5.

## Chapter 3. Professional, cultural and academic context

Research conducted within the framework of ongoing creative practice is embedded in the practitioner's personal and professional context, from which it proceeds. Consequently, it is shaped by prior experience and background as much as by the specific questions that the study addresses. I therefore begin this chapter by establishing the study's context within personal history and practice, outlining the origins of that practice, factors contributing to its development, and the motivations for conducting this research.

The personal and professional baseline for this study intersects with the broader cultural and historical context, which I go on to describe. In order to establish the study's academic context, I discuss attempts to define picturebooks and comics, both independently and in comparison to one another, and review existing research into works that combine or 'blend' the two forms. The connection between graphic narrative and drama, which is emphasised by the only systematic study of such hybrids, is examined in relation to the practitioner's experience. Finally, this chapter seeks to establish the impact of genre norms on the making of graphic narrative, and consequently on my preconceptions of picturebooks and comics. This completes the background against which the research detailed in subsequent chapters took place.

### 3.1 Personal, educational and professional context

I am the eldest of 12 children, including step- and half-brothers and -sisters. The youngest was born when I was 25 years old. As a result, picturebooks and comics have been familiar domestic reading throughout my life. From the child to whom adults read, I turned into the older and then adult sister reading to siblings, though my father continued to read to us even once we could read by ourselves: I remember first hearing Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) with a deep base sub-note from resting my ear on his stomach while he read. As social activity, reading meant physical and emotional intimacy, having to share and to take turns, the participation some books encouraged and the hiatus when a group of us were spellbound. It also became a vital private space in a family environment where solitude was in short supply. These multiple, often opposing experiences of reading have fed into my reading habit, and inform my work in their own ways.

Many of the illustrations I encountered in books as a child imprinted themselves permanently in my mind. Equally, various passages of text are fixed there, by virtue of their rhythm, or the remembered pattern of a particular person reading them. I still have a

retentive visual and auditory memory, an aptitude of mind that developed into a skill as I continued to draw and began to make graphic narrative. Both visual and auditory memory are important to the practice of a narrative artist. Illustrators depend on an ability to combine remembered and imagined elements in their imagery (Blake, quoted in Marantz and Marantz, 1992, pp.41-42). Drawing from observation is a means of building knowledge about the world, as well as a manual exercise. Auditory memory is equally vital, partly for refining verbal rhythms and cadences in a book's text and dialogue, but also for the development of a good 'ear' for the visual beat, which is key to timing, determining whether a narrative sequence rings true. Visual and auditory memory seem to collaborate in this respect. In practice, I draw unconsciously on a wide spectrum of encounters with the natural and cultural world, as every artist does. The intertextual echoes this produces are considered in the discussion of practice in chapters 4 and 5.

As an undergraduate, I studied English Literature and History of Art, but continued to draw and paint, concentrating on single narrative images that usually focus on a character or characters against minimal background detail (**figure i**). Pictures can possess an ambiguity that leaves the viewer ample room for speculation, and it was their potential to imply volumes that I was usually interested to explore. Following an evening class in illustration and a private commission to illustrate a picturebook (**figure ii**), I decided to pursue a career in narrative illustration more seriously. I applied for a place on the Masters degree in Children's Book Illustration at Anglia Ruskin University, where I discovered a strong preference for making comics.

I had never been a comics fan in the committed sense that comes from identification with a subculture (Wolk, 2007, pp.64-88), but as a child growing up in Holland, I read many comics, including Thom Roep and Co Loerakker's *Van Nul Tot Nu* (1982-2001), Willy Vandersteen's *Suske en Wiske* (1945-present) and the European weekly *Donald Duck*, as well as Hergé's *Tintin* and Uderzo and Goscinny's *Asterix*.

At home, many of our picturebooks were in English. Of these, Jan Ormerod's *Sunshine* (1981) and *Moonlight* (1982), Sendak's *In the Night Kitchen* (1970), and Raymond Briggs' *The Snowman* (1978) were my first introduction to several conventions more common to comics, such as multiple panels on a page and the use of speech balloons. Though I read few comics during my teens, I had evidently internalised the form enough to light upon it later as the best fit for the stories I wanted to tell, and the way I wanted to tell them.

I continued to make comics throughout the Masters, alongside a few attempts at picturebooks, and completed the roughs for a graphic novel entitled *The Biggest Helping*

in the final stages of the course. Taking as its starting point a folk-tale about a magic porridge pot that cooks enough porridge to submerge a town, my version brought the story into a contemporary setting, and used comics to create an intimacy with its characters, rounding out figures that have a typical or symbolic function in the folktale. Although British publishers and editors to whom I showed the book enjoyed the storytelling, commenting on the vivid realism of the setting and relationships, none of them felt able to publish it. Many of the children's publishers did not publish graphic novels or comics at all; others felt that the book framed the story from too 'adult' a perspective, and was therefore unsuitable to be published for children. On the other hand, publishers of graphic novels to whom I showed it saw it as a book for young readers, and could not consider publishing it on those grounds.

The children's publishers to whom I spoke encouraged me to try adapting the narrative mode I had been working with to the picturebook form. I had not felt satisfied with my early efforts to make picturebooks: developing narratives in that form was not the immersive experience so central to making comics. If comics allowed me access to the absorption so necessary to my storytelling, but were difficult to publish as such, how could I bring that mode of storytelling into the picturebook to develop a viable professional practice? As I began to consider the question more deeply, it became evident that my understanding of both forms was limited. A period of exploratory practice seeking to combine the two would provide a suitable context for a sustained study of their individual strengths and the relationship between them.

In 2013, the Parisian publisher Éditions Sarbacane commissioned me to complete *The Biggest Helping*, which was published in 2014 as *La Soupière Magique*. They also commented that it was unclear whether the book addressed adults or children, but the ambiguity did not dissuade them. Since then, I have also completed a commission to illustrate a picturebook for Walker Books. These commissions and other projects informed the research as it developed, not least by linking studio practice to the commercial and cultural context.

### **3.2 Historical and academic context**

Graphic literature attracted little scholarly interest and analysis until the latter half of the twentieth century, a neglect due principally to its marginal status as 'low' culture. In both British and American contexts, comics and picturebooks have occupied their own niches on the periphery, though they share common ancestry in the illustrated chapbooks of the 18th and 19th century (Kinnell, 1995, p.26-7; Sabin, 1996, p.11). The two forms diverged

from these beginnings according to specific material contexts and intended readerships, shaped by technological and economic constraints and advances (Sabin, 1996; Lewis, 2001; Kunzle, 1973-1990; Gravett, 2013; Bader, 1976).

In other parts of the world, comics and picturebooks have developed along different trajectories, although many techniques for graphic story-telling in each form have been established as cross-cultural conventions thanks to the ongoing international exchange of techniques for visual storytelling (Sabin, 1996; Gravett, 2013). Though the cultural roles and reputations of comics and picturebooks have run parallel in the U.K. and the U.S.A., they are not globally equivalent. In Japan and France, for example, the medium of comics has long been recognised as an art-form, and enjoys a far wider readership (Gravett, 2013). Equally, publishers on the continent have long been more adventurous in publishing picturebooks for adult and adolescent audiences as well as young children (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013, p.101). The histories of comics and picturebooks in these countries are concerned with different developmental models, and are not central to this discussion, which focuses on the cultural context that frames my practice and gave rise to this research. Yet cultures and literatures, especially the visual, are constantly in conversation, and (as is evident from my own career) narrative artists work internationally. I therefore touch on other contexts where it is relevant to do so.

In the U.S. and the U.K., comics emerged in the popular press (Sabin, 1996, pp.11-20). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, their attractions for a young readership, who increasingly had small disposable incomes, shifted commercial attention towards children (ibid., p.27). However, increasingly sensationalist content in American comics, imported and aped by British distributors and publishers, generated moral panic on both sides of the Atlantic in the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century over the potentially corrupting influence of comics on young minds. This pushed the industry to greater self-censorship in the U.S., and led to the passing of the Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publication) Act in the U.K. (Barker, 1984; Wolk, 2007, pp.38-39). It was not until the 1960s that underground 'comix' pushed back by focusing on explicitly adult subject-matter (Wolk, 2007, p.40; Sabin, 1996, pp.7-8), and in the half-century since, the volume and variety of comics for an adult readership has grown, edging into wider public consciousness as 'graphic novels' (Hatfield, 2011, pp.102-103). Such works have, by fits and starts, established it as a potentially sophisticated literary and artistic form.

Meanwhile, picturebooks developed from their cheap origins to meet a growing demand for a literature produced specifically for children. They improved in quality and evolved in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to a considered combination of text and image, in which pictures

were given greater responsibility for carrying the narrative (Salisbury and Styles, 2012, pp.16-17).<sup>4</sup> Since the earliest days of the form, picturebooks for adults have existed, from books such as Kokoschka's *Die Träumenden Knaben* (1908), to the popular wordless narratives of Frans Masareel and Lynd Ward (Sabin, 1996), to more recent examples such as Chris Van Allsburg's *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* (1984) and Armin Greder's *The Island* (2008). In spite of this, picturebooks have been consistently understood as a form for children. Indeed, op de Beeck (2012) claims that the association is so close that our experience of any picturebook is inevitably "interpolated" by childhood. Yet her argument, which frames picturebooks as "graphic narratives that operate in a medium called comics" (2012, p.473), relies upon the possibility of separating form from its genre associations where comics are concerned.

Where doubt has been cast on the value of picturebooks, it is on the grounds that pictures stunt readers' imaginations and retard their ability to read text (Goldsmith, 1984; Protheroe, 1992). However, recent research suggests that visual storytelling challenges and promotes readers' literacy and critical faculties in the broadest sense; that, moreover, 'reading' pictures is in itself a skill, learned at an early stage but important to maintain and develop in a visually oriented culture (e.g. Lewis, 2001; Arizpe and Styles, 2003; Arizpe, Colomer and Martinez-Roldan, 2014; Yannicopoulou, 2010). In general, picturebooks have been consistently valued as a child's introduction to art and literature, to pictorial and verbal codes, and to social mores. As Joe Sutliff Sanders (2013, pp.70-74) points out, picturebooks that are denounced as dangerous or immoral are the exception, whereas all comics have, until recently, been viewed with equal suspicion (see also Gibson, 2010, p.102). Picturebooks are prone to a different set of negative perceptions, being frequent dismissed as whimsical and/or didactic stories suitable only for the very young.

An overview of their respective histories goes some way to explain why the fields of picturebook and comics research in the U.K. and the U.S. developed as separate enterprises. Though the relationship between them and their influence upon one another was acknowledged (e.g. Schwarcz, 1991, p.6; McCloud, 1993, p.81; Lewis, 2001, p. xiii; Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001, p.139; Salisbury and Styles, 2012, p.98), it was rarely studied in greater depth. The initial hesitation to explore their common ground could be attributed to several factors. It seems likely that scholars of each form initially saw the other in the

---

<sup>4</sup> Some of the formal differences between comics and picturebooks were due to the distinct ways that advances in print technology impacted on their production. The advent of half-tone reproduction of colour artwork in the late 1880s meant that word and image were parted in illustrated children's books, thanks to the different paper stock necessary for this kind of printing (Lewis, 2001, p.141-2). The periodicals and newspapers that ran comic strips used cheaper monochrome printing techniques, so that it was possible to print text and image in closer proximity.

light of popular cultural misconceptions (Spaulding, 1995, p.8).<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the particular niches these forms occupied, and the disciplinary backgrounds of early scholars, led to different strategies for reframing picturebooks and comics as fit subjects for research. Naturally, both disciplines have contradicted the assumption that graphic narratives are simplistic and therefore unworthy of critical attention, interesting only as historical documents. Yet they assert the value of such work as literature on different grounds.

Those pioneering the study of the picturebook have allied themselves to the wider field of literature for children, insisting that a book designed for a young audience can be as sophisticated as an adult novel, and that the imagery of the picturebook is a powerful and subtle vehicle for narrative (e.g. Schwarcz and Schwarcz, 1991, p. 6; Marantz and Marantz, 1992, p.xvi; Doonan, 1993, p.7; Salisbury and Styles, 2012, p.50). By contrast, comics scholarship has been keen to 'grow comics up' (Hatfield, 2007). Criticism and theory tend to focus on their potential as a complex medium capable of communicating serious (i.e. adult) themes in a unique way, and emphasise their roots in the satirical broadsheets and adult-oriented comic papers of the 18th and 19th century (Sabin, 1996, pp.10-15), even though comics in their modern form developed as much as a source of entertainment for young readers (Barker, 1989, p.8). The eagerness to dispel the clinging perception that comics are 'kids' stuff' has led to a reluctance to engage with childhood, though children's culture has incontestably impacted on comics for young and old. Only very recently has scholarship begun to "overcome its reflexive embarrassment over the oft-belittled juvenile origins of the medium" (Hatfield, 2007, n.p.). Picturebook research, meanwhile, suffers no such embarrassment, since it asserts the potential artistic and literary merit of children's literature.

Despite the separate development of picturebooks and comics as fields of research, recent decades have seen scholars examining the relationship between them more closely, as well as the strong links to childhood and children's culture they share (see, for example, special issues of *ImageText*, 2007, 3[3]; *The Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 2012, 37[4]; *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, 2014, 5[3]). This recognition is in part due to an expanding middle ground as picturebook makers and comics creators combine techniques and conventions from both forms more freely. Though it increased exponentially in the last decades of the 20th century (Spaulding,

---

<sup>5</sup> Amy Spaulding notes that librarians and critics, powerful arbitrators of children's literature, were slower than publishers and artists to embrace the conventions of comics, thanks to the strength of prejudice against the form. Spaulding (1995, p.8) cites the critic Elaine Moss (1981), who writes: "I approached the picture strip as a narrative convention [...] with some reserve; but I emerged from studying it a convert, having discovered how rich a medium it can be when well used."

1995, p.7-8), this borrowing is not new: since their early days, picturebooks have married vernacular and avant garde influences (op de Beeck, 2010, p.xv), and have at times incorporated certain conventions from comics, such as speech balloons (as in Edward Ardizzone's *Tim* books [1936-1972]) and consecutive panels (in, for example, *Babar the King*, originally *Le Roi Babar* [1933], by Jean de Brunhoff).

The Babar books come from the French tradition, where comics were not condemned with the indiscriminate vehemence seen in the U.K. and the U.S. Such broad conflation of the medium with its trashiest message might easily influence the illustrator, as is clear from Ardizzone's comment (in Spaulding, 1995, p.226-7) that speech balloons, unless used sparingly, might cause a book to "take on the character of a strip cartoon, which would be sad indeed." Ardizzone's comment may be professionally as much as aesthetically motivated, for illustrators and picturebook makers must negotiate the needs of publishers and the opinions of critics and parents. Sanders (2013, pp.81-82) elaborates on this point with an anecdote about Virginia Burton's attempt to blend comics and picturebooks in *Calico the Wonder Horse, or the Saga of Stewy Stinker* (1941). Though it was by no means extreme in its move towards comics, the experiment warranted a justifying article from Burton in the *Horn Book*, and did not meet with the critical acclaim her other books enjoyed.

Greater freedom to integrate the two forms had to wait for a generation of artists and editors raised on comics to grow up and make books in an era when hierarchies of cultural artefacts were no longer regarded as self-evident. Maurice Sendak's *In the Night Kitchen* (1970) is a well-known early example, an explicit tribute to Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo* (published from 1905 to 1926). Comics clearly influenced and inspired other books by Sendak, both in the narrative conventions he borrowed and, Art Spiegelman suggests, in the quality of his drawing (cited in Horsman, 2014, p.327). In the U.K., Raymond Briggs was one of the first illustrators to make work published as picturebooks (and usually referred to as such) using conventions characteristic of comics. Of these, *the Snowman* (1978) is probably the most famous, although the *Father Christmas* books (1973, 1975) represent his first use of panel sequences for story-telling, and include speech balloons, while *The Snowman* is wordless. Shirley Hughes' wordless book *Up and Up* (1979) also uses panels extensively and inventively to tell its story. These and other early examples, such as James Stevenson's *The Seaview Hotel* (1978), Jan Ormerod's *Sunshine* (1981) and *Moonlight* (1982), and Helen Nicoll and Jan Pienkowski's *Quest for Gloop* (1980), opened the door still wider for picturebook makers like Colin McNaught, Quentin Blake, David Wiesner, Bob Graham and Shaun Tan to synthesise the techniques and codes of comics and picturebooks in their work. In fact, Tan (n.d.) credits *The Snowman* directly for



opening his eyes to the possibilities wordless story-telling and grids of panels presented for *The Arrival* (2006).

The formal conventions characteristic of picturebooks have impacted on comics, too. Long-form 'graphic novels' increasingly enjoy production values equivalent to those seen in picturebook publishing, allowing artists to explore well beyond the traditional limits for creators of comics. Black outlines, strong contrasts and limited colour are less ubiquitous than they were when the printing and paper used for comics would not accommodate a more subtle approach. Thus making work in that tradition has become an aesthetic choice rather than an obligation. In its place, the influence of the wider range of visual registers and languages seen in picturebooks is often evident. Full-page/full-spread images are also more common, and are put to uses other than the scene-setting and punchy drama for which 'splash panels' at the beginning and end of a comic were traditionally reserved (Gravett, 2013, p.60).

Paul Gravett (2013, p.61) puts the increase in full spreads and bleeds in western comics down to the growing influence of Japanese comics, where it is a feature of the more varied, rhetorical<sup>6</sup> approach to page architecture characteristic of Manga. Both sources are equally possible, depending on the artist and work in question, since many narrative artists work across different forms and genres. James Stevenson began as a cartoonist for *the New Yorker*, and later brought the conventions and tone of that form to his picturebooks. Similarly, Quentin Blake started as a cartoonist for *Punch* before moving into book illustration, and has used strategies from comics in his picturebook storytelling. Other cartoonists who have ventured into picturebooks include Crocket Johnson, Jeff Smith, Dave McKean, Allen Say and Kate Beaton. Likewise, many artists come to comics from making picturebooks: David Small, Isabelle Arsenault, Shaun Tan, Jules Feiffer and Alexis Deacon are, again, just a few examples.

Of course, many illustrators do not restrict their work to graphic narrative, working across a range of media, and approach picturebooks and comics from contexts as diverse as advertising and architecture. Moreover, every illustrator and narrative artist studies the visual culture that surrounds them, borrowing from and referencing it constantly. David Lewis (2001, p.99) observes: "illustrators in particular tend to be magpie-like in their approach to the world of imagery, taking whatever they wish from the visual world around them, transmuting and making use of it whenever they can." The analogy suggests a

---

<sup>6</sup> 'Rhetorical' is the translation of a term used by French comics theorist Ranaud Chavanne (2011, cited in Gravett, 2013, p.30) to mean the division of the page into different sized panels for emphasis and narrative effect.

random appropriation of anything eye-catching, which belies the purposeful selection underpinning the assembly of visual signs and codes from disparate sources. Yet Lewis' metaphor does highlight the fact that illustrators (or picturebook makers, or comics creators) are masters of allusion. In the course of their career, the illustrator develops a fine understanding of the complex intertextual frame of reference within which they and their readers/viewers operate. That understanding may never be articulated, but it is evident in their work.

The greater scope for combining diverse genres and forms in graphic narratives for children is testament to the distance travelled since comics were considered such a questionable influence. Though many still think of comics as light entertainment, opinions of their value within the book industry and in education have shifted dramatically. Charles Hatfield (2011) suggests that this change is largely due to the popularisation of the term 'graphic novel.' Originating as a way to differentiate between long-form comics for adults and serialised comic books and cartoon strips, some see it as an unnecessary and meaningless aggrandisement (e.g. Wolk, 2007, 62-64; Brunetti, 2007, p.11), but it has undoubtedly communicated the form's potential as serious literature to a broader readership (Rogers and Heer, 2015, p.29). Moreover, the term has been a game changer for long-term publishers of comics, especially smaller independents (Rogers and Heer, 2015, p.31). An assigned category meant such publications could be distributed through book retailers as well as comic shops, increasing opportunities to reach new audiences.

Despite initial hiccups, graphic novels have gone from strength to strength (Martin, 2009), winning major literary awards (Pulitzer, 1992; The Guardian, 2001; Brown, 2013; Xuan, 2016) and taking an array of genres in their stride. As a result, children's publishers have increasingly shown an interest. Thus comics have resurfaced as a 'new' form of graphic narrative for children by riding on the graphic novel's reputation as meaningful literature (Hatfield, 2011, p.103). Thanks to this shift, works for children that clearly reference or use comics are no longer the exception. Roaring Brook Press (now part of Macmillan) launched its comics imprint First Second in 2006, and have been publishing graphic novels, including many European titles in translation, ever since. In 2008, Françoise Mouly (previously co-editor of *RAW* and art editor at the New Yorker) set up Toon Books with the express intention of making comics for early readers, challenging the misconception that comics as detrimental to children's reading.

In the same year, on the other side of the Atlantic, Walker Books created a new senior editorial role to develop its graphic novel output, despite cutbacks in other areas (Horn, 2008). Walker have also published various hybrid books in recent years, including many

of Bob Graham's picturebooks, with *How to Heal a Broken Wing* (2008) listed in the 'Walker Books Graphic Novel Kit 2010' as a "graphic picturebook" (see Foster, 2011, p.72). Flying Eye Books, NoBrow's children's imprint, has been at the forefront of a new wave of small publishers and imprints with high production values investing in adventurous books that push established categories.

It seems likely that the increasing focus on producing attractive, high-quality physical books that are a pleasure to handle and share is part of the book industry's response to the rise of the digital book, which includes e-picturebooks and digital comics (both in the form of self-published web comics such as Kate Beaton's *Hark! A Vagrant* and John Allison's *Scary Go Round*, and digital publications distributed via platforms such as comiXology and mangafox). Digital comics and picturebooks are exploring new territory in interactivity, sound, movement and the 'infinite canvas' that McCloud envisaged (2009). In doing so, they become hybrids in their own right, demonstrating their versatility by learning from computer games, animation, and other narrative media to explore the new format's potential to the full. Indeed, creators and publishers of visual narrative in digital form are again pushing boundaries that have been left untouched by other genres, with publishers of prose preferring to retain as many characteristics of the physical book as possible in the transition to digital. Some (e.g. Abba, 2015; Cooper, 2015) deplore this conservatism as a wasted opportunity, for digital publications are a different form: "it is capable of things that print cannot do, and it cannot do what print can" (Abba, 2015, n.p.). Perhaps because print books possess qualities that a digital book does not, figures suggest<sup>7</sup> that sales of digital books have slowed and even dropped in recent years, and that many readers continue to read both digital and print publications (Long, 2014; Alter, 2015; Jenkins, 2016). What the rise of digital books has done, however, is to focus attention on the materiality of the book as an important facet of our interaction with them. Since print books are distinct from digital books, and look set to survive their advent, the study of graphic narrative in its non-digital forms continues to be relevant, not only to contemporary knowledge but to future practitioners and scholars. As my current practice is concerned with the making of physical books, they are the focus of this study. However, given that digital comics and picturebooks still use many of the narrative conventions developed by their physical counterparts, there is scope to expand attention to digital formats in further research.

---

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that these are difficult to ascertain with complete certainty, since sources depend on publishers assigning ISBNs (Herther, 2015).

In 2015, William Grill's *Shackleton's Journey* (2014) - a book that has been labelled a graphic novel by some (Smart, 2014) and a picturebook by others (Daniel, 2015) - won the Kate Greenaway Medal. Both Smart and Daniel also remark that it speaks to child *and* adult readers, a quality it shares with other celebrated examples of books that have been difficult to categorise (e.g. Briggs, 1973, 1978, 1998; Tan, 2006; Selznick, 2007). The fact that Grill's book largely avoids the narrative conventions of comics demonstrates that the meaning of 'graphic novel' is mutable, increasingly serving as a phrase to describe any substantially pictorial literature that does not easily fit another pigeonhole. Of course, the category and its expansion is only linguistically meaningful in the English-speaking world, but the international sale of rights to publishers worldwide, as well as an increased acquisition of titles from other countries thanks to the success of the 'graphic novel', show how shifts in terminology and their impact on a culture and market as influential as America's can affect publishers and creators globally (Hatfield, 2011, p.104). In such a climate, it is increasingly conceivable for narrative artists to approach making books as Tan does, using pictures and words in whatever combination communicates the story best (Tan, 2010, n.p.).

The growing hybridisation of forms for graphic narrative has naturally attracted the attention of academics with an interest in children's literature, picturebooks or comics, presumably playing a part in bringing them together to puzzle out the relationship. This was the purpose of a symposium at the MLA conference in Seattle in 2012, contributions to which were published in a special issue of the *Children's Literature Review Quarterly* (2012). Part of the difficulty in such discussions is the lingering sense that these categories must be definable. An essentialist stance is difficult to maintain in the face of the variety and fluid interrelation amongst all forms of graphic narrative, a challenge that many of the participants of the 2012 symposium tackle with an awareness that categories and genres are shaped by our psychological inclination to find patterns. Yet the belief that comics and picturebooks can be defined in terms of the formal characteristics of constituent members persists as an undercurrent, whether it is refuted or, as in Perry Nodelman's contribution (2012, pp.436-444), reasserted. Nodelman defines comics and picturebooks in contrast to one another, positioning them as polar opposites, where their 'typical' characteristics accrue a weight of analogous binary values. Thus comics, which he characterises as formally complex, dynamic, fragmentary and disorienting for the reader, are by association unfettered, subversive, capable of conveying subtler and more complex content. By contrast, Nodelman asserts, the picturebook's "duality" - the 'typical' mirroring of word and image, and the audience interaction it anticipates - necessarily produces a didactic, simplistic literature which exercises a questionable power over young minds. Conflating generalised formal characteristics with analogous values provokes the scepticism that "arguments

[which] turn a technological choice (or limitation) into a moral one” (Wilkins, 2015, n.p.) are liable to face. Nodelman is, in other contexts, a sensitive critic and influential theorist of the picturebook form. The article in which he contrasts comics and picturebooks demonstrates clearly the extent to which the attempt to define two forms in relation to one another tends to polarise our understanding of them, even for those who are at other times alive to the variability of individual examples.

### 3.3 “The definitional project”

Defining ‘comics’ or ‘picturebooks’ is far from straightforward: indeed, the shift in meaning of the term ‘graphic novel’ in itself demonstrates how far such labels are defined by their use, rather than corresponding to fixed sets of necessary and sufficient conditions. Yet scholarly debate in comics studies, and to an extent in the field of picturebook research, initially dwelt on definition as a way to establish subject boundaries. In the field of comics, Scott McCloud’s seminal work *Understanding Comics* (1993) played its part in making definition a central issue for debate. Building on Eisner’s description of comics as “sequential art” (1985), McCloud defines them as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in a deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (1993, p.5, **figure iii**). The sequence in which he gradually extends Eisner’s definition anticipates critical comment from the comics community, and the definition has indeed provoked criticism on grounds of its formal inaccuracy or omission, as well as its ahistorical nature (summarised by Aaron Meskin, 2007). Other definitions have focused on the blend of word and image (Harvey, 1979); on comics as, quintessentially, a mass medium relying on print reproduction (Kunzle, 1973); on speech balloons and a “book-size scale” (Carrier, 2000); on sequentiality (Hayman and Pratt, 2005); or on commonalities of style (Pratt, 2011). Some foreground extra-textual factors such as cultural context, production and audience (Sabin, 1996; Wolk, 2007), a position summed up by Martin Barker’s statement (1989, p.8) that “a comic is what has been produced under the definition of a ‘comic’”.

The quest for a single definition stems from a belief that the essence of an art form can and should be brought to light. Meskin questions both the necessity and possibility of such an outcome, disputing Carrier’s assertion that “to interpret an art, we need to know ... its defining qualities” (Carrier, 2000, cited in Meskin, 2007, p.375). Meskin argues that the characteristics we observe should be reframed as typical rather than necessary, since interpreting and evaluating comics requires an understanding of their common qualities, not a definition (p. 376). In this, he agrees with Samuel Delany (1996), who criticises McCloud’s book principally for asserting the possibility and importance of defining comics. Delany, who writes science fiction, sees this as a perennial but damaging preoccupation

in paraliterary criticism.<sup>8</sup> He points out that the “definitional project” is rooted in formalist efforts to establish literary criticism on a scientific footing, a project that has long been discredited in mainstream literary scholarship (1996, p.239).

In picturebook research, Barbara Bader’s definition of the form has become the touchstone for any attempt to outline what we understand picturebooks to be:

“A picture book is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historic document; and foremost, an experience for a child. As an art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning page. On its own terms its possibilities are limitless.” (Bader, 1976, p.1)

It is a comprehensive definition, yet prompts as many questions as McCloud’s. Should it extend to include wordless books (Postema, 2014)? Should it consider non-commercial picturebooks (Little, 2014)? Need picturebooks necessarily be for children (Kümmerling-Meibauer 2013; Tan, 2010)? Bader’s definition is immensely useful, drawing attention to material and contextual factors that are easily overlooked. Even so, a definition of a literary form, however thorough, will never be watertight.

Practice makes us pay attention to the particular rather than the general. Theories inevitably form in response to experiences and observations, but these must remain dynamic and tractable, in service to what is happening in the work. This mode of engagement with the subject of study resembles the kind of close reading that David Lewis (2001) advocates. Lewis (p.61) emphasises wide-ranging diversity and inherent flexibility as “cardinal features of the [picturebook] form.” Because there are few limits to what a contemporary narrative artist can bring to a picturebook, he advises against attempts to define the form, or pigeonhole examples by type, for whilst terminologies can help us build a common language for analysing individual instances, they can also tempt us to apply a label instead of engaging with particularities.

To account for our identification of an untameable profusion of works as ‘picturebooks’, and dissolve the need to establish essential characteristics, Lewis turns to Wittgenstein. In the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), Wittgenstein uses ‘family resemblances’ as a metaphor to suggest that our concepts and categories are formed through multiple

---

<sup>8</sup> Paraliterature is the term used to describe any work traditionally dismissed as non-literary, including comics, pornography, pulp fiction, genre fiction and, presumably, picturebooks.

analogies, many of which are shared with a community. Lewis (2001, p.27) cites the following passage:

“Consider for example the proceedings that we call ‘games’. I mean board-games, card-games, ball games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? - Don’t say: ‘There *must* be something common, or they would not all be called “games”’ but *look and see* whether there is anything common to *all*. - For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don’t think, but look!” (1953, p.31)

As noted in the preceding chapter, Wittgenstein argues that usage rather than inherent meaning determines significance in shared sign systems (languages). Concepts and categories are inevitably blurred, and the meanings we ascribe to them on different occasions come into focus in the context of use. Lewis therefore proposes that the best way to understand picturebooks is to do so on a case-by-case basis:

“I can see at least two routes to finding ways forward in the study and criticism of the picture book [...] both involving a focus upon individual texts in an attempt to accommodate diversity and difference. One route involves careful and patient listening to what children say as they read, the other an equally patient, careful description of individual books.” (1996, p.13)

To these two, I would add the careful description of the making of individual books.

Delany’s conclusion chimes with Lewis’:

“If [...] critics of the paraliterary could retire the notion of definition once and for all, if they could restrict themselves to the far more modest-seeming task of describing our objects of concern [...], we would produce a [...] far more interesting, far less self-crippling, and finally far more powerful criticism—as does McCloud at his strongest—than we usually do” (1996, p.238).

Lewis and Delany echo Wittgenstein’s directive (“don’t think, but look!”), which cautions us not to impose preconceived frameworks on the phenomena we wish to understand. Naturally this is difficult, given that we make sense of our perceptions in terms of such structures. Wittgenstein recommends that we see problems as prompts to look again, rather than contort our thinking to incorporate them into existing frameworks.

### 3.4 A description of formal characteristics

A brief description of comics and picturebooks will help to establish their typical (though not necessary) characteristics and strengths, and identify those that drew me to make comics. My chief aim in graphic narrative is to create an intimacy with characters and to represent the texture of their experience. The medium of comics is well suited to this intention, since its storytelling is potentially:

1. *dramatic*: it uses sequences of panels to convey a sense of movement; text can be pared down to dialogue (**figure iv**); the drawing is simplified and often energetic, making use of caricature and exaggerated body-language.
2. *intimate*: the use of direct speech without the necessity of verbal narration brings the reader closer to events described; the number of panels in itself, as well as the potential for using filmic techniques for shifts and contrasts in framing, enables the cartoonist to create a close sympathy/identification with one or more characters (**figure v**).<sup>9</sup>
3. *nuanced*: subtle shifts in action and emotion are made possible by the slight changes, and the greater degree of control over timing, that the density of represented moments allows (**figure vi**).

These capacities stem from three basic techniques for visual storytelling developed by cartoonists, and established as conventions during the first half of the 20th century:

1. The use of juxtaposed images in frames known as 'panels', a technique that communicates time spatially (Eisner, 1985, p.26, 30; McCloud, 1993, p.7, 100; Groensteen, 2007, p.77). In sequence, these become strips, stacked in tiers for full-page or long-form comics, a structure referred to as a 'grid' (e.g. Groensteen, 2007, p.93-100; Brunetti, 2007, p.45; Gravett, 2013, p.30).
2. A close spatial integration of images and words (where words are used) designed to maximise information in a limited space, through the use of speech- and thought-balloons, text boxes and sound effects, all of which often 'overlap' the image, seeming to obscure it. Words, especially sound effects, are hand-rendered or set in a font that mimics hand rendering, and often given a pictorial character to emphasise the verbal statement/sound.

---

<sup>9</sup> Technically, visual storytelling places us outside characters, even when we have access to their thoughts in thought balloons, since we watch their actions as observers. However, like film, graphic narrative has found many ways to communicate a subjective perspective without necessarily voicing the thoughts of a character, preferring to invite the reader to supply them. This is a communicative quality that both comics and picturebooks often explore. See Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) chapters 3 and 4 for an analysis of picturebook techniques used to convey a character's inner life. The quality of the hand-drawn line is also a powerful tool for communicating psychological states, as McCloud demonstrates (1993, pp.118-126)



3. An economy of line and selective use of detail that privileges clarity and expressive power.

The conventions described above contrast to an extent with those that developed in picturebooks, though as Nel (2012, p 445) points out, these are differences of degree, not of kind. However, picturebook storytelling is typically characterised by:

1. The use of single- or double-page images, either framed or full bleed. The sequence relies on what Bader calls the “drama of the turning page”. William Moebius (1990, p.132) remarks that Bader’s description of spreads as ‘openings’ reminds us of the closing that each one entails. Our understanding of the sequence depends on our memory of previous ‘openings’, which, as Bader highlights, also create the potential for surprise. This is rarer in comics, where sequences are often visible all at once.
2. Story-telling that depends on the interaction between words and images as much as the juxtaposition of visual moments for meaning. Wordless picturebooks are the exception to this, of course. Nel (2012, p.447) observes that the “location of the image/text tension” is different in comics and picturebooks, since layouts in picturebooks often require us to look physically back and forth between words and pictures. Words in picturebooks tend to be typeset, rather than hand-written, although many picturebooks also “play with the materiality of letters” (Nel, 2012, p.448). In picturebooks, text tends to act as narrating voice, often in the third person.
3. The imagery in picturebooks, while often also energetic, expressive and dependent on caricature, tends to emphasise pictures as aesthetic experience as much as narrative medium. Many include a wealth of detail and colour, encouraging the eye to wander around the page in ‘radial’ reading patterns (Bearne, 2004, p.22). The comics page, by contrast, though its overall composition may be carefully considered for its holistic impact, usually encourages linear reading, the visual ‘flow’ through the panels designed to lead the eye. Picturebooks often anticipate that every detail in a picture may be of interest to the audience, especially young readers. Children must learn how to read images (Nodelman, 1988, p.7, 17; Arizpe and Styles, 2003, pp.40-43), but before they become efficient interpreters, they are often more attentive, since all details are given equal attention (Goldsmith, 1984, p.358; Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001, p.261) (**figure vii**). The pictures in picturebooks are sometimes static tableaux, but they can also use space to represent a period of time (**figure viii**), just as a panel in a comic may (McCloud, 1993, p.101).

### 3.5 Graphic narrative as a dramatic art

Even in describing the differences, it is clear how much picturebooks and comics have in common, developing their own techniques for achieving similar ends in the creation of a structure into which the reader's imagination will breathe life. It is therefore unsurprising that the two forms should borrow from each other. Works that combine the comic and picturebook form have existed for some time, as we have seen, and are the subject of a growing number of academic studies. Some concentrate on the output of one artist, highlighting issues of genre, authorship, the reader, and changing concepts of childhood (Lewis, 1998; Panaou and Michaelides 2011; Hunter, 2011; Nabizadeh, 2014; Horsman, 2014). Others take a broader approach, noting the increasing number of category-defying books (Gall, 2015), sometimes with an aim to demonstrate that hybrids constitute a new category, variously labelled 'blended narratives' (Zbaracki and Geringer, 2014), 'fusion texts' (Evans, 2013) or 'graphic picturebook' (Foster, 2011). A few studies concentrate on an analysis of specific formal transitions, as Erica Schnatz (2015) does in her study of the use of speech balloons in picturebooks. Schnatz describes such works as "comics-flavored picturebooks" (2015, p.4), as do Hatfield and Svonkin (2012, p. 429), a phrase that points to the genre expectations that the form's most iconic conventions are often used to invoke.

Amy Spaulding's *The Page as a Stageset* (1995) is, to my knowledge, the only attempt at a systematic analysis of such hybrids. Spaulding focuses on the integration of comics conventions into picturebooks, from the introduction of occasional speech balloons and 'zip lines'<sup>10</sup> to storytelling that is indistinguishable from comics. Spaulding describes such works as 'storyboard picture books' on the grounds that they look and behave much like storyboards for film. She proposes that storytelling in comics differs from the traditional picturebook in its dramatic character, and argues that picturebooks, which increasingly incorporate elements of the comics 'vocabulary', are "growing farther away from illustrated novels and closer to drama" (p.5), noting that theorists and practitioners often link graphic narrative to the dramatic arts. For instance, Shulevitz (1980, cited in Spaulding, 1995, p.6) remarks on "the kinship between picture books and theater or film, the silent film in particular". This forms the rationale for Spaulding's use of Aristotle's theory of theatrical literature in performance as the framework for analysis.

Spaulding and her sources principally emphasise the relationship between what she calls 'storyboard books' (picturebooks that borrow from comics) and film. Thus Kenneth Marantz (1977, cited p.6) describes the picturebook as "more like a film than a painting, its aesthetic force derives from the continuity of the images, from the relationships of the

---

<sup>10</sup> A name for the lines used in comics to show or accentuate movement (Peterson, 2011, p. 99).

pages as they are turned.” Spaulding points to practitioners’ perception of the similarity, citing Shirley Hughes, Tomie de Paolo and Blair Lent. The last two state that they adapted techniques for mapping out film sequences to the making of picturebooks. Ahlberg (in Marantz and Marantz, 1992, p.10), Briggs (2004a, n.p.) and Hergé (in Groensteen, 2007, p.128) have also made the comparison to film, which is equally common in scholarship (e.g. Gibson, 2010; Evans, 2013; Pratt, 2011).

The relationship goes beyond metaphor, for not only are films planned as sequences of static images, they exist materially as such, relying for their motion on the mind’s interpretation of 24 frames a second (McCloud, 1993, p.8-9, **figure iii**). Cartoonists were developing comics to their current form during the same period that film and the picturebook began to come into their own (Moebius, 2011, pp.169-170). As Tappan King (1975, in Spaulding, 1994, p.12) points out, early cartoonists “found that their task was basically the same as that of early film-makers - that is, to render a motion in sequence.” He suggests, like Francis Lacassin (1972), that many of the techniques now common to visual storytelling in comics and film were developed by cartoonists. In a forthcoming study of transmedial influences and narratives, Drew Morton (2016) draws attention to the static, staged quality of theatre tableaux common to early comics and films. The dynamic, mobile framing so synonymous with modern-day cinema was first seen in cartoons (both still and animated) drawn by artists like Winsor McCay, who started his career in comics.<sup>11</sup>

The desire to emphasise that comics have had as profound an influence on film as film has had on comics is partly motivated by a sense that the comparison of the two forms does comics a disservice, producing the impression that they derive from, and aspire to, film. Framing comics as shoddy cinema ignores much of their unique potential, and obscures important differences between them, both from the point of view of the reader (Wolk 2007, pp.13-14; Groensteen, 2007, pp.26, 41; Pratt, 2011, p.115) and the practitioner (see page 54, below). Yet making comics, or indeed picturebooks, can feel like transcribing continuous action, so that the narrative artist’s task, as Ormerod (in Marantz and Marantz, 1992, p.173) says, is to decide “the absolute moment to freeze the frame so you can see what has just happened and what is about to happen”. By doing so, graphic narrative can prompt the mind to imagine the intervening moments, thereby linking the panels or pages. Comics use this method for carrying readers from image to image more than picturebooks do, conventionally. In picturebooks, the ellipsis between one page and the next is often larger: in such cases, narrative text may act as an essential bridge between two moments (Nodelman, 1988).

---

<sup>11</sup> Morton’s book is preceded by a trailer that illustrates this point, which is available at [www.fandor.com/keyframe/watch-100-years-of-movies-from-comics](http://www.fandor.com/keyframe/watch-100-years-of-movies-from-comics).

The verbal narration typical of picturebooks is one of the chief reasons I considered myself a cartoonist rather than picturebook maker. A narrating text seemed to distance me from the story: by extension, I assumed it kept the reader distant, too. Writing such text makes me uncomfortably self-consciousness, whereas telling a story through the dialogue and dramatic action of comics sets up a psychological contact with characters as I act out the drama on the page through the drawing. Blake (2013, p 248, and quoted in Marantz and Marantz, 1992, p.41), and Briggs (2004b, n.p.) both remark that drawing often feels like acting to them, a quality of experience that they see as key to narrative illustration. In a lecture given at Anglia Ruskin University in 2012, Beatrice Alemagna went further, describing herself as actors, director, producer, costume and set designer as well as lighting crew for her picturebooks.

Alemagna spoke of her books as a one-person stage production. Blake (2013, p.50) and Moebius (2011, p.171) likewise speak of the “theatricality” and “staging” involved in making a picturebook. Spaulding (1995, p.6) identifies older picturebooks with the “traditional staged performance” of theatre, with its fixed point of view, contrasting it to the dynamic shifts in perspective and focus characteristic of comics and ‘storyboard books’. These she therefore likens to film, although, as we learn from Morton, older comics and film also retain the relative stasis of the stage, maintaining a consistent distance and point of view. Thus all forms of sequential narrative, including film, have developed a greater eloquence and range in their visual storytelling over the last century, but neither comics nor contemporary picturebooks have wholly rejected the more static framing strategies common to early graphic narrative, however common a more dynamic, narratorial framing may have become.

If that is so, why do I still think of picturebooks as closer to theatre, and comics as related to film? It is true that the larger images in picturebooks lend themselves to depict a ‘stage space’ where our eyes are free to wander, while dynamic framing is more common to comics. Beyond that, I think my mind also links the metaphoric distance from characters that I feel when writing a narrating text, and the real distance between a theatre audience and the performance on stage. Comics, by contrast, seem far more intimate.

The difference is illustrated by Ingmar Bergman’s 1975 adaptation of Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*. The opera is performed on stage, as if in a theatre, and the camera’s eye, though it makes use of close-ups and panning shots, always returns to the fixed perspective of the audience. The scene changes, the page turns, and we are drawn in by the drama again, yet the staging and the camera’s point of view keep us at a distance. During the interval,

however, Bergman shifts the camera's attention back-stage, focusing on the private lives of the actors. The perspective of a secret observer, which the viewer is allowed to occupy, is made possible by a switch to dynamic, 'cinematic' framing and editing. The difference between events officially staged for an audience and the unofficial glimpses backstage epitomises, for me, the difference between picturebooks and comics. This may point towards the type or genre of graphic narrative to which my work belongs. It is at its best in comics such as Briggs' *Father Christmas* (1973, **figure ix**). Yet Ormerod produces a similar effect in picturebook form. Her example helped me to imagine how comics and picturebooks might combine in my work. I was to remember *The Magic Flute* as the study progressed, however, for part of the potential of mingling two forms of graphic narrative is to offset their characteristics, as Bergman does so well with theatre and film.

Elizabeth Parsons also links picturebooks to theatrical performance in a comparison of John Burningham's *Aldo* (1991) and Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days* (1961), although she is chiefly interested in the performance that takes place when we read a picturebook out loud to a (child) audience. Whereas Spaulding focuses on the drama as it seems to play out on the page before us, Parsons is interested in the picturebook as site and script for performance, using picturebook narratology and performance semiotics as joint critical lenses for an interdisciplinary comparison. Her analysis highlights the interesting relationship between the characters portrayed in the book and the performing adult who tells their story, or voices their dialogue. Her analysis foregrounds an important difference between comics and picturebooks that Spaulding's study does not fully acknowledge. The picturebook form anticipates a collective reading and oral performance, whereas comics project a silent reading.

When making comics, the practitioner can assume a reading context that is similar to their own as first reader of their work. Certainly the deep absorption in the narrative I experience when drawing comics is similar to the experience of reading in solitude. Drawing is feeling as well as acting, and creates a strength of empathy that reading a narrative can also evoke. Thus drawing comics can be cathartic: in a talk given at the East London Comic Arts Fair in 2014, Manuel Fior described the strange aggressive elation he felt while drawing a scene in *L'Intervista* (2013) in which teenagers break into and trash a modernist mansion, as if he had taken part in the wrecking. As readers, too, we are invited - even required - to become actors as well as witnesses, since words and pictures only become stories thanks to our imaginative investment. Catharsis was first theorised in Aristotle's *Poetics* as an aspect of audience response (Holub, 1984, p.13), but both making and reading narrative hold the potential for such emotional release.

Such parallels can obscure the differences between the narrative I imagine as I set it down on paper, and the one that the reader construes from the telling. It suggests that visual storytelling is a transferral, the recording of a film playing in my mind for readers to play back in theirs. The use of the word 'medium' to describe the forms and materials of human communication seems to spring from such an understanding. Walter Ong (1982, in Ryan, 2003, n.p.) argues that this term reinforces the impression that information passes from mind to mind by way of a conduit. The jug McCloud (2001, p.6, **figure x**) uses to illustrate the distinction between medium (comics) and content (genres, styles, etc.) reinforces that impression. The image effectively makes his point, but also implies that the reader gets out what the author/artist puts in.

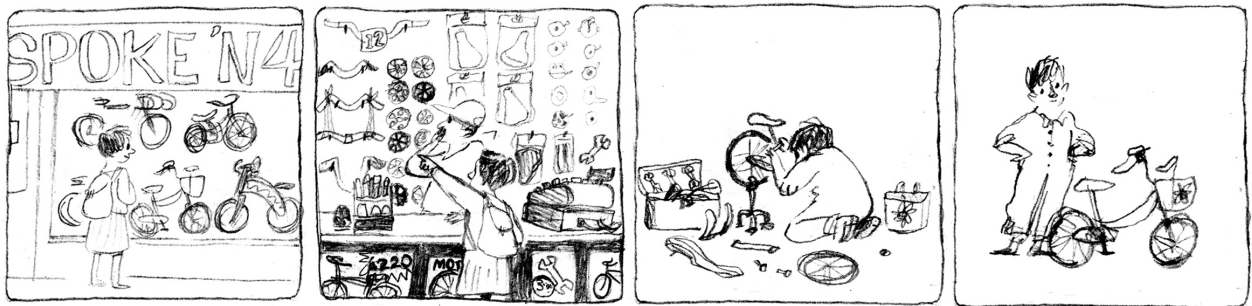
### **3.6 Medium and genre in relation to practice**

In the course of this research, I have gone from an unexamined sense of graphic communication as a transferral of information, poured into and out of a medium, to understanding the process as a form of construction, as set out in chapter 2. This image provides a more concrete model for understanding the impact of genre on the process of making. Recognising the customs of a genre in a work leads us to pay attention to some details and ignore others (Dubrow, 1982, pp.2-3). However, genre conventions are not rules for producing a "type of hackneyed story with predetermined elements in predictable combinations" (Brunetti, 2007, p. 15) (though they can be used thus). Rather, they represent norms of behaviour, which Dubrow (1982) and Fishelov (1993) compare to the social conventions of an institution, and as such they are as essential to our interpretation of a work as its use of formal conventions (Dubrow, 1982, p.2). Thus writers and artists respond to genre conventions, whether they are conscious of it or not, incorporating 'customs' as a means of prompting certain expectations and interpretations in the reader. The word 'genre' in this sense extends to all literature and art (Delany, 1996, p.240), though it is popularly used to denote the highly conventionalised structures of genres such as detective fiction or superhero comics.

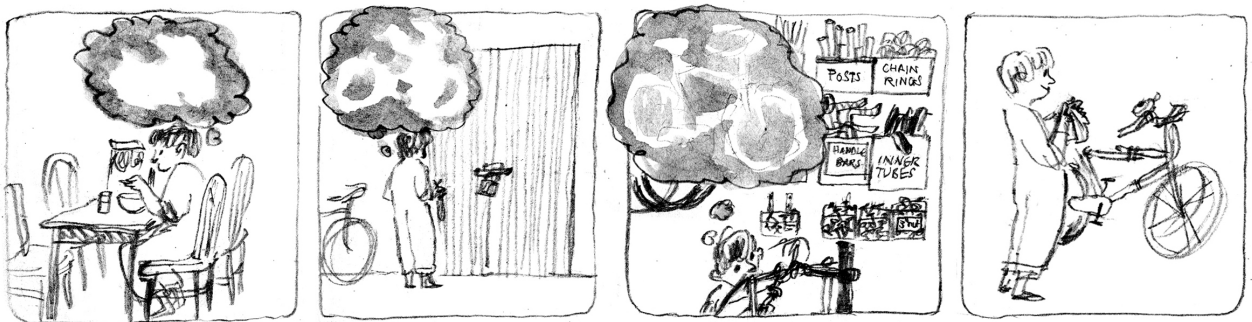
A work's context (from its material form to trailers, reviews, subcultural associations and so on) will affect the reader's genre expectations. Likewise, an artist can be affected by a work's anticipated context, which may suggest a genre as much as it does a form. If the idea for a narrative seems suited to young children, the content may take shape as a picturebook. If, to go a step further back, one sets out to generate a narrative for young children in the form of a picturebook, the influence of that intention on the content may be even stronger, for the structures of a form's familiar genres are difficult to sidestep.

In early attempts at making picturebooks, I gravitated towards narratives that mapped onto familiar story structures and themes, such as losing and finding a parent, or misfits discovering their unique value. These efforts were marred by an over-reliance on existing genre formulas, which led to the conclusion that my story-telling was inherently unsuited to the form. In retrospect, it is evident that I was conflating form and genre in my approach to making a picturebook. The intuitive development of narrative, the thinking through doodling and exploratory making that loosens the connections imposed by the conscious, rational mind, were trapped by templates imposed at an early stage.

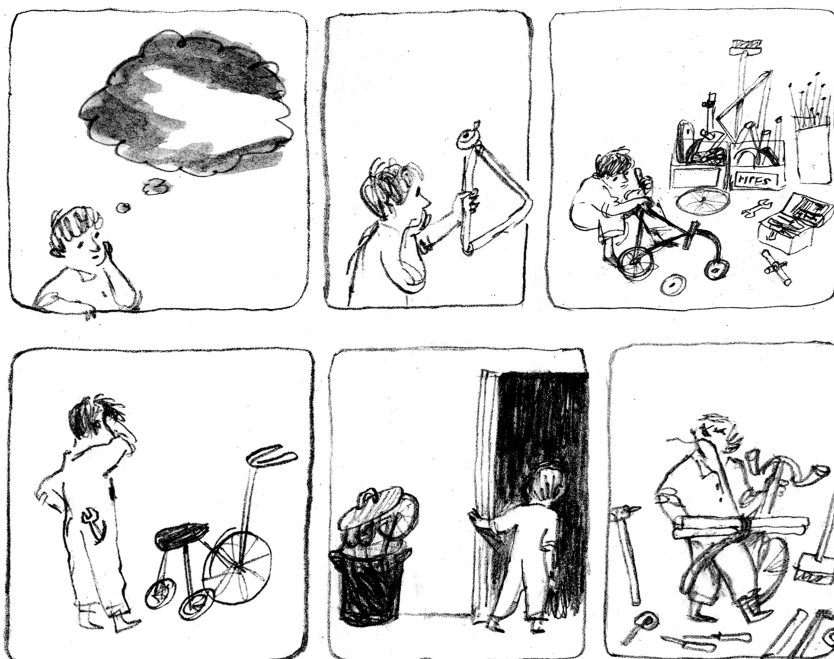
The following sequences may serve to illustrate the different ways in which the tools that genres and forms offer us may affect the narratives we construct. We could picture a situation where narrative is shaped by a genre thus (figure xi):



Putting formal and genre conventions to work in service of our storytelling might be more like this (figure xii):



Finally, trying to express an idea by combining disparate forms and/or genres could be:



(figure xiii)

which, after repeated trials, might get us to (figure xiv):





Comics, as I would usually make them, take shape roughly as the second strip describes, an existing understanding of formal conventions and generic idioms enabling me to improvise with them. When I first made picturebooks, I bypassed the immersion in improvisatory practice so necessary to finding a story, and as a consequence, came to understand the form as one generated by a planned, rational process, perceived as quite opposite to making comics. This goes some way to explain the pronounced difference I perceived between comics and picturebooks prior to this research, despite being familiar with an immense variety of both forms.

## Chapter 4. *The Grand Old Duke of York*

I embarked on this study as a visual storyteller working principally in comics, having found this the medium best suited to the narratives I wanted to make. As discussed in the previous chapter, this preference is largely due to its dramatic, dialogic mode, which does not need a narrating text or 'voice' (though such a voice may be brought into play). This directness allows the creator to efface herself by inhabiting her characters and speaking through them. Playing on the idea that an author must 'find their voice', Molly Idle (Bayliss, 2014, n.p.), a creator of wordless picturebooks, jokes: "my voice is no voice at all." The statement makes sense to me, for though my sequences certainly 'narrate' a story in images, it is the choices made in structuring and editing the images that constitute the narration (though not necessarily a narrator, in David Bordwell's view [1985, pp61-62]). I differ from Idle, though, in that I do use text in the form of dialogue. The work this chapter describes began with a curiosity to see whether I could continue to tell stories using only pictures and dialogue, but in such a way that it would be possible to read them out loud. This was the question that motivated the following exploratory series, though the work revealed more about the nature of graphic narrative and my conception of it than my initial query suggests.

In the initial stages of research, when considering whether any real distinction between comics and picturebooks could be made, the ways that the two are read and used by their readers stood out as an important difference. A comic is usually best suited to silent reading. The conventions of the picturebook form, on the other hand, have developed to be read collectively and out loud. Comics seem to resist it: the use of panels to visually pace out the action in "boxes of time" (Chute, 2010, p.9), so effective in a solitary reading, is undermined when read aloud, whether we attempt to 'read' the sequence by describing or explaining each image, or simply skip over them to the next speech balloon. The dialogue can also be challenging, especially for those who do not relish acting different parts. Together, the sequence of images and words, which is organised to lead the reader's eye from one element to the other in a particular order, loses the interlocking back-and-forth so essential to its timing when one person reads the words while the other looks at the pictures.

Rhythm is of central importance to both comics and picturebooks. Given the different modes of reading they project, it is unsurprising that the emphasis for theorists and practitioners should be on visual rhythm in comics (e.g. Eisner, 1985, p.30; McCloud, 1993, p.67; Ware, quoted in McGrath, 2004, n.p.; Groensteen, 2007, pp.45-65; Chute, 2008, p.455), while the rhythm of the text when spoken aloud, and the way that

performance interacts with the rhythm the images suggest, is a major consideration in the picturebook (Goodwin, 2008, p.106). Editors of picturebooks describe testing the words as a text develops to see how they sound out loud. Eric Carle (quoted in Marcus, 2012, p.71) ascribes Bill Martin Jr.'s success as a picturebook writer to the way he wrote his stories 'rhythm first', testing out the meter before composing the text. The 'sayableness' and momentum of the text is central to the dynamic relationship of word and image in many picturebooks, as George Shannon (1991) points out.

This is not to say that comics are never read aloud, or that picturebooks are not also looked at and read in solitude and silence. Nevertheless, the structures and conventions that are particular to each have developed to accommodate the kinds of reading they project. Sanders (2013), who also identifies this as a key distinction between the two forms, sees in it the definitive answer to the perplexing question of their difference. Sanders (p.59) aims to liberate scholarship from the "definitional quagmire" to which a preoccupation with formal distinctions has previously confined it. Yet his argument is also founded on formal differences, for he distinguishes picturebooks and comics according to the kind of reading their formal and material structures anticipate:

"In general, if the book anticipates a solitary reader who chaperones the words as they go about their work of fixing the meaning of the images, that book is a comic; if the book instead anticipates a reader who chaperones the words as they are communicated to a listening reader, that book is a picture book." (p.61)

Because Sanders' theory depends on the presence of text and pictures, it begins to founder in the face of wordless books (p.77). He is obliged to "define 'words' as broadly as theory allows", but he is evidently uneasy about it, conceding that the explanation is "so counterintuitive that it borders on the perverse." It is based on the theory that "all perception, including that of images, might be an act of verbalisation" (Nodelman, 1988, p.9), a theory that, as Nodelman's hesitance implies, is far from uncontested (cf. Arnheim, 1969; Hofstadter and Sander, 2013, pp.159-161).

Sanders' theory that words 'fix' the meaning in pictures derives from Roland Barthes' essay *Rhetoric of the Image*, where it is labelled 'anchorage' (1964, p.156). Yet Barthes describes another interaction between words and images that seems far more relevant to picturebooks, which he calls 'relay'. It describes their synergy in a sequence where each contributes to the overall meaning. "The words, in the same way as the images, are fragments of a more general syntagm and the unity of the message is realized at a higher level, that of the story, the anecdote, the diegesis" (1964, p.157). Sanders (2013, pp.60-

61) refers to Arizpe and Styles' research, which showed that children reading picturebooks will look from pictures to words and back to pictures again, as proof that the words establish the meaning in the pictures. But their observations might equally suggest that words and pictures act on each other to determine the meaning of the whole, each new page contributing to this dynamic meaning-making. This model does better justice to images and words, allowing for their mutual ability to operate on both connotative and denotative levels. Thus we also arrive at a less contorted explanation for the capacity of wordless books to communicate narrative, as Postema points out (2014, p.314).

Nevertheless, Sanders' estimation of the extent to which the anticipated reading and its context have shaped these forms is justified. Historically, formal characteristics have evolved to meet the specific needs of projected audiences, which, despite changing over time, have been consistent enough to establish certain techniques as conventional.

These conventions may, of course, be borrowed and adapted for works that do not necessarily anticipate the same mode of engagement. Picturebook makers have found ways to use dialogic text so that it can be read out loud without difficulty, as John Burningham does in *Grandpa* (1984) and the two *Shirley* books (1977, 1978). Chris Rashka's *Yo! Yes?* (1993) is another interesting example. Mo Willems' books often make use of direct speech, borrowing the speech balloon from comics to address readers (in *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*, 2003) or represent a dialogue between two characters (in the *Elephant and Piggie* series, 2007-2016). The *Elephant and Piggie* books, which are specifically designed for children learning to read, highlighted for me that reading out loud is reading *with*, rather than *to*. Margaret Meek (1988, p.26), whose writing on literacy is rooted in research and reflections on experience as a reader and educator, makes this distinction with reference to comics, observing that though they are "well-nigh impossible" to read *to* someone, they can be satisfying to read together. Their visual nature certainly invites shared pouring-over and pointing-out (Sabeti, 2011, p.143), and an effective dramatic reading is principally hampered by the fact that the pace and timing is so often determined solely by visual means.

A picturebook is read *with* others (where the reading is collective) whether every reader can engage with both words and pictures or not, for the imagery alone contains a good deal of vital information, some of it hidden. Much of the scholarship that focuses on children's interactions with picturebooks emphasises their equal, if not superior, perceptiveness when interpreting pictures (e.g. Meek, 1988, p.10–11; Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001, p.261; Arizpe and Styles, 2003, p.26). Anticipating this, picturebooks often play a game with their readers, setting them up with contradictory information, addressing

their images to the listener and observer, while the words belong by association to the oblivious reader (Gibson, 2010, p.102). In the *Elephant and Piggie* books, however, Willems gives each reader a part in the text (**figure xv**). This brought a book I read as a child to mind. In Maurice Sendak's *Hector Protector and As I Went Over the Water* (1965), two enigmatic nursery rhymes provide the bare bones for visual narratives. In the sequence that accompanies *Hector Protector*, Sendak gives his exuberant characters speech balloons, the majority of which contain single syllable words rhyming with 'NO' (**figure xvi**). These vocal outbursts from the cast seem, by their very simplicity, designed for those in the early stages of reading to take as their part, interrupting the pat rhythm of the nursery rhyme with the impassioned drama of events unfolding in the pictures.

Where image and word work together to convey meaning, the visual and the verbal will interrupt one another to a certain extent. The continual back-and-forth that the eye and mind perform between pictures and words creates what Groensteen calls an "intermittent, elliptical, jerky" progress, where "each new panel hastens the story and simultaneously, holds it back" (Groensteen, 2007, p.45). In picturebooks, the rhythm of words may seem to push ahead while the images delay us, as Nodelman (1988, p.245-8) observes. In comics, longer captions or passages of dialogue may cause a delay in the pace set up by the images and panels. Skillful narrative artists take these constant interruptions into account and turn them to good purpose (Wolk, 2007, pp. 126-129; Nodelman, 1988, pp.249-250). But, as Nodelman also points out, when a picturebook becomes a collective reading experience, the rhythm of pictures and text acting together is itself changed and interrupted in unpredictable ways (p.263-4). Readers of picturebooks may therefore have several levels of interruption to navigate in interpreting the content.

Thinking of Willems' dialogues and Sendak's playful one-word speech balloons in light of this, I wondered whether it would be possible to design a piece of graphic narrative that expressly invited interruption by writing it into the text. The interruptions would be simple, easy to read and/or to remember. They would be designed to positively invite the child to interrupt the adult reader, and might therefore (I reasoned) be a potential encouragement in the process of learning to read. I set out to explore this idea with a series of hybrids. The creation of a series to enable comparisons was an idea suggested by Matt Madden's *99 Ways to Tell a Story* (2005), itself inspired by Raymond Queneau's *Exercises in Style* (1981). Though Madden's and Queneau's purposes differ from mine, since they use their series to demonstrated the formal impact of genre through pastiche, their work highlighted the usefulness of a constant ground against which different interpretations may be compared.

For subject-matter, I chose what I initially considered a simple anecdote from my own childhood. Given the size of the family, bathtimes usually meant a number of us sharing the tub. When we were washed and ready to get out, my father would come in to dry our hair. Draping the towel over your head, he would take hold of each end and pull it from side to side as you stood between his knees, the action keeping time with a sung rendition of the nursery rhyme 'The Grand Old Duke of York'. Meanwhile, those left in the bath would continue their games. The strong rhythm of the rhyme and the action of drying a child's hair, coupled with the uncontrolled mayhem of children playing in the bath, suggested an interesting contrast and the potential for comedy.

Nursery rhymes have featured in picturebooks since their earliest beginnings, their potential as the basis for more complex visual narrative continually mined since Randolph Caldecott's imaginative interpretations (1878-1886). My series brought the 'Grand Old Duke' from the Mother Goose genre to a different narrative context, where the rhyme becomes one voice among many, a strong basic rhythm under the less ordered cadences of conversation and noise from the bath. I anticipated that this simple domestic story would be straightforward to translate onto paper, but soon discovered that the complexity of representing so much simultaneous activity in the same graphic space stretched my competence. This was fortunate, for it helped me to arrive at a firmer understanding of visual narrative and its unique capacities.

My first drawings (**figure 17a-e**) were very literal, representing and reinforcing the rhythm of the rhyme with an echoing visual rhythm. I combined broad brushstrokes with quick, economical drawings of the figures, intending to embody something of the movement and energy of the action, and underline the beat of the march that is the subject of the rhyme. The quality of mark-making in a still image can suggest movement to great effect, as the work of artists like Quentin Blake demonstrates so clearly. The drawn line is an index of the hand that made it, investing what it represents with the motion that formed it (Atkinson, 2009, p.271).

Looking at these drawings on a page together, I was struck by their relationship to musical notation. Both Eisner (1985, p.26) and McCloud (2000, p.206–207) link the pattern of panels on a page of comics to the passing of time represented by a musical score. In an analysis of sound effects in Manga, Robert Peterson (2009, p.166) remarks that the increasing and decreasing densities of the visualised sounds that run through many Japanese comics are reminiscent of a musical score. Groensteen (2007, p.45) draws a parallel between the "basic heart beat [rhythm] imposed by the succession of frames" and the rhythm or beat in music. The similarity may explain why my first attempt to match the

representation of movement to the irrepressible beat of the rhyme resulted in a kind of score.

A score is designed to be interpreted by those who can decipher and play it as music: each note represents a new moment in time, though it exists alongside others as a pattern in the same time and place, like the panels of a comic. As musicians transform symbolic notation into music, so the mind translates comics into complex, temporal narratives and characters. The parallel reminded me that it is the reading that creates the rhythms. A musical score can be beautiful in itself, but its purpose is to be translated into sound. The composer's creation is fully realised only when the musician interprets the score. The physicality of a comic or picturebook, where what I see on the page has an aesthetic as well as functional quality, can distract from an understanding that the point of transition from page to mind is the place where the story 'happens'. This makes sense of the idea that a static image on the page can have rhythm or pace, for the rhythms are perceived: they play on the mind's agility in making associations and its aptitude for metaphorical thinking. Even if a musical score is unintelligible to us, the graphic pattern still suggests a rhythm.

The interaction of words and pictures in graphic narrative of all kinds has been described as 'counterpoint' (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001; Pullman, 1989, 2016; Schwarcz, 1982), a musical term meaning "melodic lines that are heard against one another, and are woven together so that their individual notes harmonise" (Latham and Sadie, 1993, p.29). Creators of comics and picturebooks often use musical metaphors to describe the 'composition' of words and images that communicate in tandem (Sendak, 1988, pp.3-9; Ahlberg, cited in Lewis, 2001, p.31; Pakovska, 2013, n.p.). Chris Ware (in McGrath, 2004, n.p.) uses it to describe the process of finding the right 'metre' for a comic:

"When I think about [a scene], it replays itself in my mind over and over, almost like a little melody or something [...] It's like I'm writing a piece of music, and I'll keep playing it over and over in my head. And I'll realise that that doesn't sound right or that didn't feel right or that's insincere [...] so I'll have to add or subdivide or something. And then all of a sudden, it will click, and it will seem like a real thing happening".

David Lewis (2001, p.35) is circumspect where this metaphor is concerned, warning:

"Musical analogies [...] risk keeping the words and pictures apart: they might reflect each other, echo each other, weave around each other in a play of voices and images, but hardly ever do they seem to influence each other."

Though this passage, if intended as a description of music, does not match my experience (for in a song sung by polyphonous voices, each note acts on those around it, and is inextricable from the effect of the whole), Lewis is right to point out that “all metaphors and analogies have their limitations and it is always a mistake to push them too far” (p.33). Yet the similarities between a score and a comic suggest a more concrete relationship between graphic storytelling and musical composition than Lewis is willing to recognise, for both rely on a reader/player with enough knowledge of the object, its codes and its intention to interpret it. This parallel is also noted by Ware (quoted in Raeburn, 2004, p.25), whose comics, with their intricate patterns and syncopating visual rhythms, are often reminiscent of unconventional scores.

My first drawings seem to indicate that I was referring subconsciously to the organisation of a score, for I initially intended each line of drawings in **figure xvii.e** to sit above or beside a similarly linear portrayal of the children still playing in the bath, acting as the base stave or rhythm section of a score, in the hope that the two would read as simultaneous events. **Figure xviii** shows the sequence that was supposed to run parallel. The text in speech balloons attempts a looser, more naturalistic rhythm than the nursery rhyme; the change in size of the panels and their merging was similarly meant to reflect the more irregular movements of the children in contrast to the regimental hair-drying in **figures xvii.d - e**.

Yet because the children are represented in close-up throughout, without a preceding image establishing their surroundings, it is not immediately obvious they are in a bath. That decision also distances them from the sequence in **figures xvii.d - e**, where the scale is different. The two sequences do not read as a whole, since it is difficult to establish that both represent events happening in the same time and place. Nor does their juxtaposition highlight the contrast in rhythm, either visually or verbally. Moreover, the speech balloons of **figure xviii** intrude into the action, the words potentially distracting and confusing the reader by placing emphasis on a storyline that is only incidental to the whole. It became evident that I was trying to show too much. My initial drawings of the hair-drying, in which each tug of the towel is represented, are too close and too repetitive to give a real sense of vigorous movement, nor does this complete transcription allow space for communicating what else is going on in the scene.

“Without accent there is no life. The beat becomes monotonous and wearisome. Music without accent lacks coherence, and movement becomes aimless where there is no impulse. Conversely, if every note, word or movement is stressed, the result has even less meaning.” (Driver, 1936, p.34)



Some beats or moments must be accented, others played down or even silenced: silences are what make a rhythm possible. One of the illustrator's key tasks is to identify which moments to show and which to leave out, as Blake (2013, p.78) reminds us. If we get the before and after right, the reader's mind will automatically step in to fill the gap (McCloud, 1993, p.64). It is important to restrain the desire to represent everything, for the human imagination responds better to suggestion than proscription. The judicious omission of details will therefore be more convincing than the necessarily impossible attempt to include them all (Gombrich, 1960, pp.184–185).

In making graphic narrative, I always want to recount the experiences of characters so that they are recognisable and ring true. Characters often seem to reveal themselves in the process of drawing, as if they already have full lives and personalities. Both the former desire and the latter sensation make it easy to think of the process as 'capturing', as if I were a camera. But the stories I tell are often fictional, and even memories cannot simply be captured on paper, as the first attempt above demonstrates: so many elements must be orchestrated simply and clearly to evoke the scene with immediacy in the mind of the reader.

It is useful to think of my efforts to weave multiple strands together to create an integrated whole as orchestration, since it draws attention to the act as one of organising material purposefully for interpretation. When I tell a story in comics, I want to be "a window on something", as Joe Sacco (in McGrath, 2004, n.p.) puts it. I have always thought of myself as effaced in the process, because it is the loss of self-consciousness in the intuitive improvisation of characters and events that allows me to tell stories at all. Sacco is wary of this tendency, however, scrupulously emphasising that events in his comics are idiosyncratic reconstructions by including himself as a character. In the preface to *Journalism* (2012, p.xi), he asserts the possibility of an accurate, well-researched account of events that nonetheless confesses its subjectivity in its use of the hand-drawn line. His suspicion of the claim to transparency, and consequent rejection of an objective or self-effacing stance, critiques the ideal of the 'objective reporter' that was emphasised during his training as a journalist. In this, he is part of a larger movement, often called New Journalism, which is influenced by the understanding that culture and value systems always colour our perception of reality (Macdonald, 2015). It is important not to vanish completely from one's own field of vision: you have to create a window before others can look through it, and it always frames the view from a particular angle. The difficulty of representing this bathroom scene on paper made me fully aware of myself as constructor, rather than neutral conduit.

The attempt to represent a scene so full of motion and sound as a graphic narrative quickly runs up against its static, silent nature, for despite frequent comparisons to theatre and film, visual sequence can only suggest action. A more complex translation must therefore take place to represent events in such a way that the reader's eye and mind interpret motion and sound. As I battled with this, Edward Tufte's systematic analyses of visual data presentation (1990, 1997, 2001) suggested diagrams as a further analogy for graphic narrative. Tufte addresses the difficulty of portraying a "complex, dynamic, multidimensional" world on the "mere flatland" of paper or screen (1990, p.9), drawing his readers' attention to strategies for approaching the task, illustrated with examples of both good and ineffectual design. Though his focus is on communicating data, the parallel with graphic narrative is clear, and has been drawn before. Art Spiegelman (1989, n.p.; 1990, p.V), considers comics to be diagrams for conveying narrative visually in the most effective (and affective) way, clarity being key to communication in comics, which may be poorly printed and read at high speed. Nor is he the only artist to think of graphic narrative diagrammatically. Blake, for example, refers repeatedly to the "diagrammatic" nature of book illustrations (2013, pp. 54, 74, 78).

Tufte emphasises the importance of being specific about what a diagram is designed to communicate. Thinking of the page as a diagram, I returned to the intention that prompted me to select this anecdote, and focused on how the drawing and design could realise it, rather than trying to reproduce the scene wholesale from memory. My purpose at the outset was to create an 'interruptive' sequence that would invite several readers to participate in its reading. Having re-established that aim, another incident from childhood came to mind. On a car journey with the whole family, I remember noticing a chance piece of nonsense created when one person asked another a question, and a remark from a different conversation came at the right moment to sound like an answer. At the time this memory came to me, I had also been playing with replacing phrases in the nursery rhyme with more bath-time-appropriate words (**figure xix**). The two trains of thought coincided when I remembered the potential for speech balloons to visually 'interrupt' one another, or an image, by seeming to overlap on the surface of the page. **Figure xx** was the result. My idea was that the simple words and sounds that overlaid the text of the rhyme could be easily read out loud by children, as interruptions to the adult reading or singing the apparently oblivious father's song. The shorthand drawing and expressive wash denote disorder and motion, their economy intended for clarity and momentum. The pronounced bow of the towel focuses attention on that action, perhaps too strongly, though one reader commented that it gave them a physical sense of the motion of the head as the towel goes back and forth. Principally, though, it was satisfying to have lighted on a strategy that

I felt captured the content and atmosphere I intended to communicate, and did so in a way that seemed suited to the mode of reading I had in mind.

This version is structured like a cartoon strip, where a joke is set up and the fourth 'panel' (in this case vignette) delivers the punchline. I was interested to find out whether the humour of the sequence was sustainable in a form closer to the picturebook. **Figures xxi.a - e** echo Ormerod's slower, more reflective structure, the drawings containing more detail and context. With the leisure of a number of spreads, the story has more time to develop. There is also greater scope for changing the pace and using the white of the page to suggest periods of time or stretches of space. The page-turn comes into its own as a device for pacing as well as suspense and surprise. The fact that the action of turning the page mimics the movement of the towel as it dries works with the pictures to involve the reader physically in the story.

In *Sunshine* and *Moonlight*, Ormerod introduces us to a single child character, and we experience her world from her point of view. My story had previously taken a whole family as its central 'character', but **figures xxi.a - e** attempt to change the emphasis so that the reader experiences the scene from the perspective of the child having her hair dried. I went no further than the first line of the rhyme, for that spread made me wonder if the interactions in the text and the speed of the action would work as well in this context. Having drawn the first part of this sequence in a realist vein, the exaggerations that seemed natural in **figure xx** were jarring, and I could not represent them as convincingly. The comparison of the two renderings is interesting, however, for it highlights the extent to which the structure of the picturebook slows down the tempo of a text, an effect that is heightened where imagery is more detailed.

In reaction to these versions, I considered the possibilities that a less literal representation and more flexible approach to page layout might present. The visual approach to the representation of sound effects that I had explored in **figure xx** led to the thought that the words of the rhyme themselves could perhaps serve a more representational purpose, and at the same time be integrated more fully into the images. **Figures xxiii.a and b** show the resulting sequence. Having realised the importance of establishing a coherent location, I made **figure xxiii.a** in order to set up the spread that follows it. These two pictures, whose quiet orderliness gives no indication of the wild activity over the page, also serve to establish who is singing the rhyme, and the action it accompanies, for neither is depicted or referred to on the following spread. This need not necessarily be a problem: another version uses the anecdote as a starting point rather than trying to represent its different parts (**figure xxii**). However, the set-up for **figure xxiii.b** made a

satisfying use of the two words “oh.... the...” to pull back and create suspense, ready to launch into the body of the rhyme when the page is turned.

Reading parts of this series (**figures xx, xxi.a - e and xxiii.a - b** in particular) with children on different occasions gave me the opportunity to experience the reading-together that I had projected. It highlighted two things:

- 1) I had assumed that the visual solution I had found, which is effective when interpreted mentally in silence, would also work when read out loud. It is true that certain speech balloons or sounds effects placed ‘over’ others, as if they were ‘getting in the way’, can convey the idea of interruption neatly. But in practice, I discovered that there is a difference between a page that communicates the idea of interruption and one that, when read collectively, produces the aural impression of a disordered bath-time.
- 2) The ‘flow’ of the nursery rhyme’s rhythm, which the interjections do not disrupt when we interpret the sequence visually and internally, is difficult to reproduce with other readers, especially where they are encountering the story for the first time. If the sequence were read more than once, so that readers were familiar with the text and their speaking parts in it, the whole might become very satisfying to perform, those with interrupting parts perhaps anticipating the moment of their shout as my siblings and I used to anticipate the three cooks’ chorus in Maurice Sendak’s *In The Night Kitchen*.<sup>12</sup> Yet even so, my arrangement requires some practice to read collectively in the way I had projected, which counted on punctual shouts and splashes to maintain the momentum and rhythm of the rhyme. During one reading, the children I read with enjoyed shouting ‘SPLASH’ so much that they did it throughout the rhyme, louder and louder, with increasing hilarity, so that the reading was in fact very much as anarchic as the crowded bathtime I remember.

These observations brought with them the realisation that I was approaching the task of making a text designed for reading out loud as if I were making a comic. Having recognised that reading picturebooks with others entails a greater and more unpredictable variety of interruptions than those produced by the seesaw between pictures and words alone, I had gone about trying to control what it is beyond the picturebook maker to dictate: how and when those interruptions take place.

Contemplating this irony, I arrived at two conclusions. Firstly, whilst picturebooks and comics may borrow conventions and techniques for visual storytelling from one another,

---

<sup>12</sup> “Milk in the batter! Milk in the batter! We bake cakes and nothing’s the matter!” (Sendak, 1970, pp.36-37)

their function in each context is not necessarily equivalent. To go back to the comparison of a narrative image or sequence to a diagram: when attempting to convey information to an audience, it is important to consider not only what we want them to understand, but also by what means and in what context the diagram is likely to be interpreted. Thus a musical score can be represented in a linear form, on staves, the parts for different instruments equidistant above and below one another without reference to the physical placement of an orchestra on a stage. A piece of choreography, on the other hand, may well require the page to be representative of the space in which a dance is to be performed, for the dancers must interpret the movements physically through three dimensions. Equally, the function and inter-relationship of images and words on the pages of a picturebook, where that picturebook anticipates being performed for and with others, will differ from their function and relationship in a comic that foresees a solitary reading. A composition that uses speech balloons to communicate the idea of a chaotic, interruptive bath-time visually does not achieve the same end where it attempts to be the 'script' for a reenactment of the mayhem.

Describing visual narrative as a script brings us closer to the notion of the picturebook as a performance, part external and potentially collective, part internal and personal to the individuals. Mo Willems, who is an enthusiastic proponent of the book as a play, designed the *Elephant and Piggie* books as scripts for performing together (Willems, 2009, n.p.). These books are very funny, and their humour often depends on maintaining a certain momentum. The economy of text and image, combined with the energy and exaggerated body language in the drawing, help to encourage readers to keep moving at the pace set for them. The lack of any non-essential visual detail does mean, however, that there is little cause to linger on the pictures, no secrets to discover, and few encouragements for non-scripted, non-linear discussion or speculation. The setting is not the point: the relationship between the characters is the focus for all our imaginative engagement. They exist purely on the page, as if on an empty stage.<sup>13</sup> One could say that the script is as open to interpretation as it could be, since we might perform it in any context. Yet in other ways, it is tightly managed, restricting the potential for other forms of improvisation and digression to ensure that the comic timing set up so well in the dialogue, action and turning of the page is not undermined by too great an interruption.

---

<sup>13</sup> *Elephant and Piggie* do now feature in a stage production, *We are in a Play!* (2013), which takes a minimalist approach to staging that chimes with the books, focussing all attention on the two protagonists.

In this sense, as well as in the borrowing of visual conventions such as speech balloons, codified facial expressions, exaggerated physical gestures, and 'emanata',<sup>14</sup> Willems' *Elephant and Piggie* books are closer to comics than many picturebooks, for comics exert far greater control over the reader's experience of narrative time and action. Not as definitively as film does, of course, for we are still free to go through the story at our own speed. We may at any time jump backwards or forwards, or sit back from the story to contemplate individual panels, or the entire page. Yet the rhythm in the layout of panels, the transitions between them, the varying density and complexity of composition, and not least the dialogue and action, are all designed to communicate the idea of a certain pace, of an event, of the relationships between characters and between elements of the narrative.

Picturebooks, on the other hand, often relinquish control, creating opportunities for shared interpretations that are idiosyncratic, whether they are different at each reading or become unvarying intimate rituals. They are scripts for a particular play, but they also create space for play that is improvisatory and unpredictable. Reflecting on my own experiments and the decision to use speech balloons, I was reminded again of Ormerod's *Sunshine* and *Moonlight*, and saw the wisdom in their lack of words. Ormerod uses a single tier of panels throughout both books, the transitions between panels being usually 'moment-to-moment' and 'action-to-action,' to use the terminology that Scott McCloud (1993, p.70-89) develops in his analysis of comics. Less frequent 'scene-to-scene' transitions are restricted to simple movement between identifiable rooms in a family home. The decision to leave this blend of picturebook and comic wordless puts all the dialogue, narration and commentary in its readers' hands. In an interview with Sylvia and Kenneth Marantz, Ormerod makes the following observations:

"People often say of my books that they are crammed with details, when in fact they're not. I think that what people are saying is that they were able to talk with their child about the pictures, there was a lot to talk about. They confuse that with me putting a lot in. I don't actually talk to the child, because I don't remember being a child, and I'm not a very child-centered person. I'm talking to other adults who have a child on their lap. What I think about when I'm doing the work is what sort of conversation they'll be having, so I like to leave space for the child and the adult to bring their own experience to it and talk about it and enrich it in that way. Which is another reason I like to cut back and back. If I put too much in it limits that process." (quoted in Marantz and Marantz, 1992, p.175)

---

<sup>14</sup> Coined by Mort Walker in a tongue-in-cheek piece for the National Cartoonists Society in 1964, this term is now commonly used to describe the visual code or 'short-hand' developed by cartoonists to convey motion and emotion efficiently in comics. Walker has since published an expanded version of his original article, entitled *The Lexicon of Comicana* (1980).

By describing the page as a conversation piece, Ormerod gives us a further analogy to add to the diagram and the script. Each of these highlight a particular function, and each function is essential, for the diagram must be well designed and the script must be well structured for the narrative and its world to form a coherent basis for discussion.

Wordless narratives require a certain level of sophistication in the viewer, for there is much that is coded and conventionalised in a picture narrative. As Judith Graham (1990, cited in Hynds 1992, n.p.) writes with reference to Shirley Hughes' *Up and Up*: "if you are an inexperienced reader, you do not know what to look for in the pictures." It is through negotiating the visual sequence with others (whether adults or children) that we overcome this impediment and learn what Kress and van Leeuwen call the grammar of visual design (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). The most important realisation, however, is that a wordless picturebook is not necessarily designed to be read in silence. In fact, where they are shared, they invite more talk, as Jeff Hynds observes:

"You have only to see two or three children with Jan Ormerod's *Sunshine*, for example, to realise that seemingly wordless books are liable to generate words in abundance! It is quite usual for a great deal of commentary to ensue - questioning, speculating or even arguing. One seven-year-old, encountering the double-page spread in *Sunshine* where the little girl gets dressed, declared 'You can't read this: there's too many words on these pages'." (1992, p.7)

Whether she meant that the number of images would require an inconceivable volubility to describe them, or used 'words' to mean the ideas that the picture sequence conveyed, or perhaps just got muddled, this girl's comments seem to recognise the capacity of pictures to communicate a great deal of complex information, for interpreting them may require much thought and lively discussion.<sup>15</sup>

This being the case, images are more than equal to the task of interrupting the flow of a text. They are certainly capable of provoking enough attention, remark and laughter to obliterate the singing of a glib nursery rhyme. In the most recent development of the series of experiments described above, I have expanded the sequence to the standard 32 pages of a picturebook, exaggerating the bath-time anecdote shamelessly to create a

---

<sup>15</sup> Indeed, such narratives level the playing field, so to speak, inviting interpretations from their audience whether its members can read written text or not. This openness to conjecture and negotiation of meaning is one of the qualities that suits wordless books to pedagogic research projects, such as the study conducted by Evelyn Arizpe with academics working across three continents, in which they shared Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* with groups of children where the majority were immigrants learning to communicate in a new language (Arizpe et. al., 2014).

strong, 'silent' narrative that accompanies the nursery rhyme (see the *GODOY* maquette). Alongside the oblivious father and the child whose hair he towels, both to the left of the gutter, a parallel narrative unfolds on the right. This sequence is wordless, though what it represents is far from silent. As well as the battle between two of the children, there is a third child's apparently unconcerned activity and the vagaries of a rubber duck to attract the viewer's notice. Finally, events in the bath reach a climax, culminating in a pop-up that physically invades the left-hand, orderly side of the spread, drowning out all verbal remonstrance from dad. In the early maquette stage, this new attempt to represent the scene has met with interest and laughter from readers, and has led to interest from a publisher, with whom I hope to develop the book further.

In the course of the series of experiments that began the spiral process of making, reading, reflecting, re-conceiving and remaking, my understanding of comics and picturebooks developed as I perceived them in the light of new analogies. It is tempting to describe this trajectory in terms of a continual refinement or replacement of erroneous perceptions as practice and reflection produce more acute insights. To grow through change, where an advance entails the rejection of what went before, is a narrative whose hold on our perception of progress continues to be persuasive. What has become evident even in the course of this set of experiments, though, is that the process in this case is closer to an accumulation of different perspectives on the nature of the forms I am using to communicate. Coming to picturebooks as a maker of comics, the problems arising in transition from one to the other force me to find alternative means of arriving at effective solutions. Looking at it as a type of score, a diagram, a script and a conversation piece (amongst many other analogies one could fruitfully use for graphic narratives) creates a series of new frameworks, each focusing a different light on the processes by which picturebooks and comics convey meaning and narrative. In turning my attention to the act of reading as a collaborative process, which requires the creator/designer to strip out what is unnecessary judiciously in order to make room for the readers, I hope that I am approaching a solution that accommodates and encourages the unpredictable interruptions that so interested me from the outset.



## Chapter 5. *Rudolphus & Brown*

The project that became *Rudolphus & Brown* represents both the initial stages of this research project and its later developments. In contrast to the series chapter 4 describes, *R&B* was not conceived as a means of investigating a specific difference between comics and picturebooks. Initially, it was a way in to the research, a means of creating a practical context for investigating the interaction of techniques and conventions borrowed from both forms. Pursuing that investigation through a project that took shape according to my usual studio practice generated an environment (i.e. the development of a particular narrative) in which to study and analyse changes over time. It created circumstances where problems and challenges arose according to the natural patterns of practice. Importantly, it also sustained the research by giving it a focus that I felt was inherently worth developing.

In this chapter, I therefore reflect on the process of making a book where the initial stages of development were intuitive, guided only by the intention to combine elements from comics and picturebooks. In **5.1**, I begin by discussing its early evolution, analysing the different types of thinking at work during the improvisatory stage, which culminated in the creation of maquette 1. I reflect on an important piece of feedback at that stage, which informed all further work on this project. In **5.2**, I describe the book's development through stages of refining and editing, which did not begin until after the first phase of the *GODOY* project (see the chronology, p.vii). The interim period enabled me to return to *R&B* with fresh eyes, and with the insights that resulted from work on the *GODOY* series. This occurred throughout the study, as new understandings and insights from the work on one project fed into the other. The discussion in **5.2** is organised around key themes. Some are carried over to this project from the *GODOY* series; others emerged in the course of reflective problem-solving. The particular design challenges that brought these themes to the fore are therefore used to illustrate them.

### 5.1 Germination and growth

*R&B* developed from the point where two separate strands of thought crossed. The first started with a lion, who made his first appearance in a doodle (**figure xxiv**). His dissatisfaction with his shoes immediately suggested a story, but I could not find the right one then. Some time later, I used the disgruntled lion as the basis for a narrative painting that showed him with an anxious shoe-shop assistant (**figure xxv**). That assistant was clearly an early Mr. Rudolphus, who, together with Bruno Brown (a dog), was beginning to appear in sketchbooks. The two featured in a New Year's comic in 2013 (**figure xxvi**),

which cemented their friendship and sparked a curiosity to find out how a narrative might build around them. Mr. Rudolphus' earlier encounter with the lion in a shoe-shop suggested a potential moment later in the book. The rest came about as I attempted to connect these floating elements to form a coherent narrative.

To me, this part of the process is like feeling about in thick mud with a stick. Many of the ideas brought to the surface turn out to be useless, but one hopes, by persistent probing, to find fragments that add up to something worth keeping. Picturebook maker Daisy Hirst called this "the nebulous phase when you don't want to frighten [the story] back under the hedge [...] but you don't want to drag it out from under there too soon, either" (2016, in conversation). A willingness to wait for the whole to come into focus without forcing a shape on it is key.

In chapter 3, I characterise this first phase as an immersive experience. Manuele Fior described the sensation vividly in a talk given at the East London Comic Arts Fair in 2015:

"You go into the tunnel, it's black, then you come out of the tunnel and the page is done. Things get out of control when you're drawing: you just follow."

This loss of self-consciousness appears to prevent an excavation of the thinking at work, since becoming aware of it blocks the process. Fortunately, the detailed record left in sketchbooks provides evidence of the strategies at work as the story and structure of *R&B* gradually came together.

Although Bruno and Mr. Rudolphus first appeared together in an experimental comic, the connection to the lion and his disappointing shoes suggested that their story could potentially be told as a hybrid comic/picturebook. That perceived potential was perhaps partly due to the folk-tales and fables that the lion hints at, stories whose sparse verbal details are well suited to picturebook versions such as Brian Wildsmith's *The Lion and the Rat* (2002). Equally, a world in which some of the people are animals brings works like *Mr Rabbit and the Lovely Present* (Sendak and Zolotow, 1962) and Maira Kalman's *Max* books (1990-1994) to mind, and draws on a long history of anthropomorphised animals in picturebooks and other children's literature. Equally, there is a substantial precedent in comics for human-animal friendships, the closest to Bruno and Mr. Rudolphus being, perhaps, Charles Schultz's Snoopy and Charlie Brown.

It is clear from the sketchbooks and progressive maquettes that the relationship between Mr. Rudolphus and Bruno was the aspect of the narrative that I most often envisaged as comics. The intention to attempt a hybrid is reflected from the outset in sketchbook work,

where segments of the story unfold in snatches of third person narrative, layouts, action sequences, and direct speech in speech balloons (**figures xxvii-xxxiv**). Thus the story had its beginnings in both mimetic and diegetic modes, the conventions I associated with each form influencing the work from the outset. I continued to use pictures and words (whether narration, dialogue or notes) interchangeably as it evolved. Yet the relationship of these two characters is most frequently explored in sequences of moment-to-moment action and dialogue, the working method that is my 'way in' to a comic.

The first words of the story, which remain almost unaltered, are amongst the first ideas to appear in the sketchbook:

“Mr. Rudolphus and Bruno Brown lived next door at number 68 The Crescent.  
They were not very tall. They were not very rich. But they were good friends.”

The close empathy with characters at this stage was not diminished by a third-person, narrator's perspective entering the work. I can still feel Bruno's worried look in **figure xxvii**, for example, as an echo of my identification with him when drawing. There are points in the sketchbook when I seem to be addressing characters directly, trying to fathom what they want and how they feel (**figures xxviii.a - b**). Getting inside characters and acting their parts was, as always, important at this stage in the story's development.

Since my principle method for finding a story is to follow the characters as they evolve, I had assumed the initial animism that invests drawings with lives of their own preceded all other strategies for developing narrative. I therefore thought of it as the whole substance of the improvisatory phase of creation. The evidence in sketchbooks proves otherwise, however, revealing the early stage at which I started to think in terms of form. For instance, the second page of notes and drawings includes a direction to myself to represent a particular scene using a “comics sequence” (**figure xxvii**). The rationale for a switch to panels and dialogue may have stemmed from my perception that comics is a more direct medium, making the reader an intimate witness to the scene, and thereby inviting an empathy for the characters similar to my own when drawing. Comics may present us with more piecemeal glimpses of the places and lives they describe, but we witness so many moments that the representation seems complete. Groensteen (2007, p.11), citing Pierre Sterckx, suggests that the close sequencing of images in comics invites the mind to “nest” in its panels, drawing the pieces together to create a seamless world for the story.

My early consideration of form as an important tool for communicating the emotional content of a scene extends to the impact of page layout. Next to the directive for a “comics

sequence”, I note its potential to show “hurrying, and then their argument” (see **figure xxvii**). The decision to shift to comics seems to anticipate that the quick beat of successive panels will help to communicate the pace of the action, and the building tension that peaks in an angry clash, especially in the context of a book where this busyness is offset by entire single- and double-page images. Evidently, I started considering the formal presentation of events almost as soon as I had begun to generate ideas: from the outset, drawings and written directions for possible layouts appear alongside the sketches and notes where the narrative is evolving. The design of the material object is intimately connected to the development of the narrative itself.

The following strategies for that development appear in the sketchbooks:

- *'Listening' for the story*. This is evident in sections of the sketchbook where the writing is fluid and dialogue-heavy, interspersed with brief, active sketches (**figure xxix**).
- *Getting into character*. The mind and the hand work together to develop a character, their visual representation influencing and reflecting the emerging personality. They are discovered as they are drawn, their actions in the process suggesting narrative possibilities (**figures xxx.a - h**).
- *Using comics as a way to find out more*. There are times when I need more information about characters and their relationships to understand them and their story. Comics are a way of improvising characters' actions and interactions. Letting them 'off the leash' in the sketchbook helps to make them real to me in a way that I find more difficult when writing and drawing in the third person (**figures xxxi.a - b**).
- *Problem-solving through writing* to overcome difficulties with a story's development and coherence. Often evident as lists of questions, bullet points, or brief notes (**figure xxxii**).
- *Doodling* as a way of identifying potential for pictorial incident and humour. The story's developments spark ideas that become doodles, which may contribute to the visual fabric of the book. Thus the world of the book gradually grows beyond the confines of the plot (**figures xxxiii**).
- *Imagining layouts* actively considers the communicability of the story in the process of making it. Such thinking draws on prior knowledge of all forms of visual narrative, which is active in the process of visualising and drawing rather than intellectually imposed as a theory or method (**figure xxxiv**). Where this knowledge-in-practice fails to establish an effective way of communicating, a solution may be found through analytic thinking. The systematic analyses of other artists and scholars can also offer insights that help to solve such problems.

The ordering of these strategies reflects my initial perception that thinking progresses from content to formal structure. However, it is clear from the sketchbooks that all these strategies are in play concurrently throughout the process, although I was unaware of it when immersed in practice.

The fact that I experienced comics as intuitive and content-led while picturebooks felt more formally rationalised may be due to the higher level of constraint that a picturebook usually represents. That constraint was brought to my attention at the end of the first phase of development, during a period when I showed the first maquette to supervisors, peers and publishers for feedback. Their queries and suggestions were all useful, and I return to them in due course. However, the comment that had the biggest impact was perhaps also the simplest: one publisher, on looking through it, commented that it seemed rather long for a picturebook.

Over time, an industry standard of 32 pages has developed for picturebooks. That number can be printed onto a single sheet of paper, and is therefore most cost-effective. There is some leeway: the inclusion of 'separate ends' (meaning that the end papers are printed and glued in separately to the main book block), frees up extra pages. Books are bound in signatures of eight pages, this being the maximum number that can be folded and bound smoothly. Where a story calls for more pages and a publishing house is willing to invest in a longer book,<sup>16</sup> the number of pages will increase to 40 or occasionally 48 pages. However, picturebooks are not often much over or under 32 pages, even in the realm of e-publishing, which is not limited by the economic and physical constraints of printing and binding (Pattison, 2008, n.p.). It may be that 32 pages, as well as being financially viable, is also a good length for the young audience (and those reading to them) that the picturebook traditionally anticipates. Darcy Pattison suggests that reader expectation also plays a role in maintaining the number of pages, not because readers will necessarily count them, but because the scope of the narratives usually encountered in picturebooks is such that readers will notice if an example differs significantly.

Though I was aware of the publishing industry's standard length for picturebooks, I had not taken it into account when creating the first draft of *R&B*, since this exploratory attempt

---

<sup>16</sup> For instance, *Ellie and Lump's Very Busy Day* by Dorothy Clark, a picturebook I recently illustrated for Walker Books, increased from 32 to 40 pages with separate ends during the period I was working out the layouts and roughs with the editorial team. In a blog post on writing for picturebooks, Pattison (2008, n.p.) quotes Francoise Bui of Doubleday Books, who said: "We'll do a longer book if the story needs it. The most likely time is if it's a holiday or seasonal book, that we plan to give a bigger marketing push, and it needs those extra pages to tell the story. If I've acquired a story I really like, and it needs extra pages, I'll do it."

at hybridisation was taking place, in the first instance, in the context of a research project. I therefore put aside the page-count in order to give the narrative as much space as it demanded. This freedom allowed the story to 'grow' first without the limiting impact of an over-awareness of form, which had hampered my previous attempts to make picturebooks. On being reminded of the picturebook's standard length, however, I began to see it as a formative characteristic, which should therefore be taken into account in this study. By understanding the physical object solely as container for graphic narrative, I had overlooked a book's physical qualities and limits as key to the shape and pace of the contents.

The constraint imposed by the standard 32-page length is not often mentioned in picturebook scholarship, although Kümmerling-Meibauer notes its importance to the form's scope and identity (2013, p.104). Picturebook makers, on the other hand, often point to it as a salient consideration. It is given as a rule of thumb in instructional books (Salisbury 2004, p.81) and advice from picturebook makers online (e.g. Pattison, 2008; McIntyre, 2008). It is highlighted in lectures (Carle, n.d., p.60) and in interviews (Goffstein, quoted in Marantz and Marantz, 1992, p. 107). The particular limits of the form act as a stimulating challenge for the maker, creating parameters to work around.

The American picturebook maker M. B. Goffstein has said: "artists truly love discipline. The picturebook is a most beautiful discipline. I love it the way the Elizabethans loved the sonnet" (quoted in Marantz and Marrantz, 1992, p.103). This comparison to the sonnet form is illuminating when thinking through complex issues of form and its impact on the work in progress. If one intends to write a sonnet, so that the form comes first, one's ideas will be shaped by that intention. On the other hand, if the ideas are allowed to grow and, as they develop, the sonnet suggests itself as the best form to give them, the content decides the form. In either case, though, content and form must come together at a relatively early stage in the mind of the poet, and from that moment evolve in tandem, the former shaped by the latter.

Certain subject matter is suggestive of, or suggests itself for, a sonnet: likewise in picturebooks. As readers and as creators, we bring certain expectations to them, but the subject matter is not necessary to the form, which could accommodate other subjects. Here we are entering into a consideration of genre, the impact of which I discuss in chapter 3. Amy J. Devitt emphasises that "formal traces do not *define* or *constitute* genre" (2004, p.11). The reverse is also true. "'Genre' and 'form' are not synonymous", writes Nel (2012, p. 446). Yet a sonnet's form inevitably impacts on the content, its brevity restricting what it can accommodate. For instance, a sonnet cannot convey the events of an epic

ballad except in an extremely elliptical form, and is therefore inherently unsuited to communicate the arduous length of such a tale.

It is interesting to note that, though I began work on *R&B* without any conception of a particular page-count, the limits of a picturebook were evidently in my mind as I made it. Although the number of pages in the first draft exceeded the usual number of pages for commercially produced picturebooks, the story was still on a scale approximating to the shorter form that picturebooks allow, being neither as long nor as complex as narratives I have planned for graphic novel form. Evidently, it is possible to allow a story to grow naturally, improvising around the characters, but to do so in the knowledge that an embedded feeling for the scope and extent of a picturebook will inform the shape of the narrative. Having said that, the process of editing *R&B* to the standard length of a picturebook was challenging, the number of characters and the double narrative arc difficult to communicate effectively in so few pages. That may be as much due to my relative inexperience with the form as it is to my initial unwillingness to limit the contents. Reflecting on the process of generating narrative, Daisy Hirst, a more experienced picturebook maker, said that she also begins with improvisation, but does so with an intuitive feeling for the space available.

Because it expressly avoids a predetermined 'route', improvisation is easily conceived of as complete freedom from constraint. Prior to this inquiry, I understood improvisation and work within constraints as mutually exclusive opposites. Stephen K. Levine (2013, p.125), a performer and researcher, describes improvisation as "the imprévu, that which cannot be seen in advance", but he rejects its association with total freedom of action and self-expression. Citing Jacob Moreno, the founder of psychodrama, Levine (ibid., p.128) defines the spontaneity of improvisation as "an act that is an appropriate response to what is given" rather than pure impulse. Improvisation therefore "carries a dual imperative: to provide direction and at the same time be willing to give up control and follow the surprise of what is emerging." Thus even when the improvisatory process feels unconstrained, it responds to certain guiding rules. For example, in the development of the roughs for *La Soupière Magique* (2014), which were entirely improvised, the initial direction Levine describes is evident in the loose framework provided by a plot outline (a folk-tale), the basic cast of characters, the physical size and shape of the pages, even in the imperative to create an internally consistent parallel world (Eco, 1994, pp.75-96). As a story progresses and further characters, objects and events are established, these act as further 'givens' that one must keep in play.

## 5.2 Pruning

The editing stage is a different experience to the initial improvisatory thinking, when ideas are spun out and brought together in various configurations that may or may not be the basis of a narrative. Editing is a conscious process more akin to solving a series of puzzles. I came back to *R&B* to refine it, having set myself the additional challenge to bring the number of pages down to the standard length of a picturebook. Returning with the benefit of intervening work and reflection, I brought with me an understanding of graphic narrative as score, diagram and script for different kinds of performance. I had learned to see it as an inhabitable space, constructed for and with the audience, which in the case of picturebooks is often anticipated to include multiple readers.

### 5.2.1 Narrative text and speech balloons

I begin with the shift towards a narrating text, which I had previously regarded as a convention that keeps the reader/viewer at a distance from the events it describes. One supervisor commented that the narrating voice in maquette 1 of *R&B* has an 'old-fashioned ring'. Reading it after an intervening period, I can hear that it carries echoes of the books that we were read as children: the tone of writers whose books foreground the narrator as a person speaking directly to the reader, someone who, it is implied, witnessed the scenes they describe. That voice is especially evident in such passages as:

"Perhaps you can imagine what a surprise it was for Mr. Rudolphus and his assistants when the King walked in. They bowed and they bowed and they bowed and they bowed until the King said, 'Enough! I get plenty of that at home.'" (**maquette 1, p.22**)

The narrator in *R&B* is explicitly part of the characters' world:

"Mr Rudolphus and Bruno Brown were next door neighbours when we lived on the Crescent [...] They opened a small shoe shop in Bruno's front room. And my cousin Bobby went to work for them." (**maquette 1, pp.2,6**)

Thus the story takes shape as an anecdote or reminiscence, and the listener is asked to suspend their disbelief far enough to take the narrator/speaker for an eyewitness. Barbara Wall (1991, pp.19, 39-143), whose study uses a narratological approach to examine the address of narrator to 'narratee', identifies such overt narration as typical of 19th and early 20th century literature published for children, especially stories that were originally told by the writer to particular children, as Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories* (1902) were.



Memories of Kipling's playfulness with the aural qualities of words may have influenced passages like: "no-one could choose shoes like Bruno's nose chose" (**maquette 1, p.11**). It is plain from such phrases that I considered the text as one that would be read out loud. The narrative voice was not consciously adopted, but clearly drew on the remembered characteristics of texts heard in childhood, reaching for them in an analogous situation, the basis Hofstadter (2013) suggests for our choices of language and tone (see page 14, above). Realising the impact of other texts on my own, I understand Barthes' apprehension (1953, p.23) that "it is impossible to develop [my writing] without gradually becoming prisoner of someone else's words." Perhaps my instinct to avoid written narrative, and the distancing effect I had attributed to it, stemmed partly from an anxiety similar to Barthes'.

Contrary to my preconceptions, however, the relationship between narrated text and images that is often central to picturebooks is a varied one, capable of many nuances. Picturebooks often use pictures to undermine the narrator's words, or to point out their fallibility, playing on the notion of the adult as the blinkered reader of the text, while the children perceive what is 'truly' going on in the images. This fosters complicity with the implied author/artist, or with characters themselves, as in Burningham's (1977, 1978) *Shirley* books (see Gibson, 2010). Thus the contradiction of word and text can bring viewers closer to characters. The visual may also invite empathy that is reinforced by the defensive assertions of a text that takes on the character's voice. On pages 17 and 18 of maquette 1 (**figure lii**), for instance, the images, in presenting a lonely echo of pages 3 and 4 (**figure liii**) was intended to contradict the statement in the text. As a

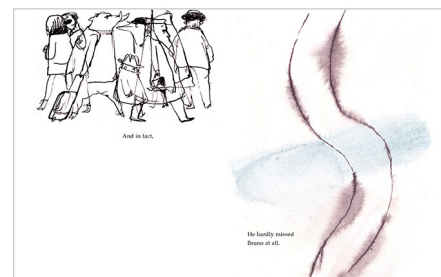


Figure lii

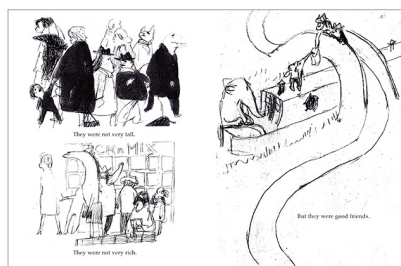


Figure liii

consequence, the words take on the character of free indirect speech, asserting Mr. Rudolphus' stubborn self-sufficiency. Debbie Drechsler's *The Dead of Winter* (1996). In Drechsler's comic, the narrator tells the story of an abortion, the text taking the tone of a story told some time later, slightly off-hand though at the same time trying to communicate its impact on her. At first sight, the drawings seem to supplement the words without being necessary to the story-telling. Yet the space that opens up between words and images is where the story's true pathos originates, for the images show a vulnerability and uncertainty that the words try to conceal (**figure xxxv**). The comic invites readers to recognise both the feelings and the wish to protect oneself by denying or making light of them, so that our empathy is

potentially as deep, perhaps deeper, than it might have been had the narrating voice been omitted. This persuaded me that narratorial text in picturebooks need not have the distancing effect I associated with it.

As is often the case in picturebooks, much of the text was cut as I established the extent to which the pictures can tell the story. The trimming of text is motivated both by the length of the book, which encourages succinct storytelling, and by the intention that text and pictures should collaborate without duplicating information unnecessarily. Visual communication is foregrounded, and the design of the page must create space for the text. This is true in comics as well as picturebooks, though in comics the small spaces that words and pictures must share also motivates an economy with text. Comics place images and text cheek-by-jowl, speech balloons and sound effects often overlapping or obscuring parts of the image, and vice versa. The arrangement is ruled by the 'flow' that a comic seeks to establish - the path that leads the eye between images and text. When managed effectively, this establishes their temporal relationship and creates the illusion of movement at which comics aim (Able and Madden, 2008, pp.28-30).

In a picturebook, the temporal flow that the cartoonists aim to establish through a page of comics is not necessarily the primary goal, although Nel (2012, pp.449-450) observes that picturebook makers do at times compose a page or spread to show time passing (as I attempted to do in **figures xxxvii and xxxviii**). It is more common to identify a moment and use the composition to communicate as much as possible in that moment. The aesthetic of the picturebook is oriented towards the effective composition of the spread. The picturebook maker (and the designer with whom they work in a commercial context) must therefore ensure that words and images are integrated visually, so that they work together in the dynamic of the composition, each given adequate space. My inexperience as a picturebook maker is evident in the layout of text and images in the first iterations of *R&B*, where blocks of text are placed to achieve a rhythm and flow of reading that connects pictures and words temporally, but with little awareness of the visual and spatial impact of text on the images. For example, a supervisor pointed out that the text on page 15 of maquette 2 (**figure liv**) sits heavily on the characters depicted below, stifling the visual rise and fall that the figures in the image describe. I therefore cut most of the text in this scene for the sake of the composition as much as for economical storytelling, leaving the pictures and dialogue in speech balloons to fill the gap in the narration.

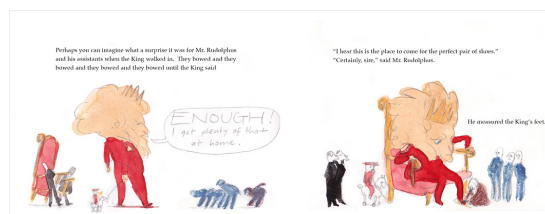


Figure liv

Using speech balloons can be risky in picturebooks. Because they interrupt the flow of the 'main' narrating text, and are understood as elaborative rather than essential, readers may

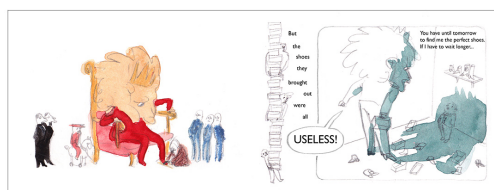


Figure Iv

regard them as optional and skip them. To ensure their contents are read, one must clearly signal the speech balloon's importance by placing it squarely in the line of the reader's travelling gaze. Picturebooks often use speech balloons as a container for dialogue that is signalled in the written narrative by attributive phrases, as in Sendak's *In The Night Kitchen* (1970, **figure xxxvi**). In such cases, the function of the balloons is partly aesthetic. By referencing comics, they also provide a recognised context for the manipulation of the visual qualities of printed words to indicate the volume and even the tone of speech (as in **figure xxxvi**), a technique developed by cartoonists. Speech balloons are used in this way at various points in *R&B*.

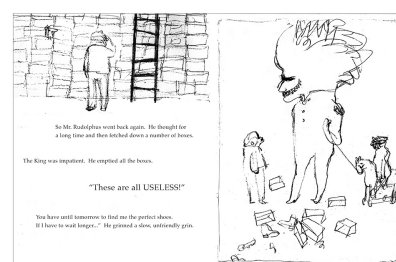


Figure Ivi

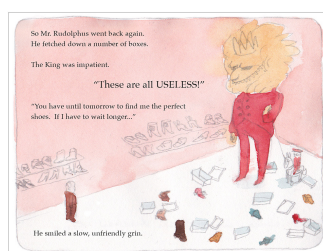


Figure Ivii

At other times, the text shifts from the narrator to direct speech in ways that also make use of the potential to mingle text and pictures in the layout, as on page 15 and 16 of maquette 3 (**figure Iv**). Here the narrator, shifting to a mimetic mode, brings the reader into the scene as a present-tense observer, standing with Mr. Rudolphus as the force of the King's displeasure hits him. The scene is much changed since its first iterations in maquette 1 (p.26; **figure Ivi**) and 2 (p.18; **figure Ivii**), in which the King's demand is framed by narrated text and his mood in the imagery seems more malicious. Coupled with Mr. Rudolphus' diminutive size, this calculating malice is perhaps more threatening, but the King's loss of temper in more recent versions seems truer to his temperament, which is essentially that of the impetuous bully.

Speech balloons are used at other points in *R&B* as part of the pictorial narrative, which takes on the character of a comic as the characters are given a voice. Initially, I illustrated the scene in which Mr. Rudolphus and his assistants search for a perfect pair of shoes for the King with a single vignette (maquette 1, p.28; **figure Iviii**), conveying its frantic activity with energetic drawing and quick washes. During the second phase of

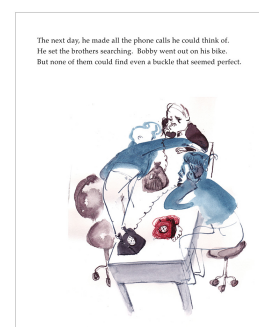


Figure Iviii

development, I started by using a single image again, though this time it included the interior of the shop. The page layout was organised so that the eye would flow from the first block of text to the busy search at the table, and from there to Bobby entering, finishing on his exchange with Mr. Rudolphus, in order to create a sense of time and movement in the picture, so that we might feel we had seen Mr. Rudolphus turn from his phone-call at Bobby's entrance (**figures xxxvii and xxxviii**). Yet these attempts do not quite communicate Mr. Rudolphus' increasing anxiety, or the disorganised search he has set in motion. A sequence of panels suggested itself as an alternative (maquette 2, p.18; **figure lix**). It was imagined as choreographed chaos, the syncopated echoes of speech and actions setting up a humorous rhythm (another attempt to orchestrate mayhem, as in the *GODOY* series). The contrast with the sleepless night on the left of the spread emphasised the pace of the sequence.

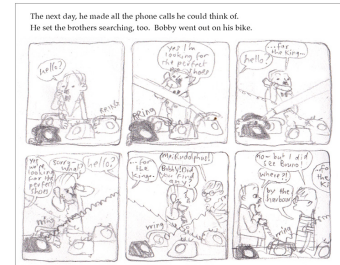


Figure lix

When I showed this sequence to my supervisor and to fellow illustrators alongside single image alternatives, they all felt that the sequence in panels conveyed the scene and its mood better. Yet it presented problems, because it was not obvious to all readers that they needed to read the text in the speech balloons. As I wrote above, readers do not necessarily perceive dialogue in speech balloons to be essential in picturebooks where it co-exists with narrative text. As visual signs, an increasing build-up of speech balloons is in itself enough to signify hurry and bustle, denoting, in the context of this scene, 'they are busily phoning people'. This would be enough, were it not for the fact that, in the last two panels, Bobby gives Mr. Rudolphus some information about Bruno that is important for making sense of what follows. This being the case, how could the eye be more strongly directed to read the exchange between them?



Figure lx

The most recent version (maquette 5, p.19; **figure lx**) attempts to answer this question by mixing formal conventions more overtly on a single page. The final panel of the comics sequence is expanded so that the edges of the page become its outline. The five remaining panels are repositioned to form the beginning of a triangle pointing down from the text to the crucial exchange below. Mr.

Rudolphus and Bobby's conversation is emphasised by increasing their size and that of their speech balloons, towards which their gazes are directed, as is that of the assistant on the left. Though the movement from one mode of story-telling to the other is not yet fully resolved here, the page demonstrates how efforts towards effective communication

generated a novel approach to combining conventions from comics and picturebooks to direct the reader's gaze through a page.

I have mentioned the “comics sequence” envisaged at an early stage to show the build up to an argument between Mr. Rudolphus and Bruno. This sequence also developed to include dialogue in balloons as a means of bringing characters and their actions to life, though in this sequence, their text was not essential to an understanding of the whole. It comprises twelve panels in the first iteration, beginning with a close-up of Bruno reading an order (maquette 1, p.12; **figure lxi**).



Figure lxi

The colour washes behind the drawings, which define each panel's edges, gradually shift from pale beige to vivid pink. Here colour is used for narrative purposes, the intensifying hue intended to imply heightening stress. The ‘grid’ that the evenly-spaced and -sized patches of colour create is regular, or “democratic”, to use Brunetti’s (2007, p.45) term, a division of the page that marks out

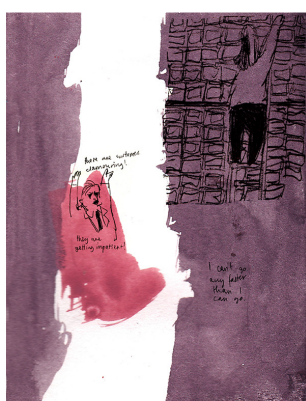


Figure lxii

time in equal segments, creating a fixed rhythm against which the action plays out. Looking back at this sequence, I realise that arranging the panels three to a row creates a livelier tempo: it generates the momentum of a waltz, pulling forward inexorably to the collision and Mr. Rudolphus’ unreasonable explosion. A fourth beat in every row would complete each phrase, setting a more stately pace. This was not a conscious decision, but the result of an intuitive ‘ear’ for the beat in comics that I describe in chapter 3 (pages 23-24).<sup>17</sup> In maquette 1, the argument itself is left to

the following page (**figure lxii**). In retrospect, these two pages would have worked better as a spread, so that one yell could follow more immediately on the other.

On returning to maquette 1 to edit the book, this sequence seemed incongruous in the context of the whole book. At that point, it was the only scene in which I had experimented with a switch to comics, and the shift seemed jarring. Furthermore, the decision to change the format from portrait to landscape made stacked tiers of panels less feasible. I decided to continue to divide the scene over a number of panels in order to contrast it to the sedate scene of the shop floor. It was also important that the scene’s culminating

<sup>17</sup> Other cartoonists also talk about the effect of different grids or numbers of panels on tone and pacing. Michael de Forge, for example, prefers a grid arranged in tiers of two panels for “the ‘call and response’ sort of rhythm they have” (2013, n.p.).



altercation should be given enough build-up to be plausible. Initially, a wordless sequence that used colour to signal Mr. Rudolphus' increasing impatience seemed most effective, its very silence creating an unsettling atmosphere, as if we were witnessing the scene through glass (maquette 2, pp.7-8; **figure lxiii**). Yet despite the use of regularly shaped panels and a fixed background, it was difficult to communicate what was happening.

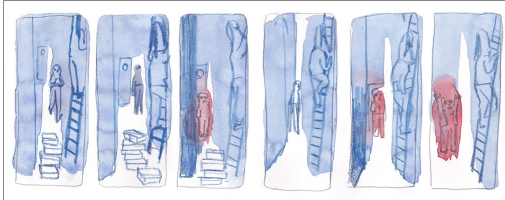


Figure lxiii

I therefore decided to re-introduce speech balloons in order to communicate events more explicitly, so that the reason for Bruno's stress and Mr. Rudolphus' anger is clear (maquette 3, p.p.9-19; **figure lxiv**). Beneath

the sequence of panels, the words "he did it all by himself" are spread out to match and emphasise the rhythm of the panels. Later, when reading the story aloud with children, I found that this did not work well in practice. Moreover, feedback from others suggested that the text was easy to overlook and/or difficult to read when so dispersed. Before such feedback, however, I anticipated that readers would initially bounce from one panel to the next as they read the text under it, the listening and looking participants in a shared reading perhaps carried along by that pace. I imagined that the curiosity awakened by the speech balloons might recall readers to the first panel to read them all more closely, once the pace of the text had established the speed of action in the sequence. Again, though, there is no guarantee that speech balloons will recall the reader, therefore the speed at which the narrative text races the readers across the page might easily hurry viewers as well as readers through the pictures.

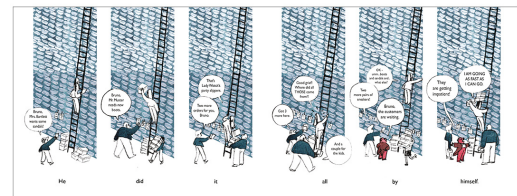


Figure lxiv

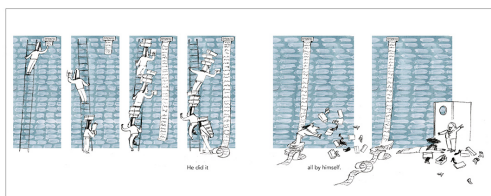


Figure lxv

Since the speech balloon as a symbol immediately denotes talk, perhaps an increasing number of blank speech balloons would be enough to communicate the overwhelming demands made on Bruno. Even

those readers/viewers to whom a speech balloon is not yet a familiar convention would perceive the growing clutter of white shapes crowding in on him. Representing the orders with pictograms, a technique often used in picturebooks (**figure xxxix**), offers another means of communicating with visual immediacy that avoids the necessity for verbal dialogue. Yet these solutions still seemed clumsy and ineffectual. Pages 9 to 10 of maquette 5 (**figure lxv**) therefore return to a wordless sequence that communicates

through mime. Instead of assistants rushing in and out, the ordering system is automated, a simpler way to show Bruno's difficulty. The internal logic of the sequence is also more satisfying, for the excessive demands made on Bruno become the physical cause of the final crisis.

### 5.2.2 *The comics grid*

The scenes of the argument and of the phone calls both use the grid of panels usually found in comics, the visual organisation of a sequence to which I was most accustomed. The argument later became a single tier of panels,<sup>18</sup> which created a firmer continuity with the design of the previous spread. The layout also allows readers to follow the story across the spread, and then over the page, like an extended strip cartoon, without needing to retrace their steps to the beginning of another tier below.<sup>19</sup> The spread is still divided into rectangular panels, however. In the course of making *R&B*, I realised how ingrained the mental habit of dividing a page into panels had become. On deciding to represent a scene as a sequence of moments, I immediately think in terms of a grid. It is a preparatory thought-pattern that other cartoonists share: Thierry Groensteen (a cartoonist as well as scholar) describes the conceptual 'gridding' that takes place as a cartoonist contemplates putting down a sequence on paper (2007, p.41; see also Walden, 2016). The layout of panels always plays a part in how a sequence of events is imagined, and panel frames are usually mapped out, however roughly, before the pictures themselves are drawn. Though rectangular frames and panel sequences are common in picturebooks too, there is no necessity for pages to be laid out in this way, even where multiple moments share the same space. However, it took some time to see beyond the mental grid, which was the result of 'thinking in comics', to the broader possibilities for layout in a hybrid graphic narrative.

Placing each moment in a contained, stackable box is an economical means of communicating a lot of information in a limited space. Briggs (cited in Evans, 2011, p.56) claims this expediency as his original motivation for telling stories in many panels in *Father Christmas* (1973) and for making the panels so small in *When the Wind Blows*

---

<sup>18</sup> The layout echoes that of Jan Ormerod's *Sunshine*, which she in turn identifies as indebted to Brinton Turkle's design for *Deep in the Forest* (1976) (Marantz and Marantz, 1992, p.173).

<sup>19</sup> The zig-zag reading pattern that becomes second nature when we learn to read text adds further complication for young readers who are getting to grips with the left-to-right motion of a book. Understanding that a figure represented many times on the same page is the same character at different moments, rather than many similar characters at the same moment, is not necessarily straightforward either. That misunderstanding is the subject of one of Richard Thompson's strips from the series *Cul de Sac* (**figure xl**). Thompson demonstrates how such confusions may be resolved by explanations from a more experienced reader, although he also indicates the rich narrative potential of a reading that understands each panel to be a box containing a different cat.

(1982) (Gravett, 2013, p.57), although both decisions proved serendipitous. Picturebook storytelling tends to keep page designs more open, often activating the negative space around images as a dynamic element of the composition, and using that composition to lead our eyes through the spread, or else leave us free to explore it. Crucially the space is considered flexible, and adapted to an endless variety of layouts.

Since I was unused to approaching a page in this way, the first iterations of *R&B* stuck closely to the rectangle and the grid. I was not aware of its limiting effect until a breakthrough in the process of redesigning the scene on page 5 of maquette 1. Mr. Rudolphus is proposing to Bruno that they should go into business together, a scene depicted in a single illustration in maquette 1. On the right of that spread, Bobby is already advertising their shop. The two scenes were separated by a page-turn in later versions to indicate a greater interval of time and to keep the nature of the business a surprise. On returning to the book, I decided that the narrative should come in closer to Bruno and Mr. Rudolphus at the point when the plan is first mentioned. The structure of Mr. Rudolphus' speech suggested the way that a person might casually phrase an idea, as if it were just coming to him, when he suggests it to a friend who he feels may take some persuading. Dividing his words across several speech balloons is one way to emphasise that phrasing. At the same time, I wanted readers to experience the relaxed domesticity of their friendship before it is upturned by their new venture.



Figure lxvi

out, the longer pause after "Bruno" that it creates was lost, so I compromised by distributing all the text as captions under the panels (**figures xli.e - f**).

Immediately, I envisaged this as a series of panels, as on page 3 of maquette 2 (**figure lxvi**), and the many sketchbook trials that preceded it (**figures xli.a - d**). I tried placing Mr. Rudolphus' words in speech balloons inside the panels, but the attributive phrase inserted beneath the panels looked clunky and out of place. If I left that phrase

Having determined a layout, I began to work out how to draw these panels. I decided to reduce the colours to a monochrome sepia, experimenting with line and wash (**figure xlii**). When I draw with ink, I try to do it freehand so that the drawing retains the energy of a sketch, sometimes making many versions before the 'right' one. As I did so with this sequence, it struck me that Mr. Rudolphus and Bruno's surroundings could be suggested with a few props, without the necessity of a panel full of background details. Stripping them of their panels transformed them into vignettes, and thereby freed them from the grid. As a result, I saw how to lay out these vignettes and speech balloons as a visual



sequence that would allow the eye to follow the text into, out of, and back into the speech balloons smoothly (maquette 3, page 4, **figure lxvii**, and in subsequent maquettes).



Figure lxvii

Vignettes, meaning in this case illustrations without borders whose edges therefore fade out into the page, have become a common feature of the picturebook. They originate in an early form of book decoration, used in otherwise empty spaces such as title pages, head- or tailpieces, and developed to an art-form by graphic artists such as Thomas Bewick (Lubbock, 2012, pp.127-129). Bewick combined a skill for depicting landscape and its inhabitants with a keen eye for anecdote, and it is the vignette's suitability for anecdotal drawings that has led to its adaptation for narrative illustration. Thanks to its flexibility, the vignette is used in many contexts to create a sequence of images on a page without resorting to rectilinear frames or panels. Works that combine techniques from different forms of graphic narrative often include vignettes as well as panels, omitting unnecessary detail where action is the focus, and including a context where it becomes relevant (**figure xliii**). Switching from panels to vignettes creates visual variety, a contrast that can be used for narrative as well as compositional purposes.

What vignettes do require, however, is breathing room. It can be difficult to decipher them when they are too tightly packed together, let alone understand them as a sequence. Tom Lubbock describes how a vignette interacts with the surface of the page, emerging from it as a three-dimensional space with uncertain edges, playing, as much graphic art does, with the illusory potential of marks on paper (2012, pp.131-134). To communicate a sequence, there must be enough space between drawings for the flatness of the page to intervene, acting as the 'gutter' between two activated spaces. In the course of this study, I made a number of smaller comics, one of which was drawn for my brother when he was ill, laid out for photocopying onto an A4 piece of paper to be folded into a little booklet (**comic 1**). The drawings and dialogic tone were much inspired by John Glashan. Like Glashan, I left the drawings unframed, but as the little A7 pages allowed minimal space for their distribution, the layout looks cramped, and the order of reading is not always immediately clear. By changing the layout to give the images more room and printing it at a larger scale, the story became more legible (**comic 2**). To communicate clearly, a vignette sequence requires more space than a panelled sequence.

Breaking out of the grid impacted on other parts of the book, helping me to consider the division of space more creatively. In maquettes 1 and 2, for example, the pages that read

“They were not very tall.  
They were not very rich.  
But they were good friends.”

are divided into three rectangular spaces. In maquette 1 (pp.3-4, **figure lxviii**), this occurs across a spread. In maquette 2 (p.2, **figure lxix**), however, the format of the book has changed and the sequence is fitted onto a single page, opposite the street scene that

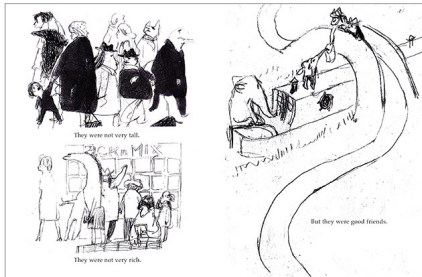


Figure lxviii

previously occupied the first spread. The two pages are evidently not designed as two parts of a whole. The arched white space of the street is blocked abruptly by the illustrations on the right. At first, it seemed best to abandon the division into moments and concentrate on a single, full-page image of their walk, composed in such a way that the words could be spaced out across it. The spacing of these individual sentences was important in order to maintain their measured rhythm (maquette 3, p.3, **figure lxx**), but I found that spacing the text out across a page did not create adequate pauses.

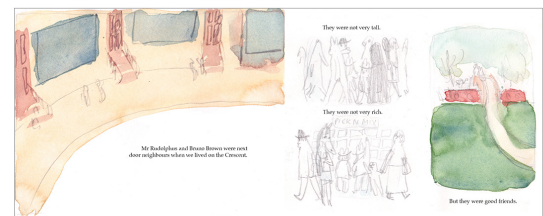


Figure lxix



Figure lxx

Having understood the grid's influence, and the possibilities for communicating a sequence of events without it, I began to look at this page differently. The shift was also influenced by Martin Salisbury's comments in *Illustrating Children's Books* (2012) on the relationship between an image and the space of the page. He encourages picturebook makers to ask themselves

whether “characters need to be represented in ‘real space’: in other words, through the western tradition of creating the illusion of a three-dimensional world, or whether they would work better in a ‘schematic’ way, where the shapes exist primarily in relation to the two-dimensional surface of the page” (2004, p.83). Compositions in picturebooks frequently reflect a greater consciousness of the relationship between areas of colour and pattern arranged on a flat plain. In addition, the pictures in picturebooks are often required to communicate a quantity and complexity of information with great simplicity of design. Considering schematic as well as realistic approaches to the space of the page increases the potential for achieving that simplicity. Many picturebooks switch between the two with relative freedom, often incorporating them within the same image (**figure xlv**).

In maquette 4, I moved Mr. Rudolphus and Bruno's walk back to share a spread with the opening scene, thinking that the composition of the right-hand page could be made to

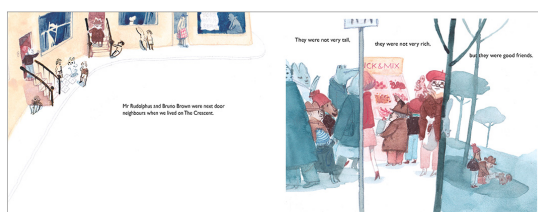


Figure Ixxi

mirror the curve on the left. To that end, I placed the three moments depicted in maquette 1 side by side, exchanging the canal bridge for the round slope of a hill so that the three images together might suggest an answering arch (maquette 4, p.2; **figure Ixxi**).

I also experimented with replacing the gutters separating these incidents with objects, a technique for dividing individual moments that Tove Jansson uses regularly in the *Moomin* comics (1954-1975, **figures xlv**). Thus the representational participates in a conventional code whilst retaining its iconic meaning. Feedback on this solution suggested that the placement of the figures in each section, coupled with the slightness of the objects standing in for gutters, lacked the clarity necessary to communicate the sequence effectively. I therefore returned to a much simpler colour scheme, which I had used in the rough, and made some changes to the crowd of figures in the first two scenes (maquette 5, p.2; **figure Ixxii**).

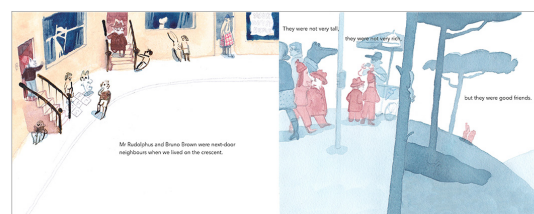


Figure Ixxii

### 5.2.3 The page as diagram

Considering the schematic as well as realistic possibilities for designing a page or spread brings us back to an understanding of the page and its layout as diagram. Grasping the diagrammatic nature of graphic narrative was key to progress in the work described in chapter 4 (p.55). The focus on the specific content and context of communication was informed by the principles of clear, economical design expounded by Tufte (1990 et. al.). Instant legibility is also paramount for cartoonists who emphasise the diagrammatic qualities of comics, and lack of clarity is regarded as a failure of design. Unless, of course, the sequence is intended to confuse: in that case, the diagram must deliberately withhold clarity.<sup>20</sup>

Graphic narratives more often occupy a middle ground between total clarity and deliberate confusion. Many strategies and conventions refined by narrative artists for effective visual storytelling act as a language, as capable of denoting particular meanings as words are.

<sup>20</sup> John Broadley (2010) and Spiegelman (1977) have both used this strategy in their cartooning.

Yet they, too, can suggest a wealth of connotative meanings. The evolution of an unambiguous code for depicting a character's moods and reactions in comics (**figure vlv**) led to a simplification of facial features, now common both comics and picturebooks. This lack of detail, designed for clarity, allows the cartoonist to leave interpretation open to the audience, relying on narrative context, personal experience, and imaginative empathy to aid understanding.<sup>21</sup> Judith Vanistendael's *When David Lost His Voice* (2012) contains many beautiful examples of that allusive potential (**figure xlvii**). Such an ambiguous use of strategies developed for immediate legibility highlights the contrast in the intent of graphic narrative and diagrams in Tufte's sense. Both aim to communicate, but they differ in what they wish to convey. Furthermore, the reader also brings a different kind of openness to graphic narrative than they do to, say, instructions for escaping a burning train, as Rosenblatt points out by making a distinction between 'aesthetic' and 'efferent' reading (1978, pp.23-25). In graphic sequence, images and words (where they exist) usually interact to denote a series of elements and events, but it is their connotative resonances, both individually and as a composite, that invite a poetic as well as rational frame of association.

That words and images both have the potential to connote as well as denote meaning is already clear to us, as are the confusions that can arise when word and image are considered as binary, accruing a series of 'opposite' attributes as a result. Alain Rey therefore proposes that we envisage graphic narrative as "a creative battle between figuration and narrativity, not between image and word" (cited in Groensteen, 2007, p.12). By replacing 'word' and 'image' with 'narrativity' and 'figuration', Rey effectively addresses the fact that not all graphic narratives contain words, whilst maintaining that, even in



Figure lxxiii

wordless narratives, a tension exists between the forward momentum of the story and the lingering scrutiny that pictures often invite. His reframing of the 'battle' also allows that, where there are words, they may at times pull the reader forward, whether through fast-paced dialogue or with an inexorable rhythm, while the images hold our attention (e.g. Blake's *Mister Magnolia* [1992]). Equally, Rey identifies a struggle between pictures as tools for clear communication (their diagrammatic aspect) and as evocative objects open to multiple meanings.

<sup>21</sup> McCloud sees this emptying out of detail as an aid to reader identification with characters, arguing that the lack of detail is the visual equivalent to our inner, schematic sense of our own face when interacting with others (1993, p.35-41)

As I edited *R&B*, there were times when the tension between narrativity and figuration was evident. For instance, the page that introduces Bobby, newly employed by the

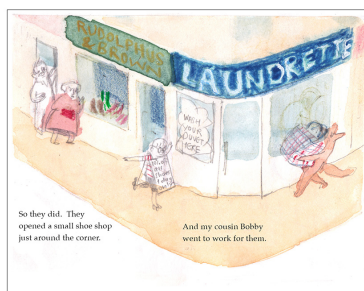


Figure lxxiv

protagonists, includes a populated street scene in the first, second and third maquettes. When showing the book to fellow illustrators and to children, I realised that it was not obvious which figure was Bobby, though the text implies his presence (see maquette 1, p. 6, **figure lxxiii** and maquette 2, p.4, **figure lxxiv**). Because he plays an important part in the story without being constantly foregrounded, I needed to ensure that he was unequivocally identified for the reader. In subsequent dummies, therefore, I reduced the scene to a vignette of Bobby skating across the page (see maquette 4, p.5, **figure lxxv** refined to maquette 5, p.5, **figure lxxvi**). I thought of this as an instance

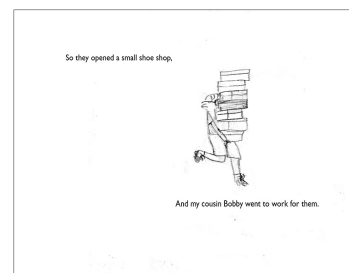


Figure lxxv

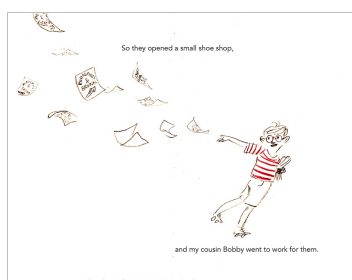


Figure lxxvi

where it was necessary to prioritise clarity of communication over the visual pleasure of a full street scene. Yet stripping this picture down to Bobby skating enabled an emphasis on his energy, on the one hand, and on the other, created a layout where the two pages were no longer fighting for the reader's attention. Bobby zooming across the left carries us into the scene inside the shop on the right, where the reader is invited to spend more time. Thus narrativity and figuration are potentially as supportive as they can be competitive.

#### 5.2.4 Pace

In the picturebook, a form that has developed to anticipate shared readings, pace is set and timing established by various means. Of these, the page turn is key: since each turn of the page acts as a natural pause, the time given to a sequence of events can be determined by altering the number of pages over which it extends. The page-turn also increases the potential for suspense, as Bader (1976, p.1) highlights. Nikolajeva and Scott (2001, p.157) note that words offer a shorthand to tell us that days, weeks or years have passed, a capacity that is often indispensable. Yet Shulevitz points out that, where the story requires us to *feel* the passing of time, experiencing it with the characters, nothing can do so more effectively than pacing out the narrative over a greater number of pages (1985, p.54). Thus the sequentiality of graphic narrative is as effective as text for establishing time passing.



It may become evident, on returning to work-in-progress as a reader or reading it to others, that a picturebook is missing a ‘beat’. In comics, panels are usually subdivided on the same page or spread to resolve such an issue, but a picturebook will often require an extra page to achieve the same (see Frances Bui’s comment, above [page 65]). In order to insert pages, the rest of the book must be shifted around, a necessity that accentuates the sense of a picturebook as puzzle at the editing stage, since the space is limited.

Due to the eventfulness and relative complexity of the narrative in *R&B*, I found it impossible to give each event enough space to do the story justice in 32 pages, so I extended it to 40. My many attempts to divide the narrative satisfactorily across 32, 40 and even 48 pages are included in Appendix 1, page 112. Pacing the book was a continual balancing act between accommodating the narrative within a limited page count and giving each event the space it needed. To take the sequence of events surrounding Bruno and Mr. Rudolphus’ argument as an example, it was difficult to give it an adequate number of pages. In the first maquette, this section takes up six pages (maquette 1, pp.11-16). By the fourth maquette, I had reduced it to two page across a single spread (maquette 4, pp.9-10, **figure lxxvii**), but the pages look cramped, the



Figure lxxvii

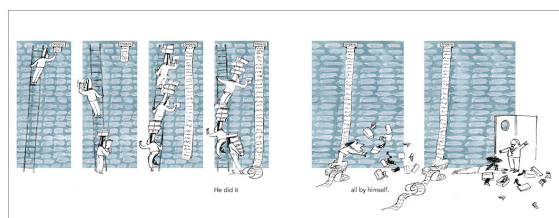


Figure lxxv

drawings and speech-balloon text on the left so small that they are almost illegible, the text on the right evidently ‘fitted around’ the image rather than integrated with it. One cartoonist to whom I showed it felt that this compressed quality added to the sense of frantic activity on the left-hand page. However, the transition from Mr. Rudolphus and Bruno’s argument to Mr. Rudolphus at the breakfast table still seemed too sudden. It needed the pause that a page-turn creates to allow the reader to catch their breath, a turn that would also communicate the change in place and time more effectively. In maquette 5 I therefore extended the sequence across two spreads again (pp. 9-10: **figure lxxv**).

Although the page turn is central to pacing in picturebooks, its effect on timing relies upon the contents and composition of the page. For example, in the above sequence, the terse text, and the acceleration achieved with a sequence of tall panels, carry the reader across the spread (**figure lxxv**). However, the full stop acts with the even number of panels and

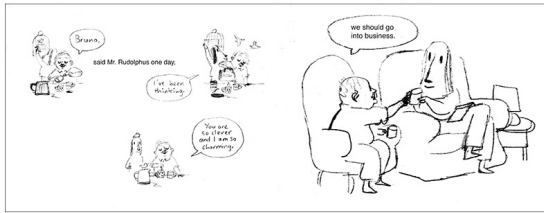


Figure lxxviii

Bruno's heavy landing at Mr. Rudolphus' feet to create a pause before the page turn, so that the change of scene when we turn over does not feel sudden or unexpected. Breaking up a sequence can have the opposite effect. When I showed maquette 3

to another picturebook maker, she commented that there ought to be a delay before the 'punch line' in the sequence in which Mr. Rudolphus proposing his business plans to Bruno (maquette 3, p.4, **figure lxxvii**). She suggested splitting it across a page turn. Doing so creates a momentum towards the page-turn, since we are in suspense for the end of the sentence. The effect is intensified by the splitting of the four 'beats' of this sequence, which propels us towards the fourth beat over the page. However, ending the sequence on the next page means that there is little pause for the transition from the idea of the shoe shop to its reality, since the two are divided only by the gutter. I therefore decided to split Mr.



Figure lxxvii

Rudolphus' proposal across a spread instead, where the beat of the sequence is split across two pages, but allows a pause before we turn the page to the shop (maquette 5, pp.3-4, **figure lxxviii**). Thus, whether we divide contents across page turns or gutters, the book's material mechanisms always collaborate with the design and content of the graphic sequence to establish timing and determine how we approach the edge of the page.

The fact that panels or multiple vignettes can be used to indicate a faster pace is emphasised in works that contrast such sequences to less directive compositions, as Postema (2014, pp.319-320) observes in David Wiesner's *Flotsam* (2006). Two spreads from *La Soupière Magique* serve as another example (**figures xlvi and xlv**). By 'directive', I mean imagery and layouts that strongly encourage the eye to follow a certain route through the page. Of course, panels and other visual sequences are not the only means by which a page can lead the eye. In picturebooks, the composition of illustrations can create strong vectors to direct readers, the route often taking us from (top) left to (bottom) right of the spread, echoing the direction of a Western page of prose (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001, p.153).

Nikolajeva and Scott assert that detailed images slow down the pace because they demand more attention (p.160). However, Little (2014, p. 70) observes that she often experiences very busy pages as fast-paced, and points out that narratological theory distinguishes between discourse time (the time it takes to tell/read a narrative) and story

time (the time as it passes in the narrative). She concludes that a more detailed picture may imply a slow or a fast pace, no matter how long we pause to look at it. Thus emptying the page of extraneous detail may increase the pace, as we saw in Willems' books (**figure xv**), where story time and discourse time are essentially equivalent. However, an emptier picture does not entail a fast story time any more than a full one slows it down: M. B. Goffstein's illustrations, for instance, are often extremely minimal, yet maintain an unhurried, contemplative pace thanks to the steadiness and precision of her line, the frames with which she contains her images, and her preference for strongly centred compositions (**figure I**). Clearly, then, the way a picture is executed affects pace too, as observed in chapter 4 (page 50). A more or less energetic use of materials, tentative or bold mark-making, clean lines and flat colours or rhythmic/frenetic mark-making, the expressiveness of an image (or lack of it) can be used to bolster or accent the pace of a narrative (see McCloud, 1993, p.123-126).

Although panels or vignettes can establish timing visually, their capacity to do so is often diminished when a book is read out loud, as I observed in chapter 4. 'Thinking in comics'

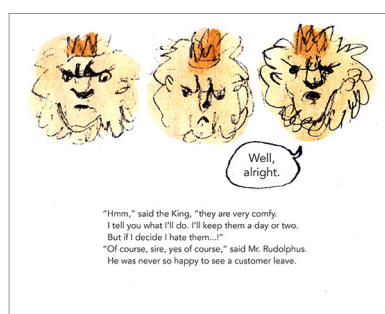


Figure Ixxix

can easily produce a strategy that relies too heavily on the timing of a silent sequence of images. On page 26 of maquette 5 (**figure Ixxix**), the lion's changing expression, the conflicted thoughts they imply and the suspenseful pause they create act as an essential precursor to the text that follows. Yet because this little sequence is largely wordless, it relies on the hesitation we experience when we read first the pictures, then the

words. That hesitation is far harder to convey when one reads these two pages out loud. The best way I found was to pull the faces the King is making at my audience before growling, "well, alright". Thus the sequence begins to act as stage- (or mime-) direction as well as script for the performing reader. If the reader resists or overlooks it, ignoring the King's speech balloon, the sequence may fail to create the intended hesitation, and the text that follows will seem to be missing some vital information. The pause of another page-turn would help to pace this incident better, but that would mean either a further spread in the book, or losing the reveal of the expansive parkland on the following spread.

Again, the difficulty is partly to accommodate the content to the form in a way that will respond well to various reading situations. Such problems can be both infuriating and extremely satisfying to work out, as Sendak clearly felt:

"A picturebook is not only what most people think it is - an easy thing to read to very small children, with a lot of pictures in it. For me, it is a damned



difficult thing to do, very much like a complicated poetic form that requires absolute concentration and control. You have to be on top of the situation all the time to finally achieve something that effortless. A picturebook has to have that incredible seamless look to it when it's finished. One stitch showing and you've lost the game. No other form of illustrating is so interesting to me." (1988, p.186)

Sendak's words mirror Goffstein's, expressing a deep engagement with a form whose complexity is demanding on an intellectual as well as intuitive level. Ormerod echoes their feeling:

"I keep using this word 'urgency'. That's what I call it for myself if I'm intrigued by a problem or a concept. It just becomes terribly important to work on it and the adrenaline starts to flow." (quoted in Marantz and Marantz, 1992, p.175)

Speaking at the Word and Image Crossovers conference in Bydgoszcz in 2014, Iwona Chmielewska offered an explanation for this state of 'urgency', proposing that "setting the boundaries very tight allows the author to go deep." An experienced picturebook maker herself, she also stated: "as an author, you set your boundaries very strictly so you give your reader more freedom." The idea was intriguing, and its truth became clearer in the course of this study. The careful stripping back of a graphic narrative to its most essential moments challenges the picturebook maker to return to her initial intuitive constructions again and again to understand her intent, to refine them, and to bring the whole into clearer focus. The process of stripping away unnecessary elements can open up more space for readers to step in and fill the gaps, the reason that Ormerod suggested for readers' perception that her images are full of detail (see page 59, above).

#### 5.2.5 *To explain, or not*

This is as true of narrative explanations as it is of details. Some statements and events need a proper explanation, and others seem to invite one from the illustrations. For

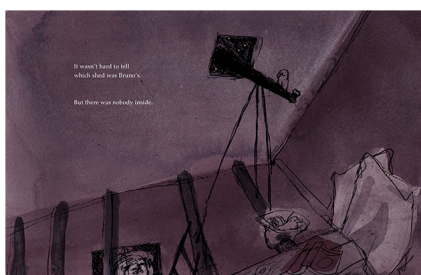


Figure lxxx

instance, after reading maquette 1, one picturebook maker asked me *why* "it wasn't hard to tell which hut was Bruno's" (pp.31-32, **figure lxxx**). Looking to the picture for an explanation at this point is an obvious reaction to the text, given the back and forth call-and-response between words and images so characteristic of picturebooks. Realising that I had not created a

clear enough association between the contents of the hut and Bruno, I made an effort in later versions to strengthen it by leaving more obvious clues in the early scenes of the

book, and including a framed picture of Rudolphus and Bruno on the wall or on a stack of books in the hut.

At other times, however, an explanation is less necessary. In the initial stages of thinking out the narrative for *R&B*, a friend who read its earliest version suggested that the shoe-shop could be in Bruno's front room, so that when it expanded, it would encroach on his living space. This would clarify how and where the shop grew bigger, and at the same time place greater pressure on Bruno, whose eventual escape would be partly motivated by the invasion. It was a neat twist to the story, but very complicated to represent. My

initial attempt used a cut-away diagram of the ground floor of Bruno's house at various stages of the shoe-shop's growth. Opposite is a full 'doll's-house' view of the interior, in which I planned to show the attic, in blue, as Bruno's only remaining refuge (maquette 1, pp.9-10, **figure lxxxi**). This use of a diagrammatic view inside a building was inspired by André Francois' explanatory images

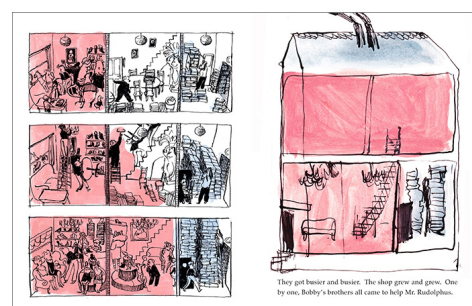


Figure lxxxi

in *Little Boy Brown* (Harris and François, 1949: **figure li**). When I came to edit *R&B*, the spread seemed over-complicated and the sequence of events unclear. On the left, the same floor is represented at three different moments whilst on the right, three different floors are represented at the same moment. How could the sequence of events be communicated fully in the space allowed whilst maintaining a simplicity of layout?

A passage from Burningham's *It's a Secret!* (2009, p.7) suggested an answer. Marie Elaine wants to go out with Malcolm the cat:

“‘That’s all right, I suppose,’ said Malcolm, ‘but you’ll have to get small.’  
Marie Elaine got small and they went out of the house through the cat flap.”

We never find out how Marie Elaine got small, and in fact it is not necessary to know for the purposes of the story. Some readers, when reading together, might discuss it, or raise it later as a question. Equally, though, the nonchalance of the wording suggests that ‘getting small’ is the most natural thing in the world. This little incident helped me to realise that there is room to leave some ‘how’s and ‘why’s unanswered in a narrative, and certainly in a picturebook, where our means are so limited. I therefore changed the sequence so that the page turns from the tiny parlour directly to a palatial outlet across a full spread (see maquette 4, pp.6-8, **figures lxxxii** and **lxxxiii**, and in rougher form in maquettes 2 and 3), where the walls are painted the same salmon pink. Here, the text reads simply:

“The shop grew and grew.  
They hired more assistants.”

An adult reader may assume that their business grew, so that they could afford to move to



Figure lxxxii

larger premises; a younger reader might decide that the shop physically expanded. Neither answer is necessarily wrong or right. It is only important to know that the shop is bigger and busier than before. Thus authorial constraints lead to greater freedom for the reader, as Chmielewska insightfully observed. Not only that: it is possible to use those limitations to create enough space for readers with different levels and

kinds of experience to inhabit a book, and to inhabit it together. A picturebook is a space that one reader can happily occupy by herself, but multiple readers are also likely to congregate there. One cannot make a book that is ergonomically tailored to every possible reader and reading situation: inevitably it will suit some more than others.



Figure lxxxiii

But if the joins are left flexible, it may accommodate a greater variety of interactions whilst still maintaining the “incredible seamless look” of a well-made story.

I have therefore come to understand the links between pages in a picturebook as more elastic than those between the panels in a comic. We have seen that the rhythm and timing characteristic of comics anticipates a solitary reader, whose mind follows the flow of action and dialogue through the page as if watching events played out before them. The performance takes place in the mind, which reconstructs the narrative beat and nuances of timing, moving between pictures and words as the layout indicates. The performance of a picturebook, on the other hand, has a less fixed location and identity, depending to a great extent on the particular context and individual readers involved. One could say that the cartoonist communicates more directly with the reader, relying with greater confidence on a mode of reading that is equivalent to their own. The picturebook maker, on the other hand, must take into account that there will often be a middleman. The book must therefore be scripted to allow for a reading where one person will engage primarily with the words, while others will simultaneously be absorbed by the pictures. The solitary reader of a comic is guided through images and words that interlock with greater specificity to bring the characters to life. That organisation depends on a predictable reading order and pace.

This chapter draws together the experiential aspects of making comics and picturebooks introduced in chapter 3 and the dynamic theorising of practice that chapter 4 describes, considering them both in the light of an analysis that examines the development of *R&B* as a hybrid book. Chapters 3 and 4 both produced conclusions concerning the nature and capacities of picturebooks and of comics, as well as identifying useful metaphors for thinking about graphic narrative in-the-making. This final chapter shows how reflections in the course of ongoing practice revisited those conclusions, supplementing them, contradicting them, or excavating them in an attempt to discover their source. It reflects at greater length on the diagrammatic nature of graphic narrative, considering the effect of the artist's different intentions, and the different expectations of the viewer/reader, on what constitutes 'clarity' in narrative art as opposed to the diagram. It considers pace and timing in the context of comics and picturebooks, and how the conventions each form has established to manage the reader's experience of time are suited to particular modes of reading. Moreover, it addresses whether and how these conventions may be combined to accommodate different reading situations.

I began this study with a sense that the types of thinking required of the practitioner when making comics or picturebooks are distinct. That perception has been modified, on the one hand, by an understanding that the difference is one of degree, since both intuitive and reflective modes of thought are brought to bear on the making of each; and on the other, that the difference is chiefly determined by the degree of constraint the artist contends with, rather than the form the work takes. That constraint has also shown itself to be a means by which space for readers is created, by restricting how much detail can be included and therefore obliging the artist to consider more carefully what is essential and what will be most fruitfully left to the imagination.

## Chapter 6. Conclusions

The research presented in this thesis aimed to develop a better understanding of graphic storytelling by using reflective practice as a site with unique potential for critical study. The thesis has focused on three areas, as outlined on page 2 of the introduction, aiming, firstly, to arrive at a better understanding of the individual characteristics of comics and picturebooks; secondly, to investigate the interaction of those characteristics when combined; thirdly, to examine the conceptual shifts that are often key to solving problems in practice, and their potential to reframe comics, picturebooks, and the relationship between them. Two narrative projects emerged as the lines of inquiry the research would follow. The explorative development and refinement of each project created the circumstances for a sustained, attentive engagement with the material.

This method created ample opportunity to attend, at close quarters, to the workings of the conventions and techniques that characterise comics and picturebooks, and to observe the impact of combining them. As different solutions were compared and contrasted, a firmer understanding of their operation and potential emerged. For example, techniques used to establish pace and timing in comics and picturebooks could be examined in different contexts (see page 83). Iterations that attempted to interlock these techniques in different ways brought out their individual contributions, as well as focusing on their interaction. Failures of communication and unexpected outcomes also highlighted facets that had hitherto been hidden. Thus, the results of applying conventions used in comics to a graphic narrative that I intended to be read out loud demonstrated that what they communicate depends to an extent on how they are read (see pages 56-57). Furthermore, the change in a convention's meaning and perceived significance that often occurs when the two forms are combined became increasingly apparent. For instance, in the context of a comic, the grid of panels usually constitutes a basic rhythm against which changes of pace may be established. Relocated to a work where most pages contain a single image, the strong contrasting rhythm of a grid immediately implies a hastening tempo. Similarly, the hierarchy of text types on the pages of a hybrid work challenges the narrative artist who wishes the contents of speech balloons to be given the same attention afforded to the 'main', narrating thread. In these and other ways, the problems arising in practice demanded a close attention to the interaction of different mechanisms, both when read in silence and when experienced together, out loud. In this, practice has shown itself to be well suited to the development of a deeper knowledge of form.

The study foregrounded the analogical thought-processes at work at every level, emphasising, on the one hand, the associative process by which conventions for

communication are selected in the construction of graphic narrative, and on the other, the mind's capacity to make the links that Schön calls 'generative metaphors', which allow us to reconsider a problem in a new light. Crucially, such metaphors respond to function rather than appearance, arising from a sustained engagement with the mechanisms that drive the work under construction. They therefore surface alternative patterns of association to those we form or receive as non-practitioners. In doing so, they highlight that categories do not constitute absolute values, but represent one way of organising the phenomena we encounter. How we organise the world depends on our experience or expertise and our approach at a particular moment. A farmer, a painter and a geologist will each perceive different features and organising principles in a landscape, and each perspective adds to our understanding of the whole. In addition, multiple perspectives serve to highlight that categories are mental constructs, many of which are embedded in language and culture, acting as a network of connections superimposed on the world we encounter. Sustained reflective practice can help us to reformulate those connections. The record of that process offers alternative constructions that are potentially useful to others as well as to the practitioner herself.

Understanding that reading context impacts on the function of the tools and mechanisms we use to make graphic narrative represented a breakthrough for this inquiry. In the wider academic discussion, the different reading modes anticipated by picturebooks and comics are remarked, but the implications of that difference have not been explored in any depth. This is true even in Spaulding's study, for though it occasionally reflects on the relative ease with which 'storyboard' picturebooks may be read out loud, it does not investigate what this may reveal about the capacities and limitations of formal conventions designed for one reading context when they are brought into another. By contrast, the analysis of practice presented here highlights context of use and interpretation as key to determining what is communicated.

The results of this study support Sanders' view (2013) that comics and picturebooks have developed formal conventions better suited to certain kinds of reading than to others. That development, as Sanders also observes, was influenced by historic cultural factors that determined the use and audiences for which these two forms have been refined. One could argue that formal and genre conventions have developed to a point where it is possible for narrative artists to make a picturebook or a comic and genuinely never consider the reader or their reading. Since the form is fit for purpose, any work that adheres to that form will be, too. This may explain why hybrids tend to be less obviously suited to either shared or silent reading, for when mixing conventions (as I found), one

may imply different modes of reading even within a single page, or present material that is more challenging to read out loud to others.

Sanders claims that, given their historic development towards certain modes of reading, the two forms may be clearly distinguished by the reading they 'anticipate'. I began this study with an understanding similar to Sanders', confirming the difference between picturebooks and comics by thinking of the former as works to be read out loud and the latter as silent reading. The focused engagement with the particular that practice demands eroded that distinction. It has become clear that, though it is tempting to use anticipated reading modes as an algorithm for distinguishing between picturebooks and comics, reading-out-loud and reading-in-silence do not map so neatly onto these forms. Some picturebooks are well suited to reading in silence and alone, while some comics are effective scripts for collective performance. Many can be read in a number of ways: it depends on the individual work rather than the category to which we assign it. We might therefore look for the kinds of reading a work *accommodates*, as well as anticipates, for whilst works may suggest a particular reading mode and context, many of them can be adapted to a variety of reading practices, gaining a different emphasis in meaning from each. This inquiry therefore demonstrates that meaning is, in Iser's words, "an effect to be experienced", not an 'object to be defined'" (1978, p.10).

In chapter 2, I cite Postema's suggestion that we think of the categories 'comics' and 'picturebooks' on a sliding scale, rather than as distinct groups. In the later stages of this study, I came to the conclusion that this sliding scale is just one of those that might productively be used in the study of graphic narrative. The spectrum of reading modes discussed above is another. One could use such a spectrum to consider the kind of engagement a work seems to anticipate, or start from the premise that a graphic narrative may accommodate different reading modes and contexts, and examine their impact on the meaning. In and of itself, this spectrum or schema is a reminder that a single work may be experienced in a number of ways.

Equally, one could analyse and compare graphic narrative according to the level and type of constraint on the artist. This thesis focuses on the picturebook form as a severer discipline for the artist, describing comics as a form with greater flexibility and scope for accommodating content. It concludes that the restraints a picturebook places on the artist create the circumstances for making a book that allows readers more space to inhabit it as they will. That conclusion chimed with my prior experience: initially, I conceived of constraint and improvisation as separate, even opposite, conditions for practice, associating the former with picturebooks, and the latter with comics. To an extent, the

greater ellipses between illustrated moments that the picturebook conventionally dictates do require a greater degree of conscious consideration to choose what to show. In comics, one must choose moments, but they are much closer together, and can therefore feel like the direct notation of live action. In the making of a picturebook, intuitive thinking is perhaps more active, after the earliest stages, in the composition of images rather than in 'drawing out the narrative'. In this sense, making comics, which is often likened to writing with pictures, might be more related to the experience of writing prose, for instance, while picturebooks, as Goffstein and Sendak suggest, may be experientially closer to composing poetry.

Yet, once I had recognised that limitation or 'direction' is necessary for improvisation, I began to see that relative constraint does not correlate straightforwardly with picturebooks and comics any more than the kinds of reading they accommodate. Comics are often created under equally constrained circumstances, as in four-panel cartoons and the one-page comic. Comic books also traditionally have a standard length, which is 32 pages in the U.S., just like the picturebook (Chute, 2008, p.453). Moreover, the constraints on time created by a commission for a weekly comic, or else by the limited financial rewards for making a full-length graphic novel, also impact on the work cartoonists produce.

Equally, the 32-page limit may or may not be an unbending imperative for a picturebook, depending on the publisher, the time of year, and the story itself (see page 66). Though they do not frequently extend too far beyond the standard length, much longer picturebooks are published. Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007), a 526-page wordless book that takes full advantage of "the drama of the turning page", is arguably an example. Moreover, artists create rules and constraints for themselves, which then drive the development of the work. Therefore, though picturebooks may often represent a fixed constraint, and comics, especially graphic novels, may more frequently allow an open-ended approach, examples of each form fall at different points on this sliding scale, too.

A growing appreciation of ellipses as a vital part of content in graphic narrative, just as negative and positive space are both integral to a composition, connects much of the learning that has resulted from this research. Thus chapter 4 ends with the realisation that leaving out text altogether can be a more effective way to imply noise and invite readers to vocally contribute to it. In chapter 5, unexplained gaps between images were found to be a potential space for allowing different readers to interpret in their own ways, allowing for different versions of events. This understanding of the spaces that a picturebook



structure can open up for its readers challenged my inclination to show the events and emotions of a story in as much detail as possible.

The inquiry suggests that comics tend to exercise (or at least anticipate) a greater control over pace and timing than picturebooks do. I had used that potential in order to convey nuances in relationships, actions and emotions without stating them explicitly. My inclination to use comics was founded on a wish to leave things unsaid, to show rather than tell: in other words, to create space for the reader. It is eye opening to realise that the conventions of picturebook storytelling, and its limitations as a form, also encourage the artist to leave out as much as they put in, inviting readers to fill the gap. The difference lies largely in the reading modes that the gap is designed to accommodate, for it has become clear in the course of this inquiry that reading mode plays a decisive role in determining what a text communicates to its readers.

I see the projects undertaken in the course of this research as apprentice pieces - not yet fully resolved, perhaps unresolvable. Yet they have served the purpose for which they were conceived. Though this study concentrates on a small sample of work in the practice of a single narrative artist, its results make a relevant and timely contribution to the wider study of graphic narrative as well as to the field of practitioner research. I hope it will be of interest to practitioners, too, as the research of other artists is to me, illuminating or speaking to aspects of the intuitive and experiential knowledge developed in practice.

## **6.1 Areas for further research**

The inquiry suggests a number of avenues for further study. Pursuing its analysis of a single practitioner's experience, it could form the basis for a wider inquiry into the experiential dimensions of making graphic narrative. Laura Valojärvi, an illustrator, educator and practitioner-researcher at Aalto University, is conducting a study of this nature, drawing on in-depth interviews with picturebook makers alongside personal experience to examine, at close quarters, the act of story-telling in picturebook form. Parallel research involving cartoonists and/or narrative artists working in both forms could generate material for a comparative study foregrounding the practitioner's understanding and experience of graphic narrative, which has not previously been a subject of systematic study.

The study also poses questions concerning the different modes of reading that graphic narratives in digital form encourage and accommodate. When adapted or created digitally, such works often incorporate optional audiobook functions, which read the text and/or

dialogue 'to' the audience, sometimes with the addition of hidden dialogue for readers to discover through interaction with the screen. In digital comics, creators have experimented with making sounds effects audible, as well as introducing soundtracks. Moreover, both picturebooks and comics in digital form experiment with the animating potential of the format to introduce compositional and narrative elements that shift as we read and interact with the screen. Thus the reader is involved in a very different physical interaction when engaging with a book. Taking the understandings and 'generative metaphors' that resulted from this study into the digital arena through practice could produce further frameworks for understanding how the tools of graphic storytelling function, in old and new contexts, and the breadth of communication that the inventive combination of images and words in sequence makes possible.

## Bibliography

Abba, T., 2015. A manifesto for the future of the book. The Bookseller, [online] Available at: <<http://www.thebookseller.com/futurebook/manifesto-future-book-310175>> [Accessed 21 August 2016]

Able, J. and M. Madden, 2008. *Drawing Words and Writing Pictures*. New York and London: First Second.

Alter, A., 2015. The plot twists: e-book sales slip, and print is far from dead. New York Times, [online] Available at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/23/business/media/the-plot-twist-e-book-sales-slip-and-print-is-far-from-dead.html>> [Accessed 21 August 2016]

Archer, B., 1999. Design, innovation, agility. *Design Studies*, 20(6), pp.565-571.

Arizpe, E. and M. Styles, 2003. *Children Reading Pictures: Interpreting Visual Texts*. New York and London: Routledge.

Arizpe, E., T. Colomer and C. Martínez-Roldán, 2014. *Visual Journeys through Wordless Narratives: An international inquiry with immigrant children and 'The Arrival'*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Arnheim, R., 1969. *Visual Thinking*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Atkinson, P., 2009. Movements Within Movements: following the line in animation and comic books. *Animation*, 4 (3), pp.265-281.

Bader, B., 1976. *American Picturebooks from Noah's Ark to the Beast Within*. New York and London: Macmillan.

Bang, M., 2000. *Picture This: How Pictures Work*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Barker, M., 1984. *A Haunt of Fears: the Strange History of the British Horror Comics Campaign*. London and Sidney: Pluto Press Ltd.

Barker, M., 1989. *Ideology, Power and the Critics*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

Barry, L., 2008. *What It Is*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly.

Barry, L., 2014. *Syllabus*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly.

Barthes, R., 1964. Rhetoric of the Image. Translated from French by S. Heath, 1977. *Image - Music - Text*. New York: Hill and Wang, pp. 32-51.

Barthes, R., 1953. *Writing Degree Zero*. Translated from French by A. Lavers and C. Smith, 1984. London: Jonathan Cape.

Bayliss, S., 2014. How Wordless Picture Books Empower Children. *School Library Journal*, [online] May 31. Available at: <[www.slj.com/2014/05/standards/early-learning/how-wordless-picture-books-empower-children-slj-day-of-dialogue-2014](http://www.slj.com/2014/05/standards/early-learning/how-wordless-picture-books-empower-children-slj-day-of-dialogue-2014)> [accessed February 08 2016].

Bearne, E., 2004. Multimodal texts: what they are and how children use them. In: J. Evans, ed. 2004. *Literacy Moves On: Using Popular Culture, New Technologies and Critical Literacy in the Classroom*, pp. 16-30.

Blake, Q., 2013. *Words and Pictures*. London: Tate Publishing.

Bordwell, D., 1985. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Briggs, R., 2004a. Bloomin' Christmas. Interview by Nicholas Wroe. *The Guardian*, [online] 18 December. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/dec/18/featuresreviews.guardianreview8>> [Accessed 20 August 2016].

Briggs, R., 2004b. Sunday Times Interview. Interview by Amanda Craig, [online]. Available at: <[http://www.amandacraig.com/pages/journalism\\_01/journalism\\_01\\_item.asp?journalism\\_01ID=89](http://www.amandacraig.com/pages/journalism_01/journalism_01_item.asp?journalism_01ID=89)> [Accessed 21 August 2016].

Brown, M., 2013. Costa Awards 2012: graphic biography wins category prize. *Guardian*, [online] 2 January. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jan/02/costa-awards-graphic-novel-biography>> [Accessed 4 July 2016].

Brunetti, I., 2007. *Cartooning Philosophy and Practice*. Reprint 2011. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Carle, E., n.d. 'Where Do Ideas Come From?' Speech given at the Library of Congress. In: E. Carle, 1996. *The Art of Eric Carle*. New York: Philomel Books.

Carrier, D., 2000. *The Aesthetics of Comics*. Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press.

Cartwright, J., 2015. *The Bookmaker's Studio*. London: James Cartwright / Hooksmith Press.

Chapman, P. and S. Scrivener, 2004. The practical implications of applying a theory of practice-based research: a case study. *Working Papers in Art and Design*, [online] 3. Available at: <  
[https://www.herts.ac.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/12367/WPIAAD\\_vol3\\_scrivener\\_chapman.pdf](https://www.herts.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/12367/WPIAAD_vol3_scrivener_chapman.pdf)> [Accessed 20 August 2016].

Chute, H. and M. De Koven, 2006. Introduction: graphic narrative. *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies*, 52, pp.767-782.

Chute, H., 2008. Comics as literature? reading graphic narrative. *PMLA*, 123(2), pp. 452-465.

Chute, H., 2010. *Graphic Women: Life Narrative & Contemporary Comics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Cooke, R., 2008. Big kid, 'old git' and still in the rudest of health. *The Observer*, [online] 10 August. Available at:  
<<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/aug/10/booksforchildrenandteenagers>> [Accessed on 2 March 2015].

Cooper, J., 2015. Not a manifesto: on 'a complicated relationship.' *The Bookseller*, [online] 2 December. Available at: <<http://www.thebookseller.com/futurebook/not-futurebook-2015-manifesto-317831>> [Accessed 21 August 2016]  
Daichendt, G., 2011. *Artist Scholar: Reflections on Writing and Research*. Bristol and Wilmington NC: Intellect Ltd.

Daniel, L., 2015. Why a picture book about Ernest Shackleton marks a publishing revolution. *The Telegraph*, [online] 27 June. Available at: <  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/authors/why-a-picture-book-about-ernest-shackleton-marks-a-publishing-re/>> [Accessed 10 August 2016].

Delany, S., 1996. The Politics of Paraliterary Criticism. In: S. Delany. 1999. *Shorter Views: Queer Thoughts and the Politics of the Paraliterary*, pp.218-270.

Dennett, D., 2013. *Intuition Pumps and Other Tools for Thinking*.

Devitt, A., 2004. *Writing Genres*. Reprint 2008. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

- Doonan, J., 1993. *Looking at Pictures in Picturebooks*. Stroud: Thimble Press.
- Driver, A., 1936. *Music and Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dubrow, H., 1982. *Genre*. London: Methuen.
- Eco, U., 1994. *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Eisner, W., 1996. *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative*. Tamarac: Poorhouse.
- Eisner, W., 1985. *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practices from the Legendary Cartoonist*. Reprint 2008. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Evans, J., 2011. Raymond Briggs: controversially blurring the boundaries. *Bookbird* 49(4), pp.49-61.
- Evans, J., 2013. From comics, graphic novels and picturebooks to fusion texts. A new kid on the block! *Education 3–13*, 41(2), pp.233–248.
- Finch, H. L., 1995. *Wittgenstein*. Shaftesbury, Dorset: Elementary Books.
- Fishelov, D., 1993. *Metaphors of Genre: the Role of Analogies in Genre Theory*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press.
- Foster, J., 2011. Picture books as graphic novels and vice versa: the Australian experience. *Bookbird* 49(4), pp.68-75.
- Frappaolo, C., 2008. Implicit knowledge. *Knowledge Management Research and Practice*, 6, pp.23-25.
- Frayling, C., 1993-4. Research in Art and Design. *Royal College of Art Research Papers*, 1(1), pp.1-5.
- Fuchs, W. and R. Reitberger, 1972. *Comics: Anatomy of a Mass Medium*. Translated from German by Studio Vista. London: Studio Vista Publishing.
- Gall, E. and P. Gall, 2015. Comics are picture books: a (graphic) novel idea. *The Horn Book*, [online] 5 November. Available at: <<http://www.hbook.com/2015/11/using-books/comics-are-picture-books-a-graphic-novel-idea/>> [Accessed 12 August 2016].

Geringer, J. and M. Zbaracki, 2014. Blurred Vision: the divergence and intersection of illustrations in children's books. *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, 5(3), pp.284 – 295.

Gibson, M., 2010. Picturebooks, comics and graphic novels. In: D. Rudd, ed. 2010. *The Routledge Companion to Children's Literature*, London & New York: Routledge. pp.100-111.

Gibson, M., G. Nabizadeh and K. Sambell, eds., 2014. Special Issue: Watch This Space: Childhood, Picturebooks and Comics. *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, 5(3).

Goldsmith, E., 1984. *Research into Illustration: An Approach and a Review*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gombrich, E., 1960. *Art and Illusion*. Reprint 1977. London: Phaidon Press.

Goodwin, P., 2008. *Understanding Children's Books: A Guide for Education Professionals*. London: SAGE.

Gravett, P., 2013. *Comics Art*. London: Tate Publishing.

Gray, C. and J. Malins, 2004. *Visualizing Research: a guide to the research process in Art and Design*. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing.

Grennan, S., 2011. *Comic Strips and the Making of Meaning: Emotion, Intersubjectivity and Narrative Drawing*. PhD. CCW, University of the Arts London.

Groensteen, T., 2007. *The System of Comics*. Translated from French by B. Beaty and N. Nguyen. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press.

Groensteen, T., 2013. *Comics and Narration*. Translated from French by Ann Miller. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Guba, E. and Y. Lincoln, 1985. *Naturalistic Enquiry*. Newbury Park, London, New Dehli: SAGE.

Hamm, J., 1967. *Cartooning the Head and Figure*. New York: Penguin Group (USA)..  
Haughton, C., 2010. *A Bit Lost*. London: Walker Books.

Harvey, R. C., 1979. The aesthetics of the comic strip. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, XII (4), pp.640-652.

Hatfield, C. and C. Martin, eds., 2007. 'Comics and Childhood,' a special issue of ImageTextT. *ImageTextT: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies*, [online] 3(3). Available at: <[http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v3\\_3/](http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v3_3/)> [Accessed 21 August 2016].

Hatfield, C., 2007. Introduction to 'Comics and Childhood,' a Special Issue of ImageTextT. *ImageTextT: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies*, [online] 3(3). Available at: <[http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v3\\_3/introduction.shtml](http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v3_3/introduction.shtml)> [Accessed 21 August 2016].

Hatfield, C., 2011. Graphic Novel. In: P. Nel and L. Paul, eds. 2011. *Keywords for Children's Literature*. New York and London: New York University Press, pp.100-105

Hatfield, C. and C. Svonkin, 2012. Why comics are and are not picture books: Introduction. *The Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 37 (4), pp.429-435.

Hayman, G. and H. Pratt, 2005. What Are Comics? In: D. Goldblatt and L. Brown, eds. 2005. *A Reader in Philosophy of the Arts*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc., pp. 419–424.

Herther, N., 2015. Ebooks in 2015: Trends and Forecasts Part 1. *Information Today, Inc.*, [online], 13 January. Available at: <<http://newsbreaks.infotoday.com/NewsBreaks/Ebooks-in-2015-Trends-and-Forecasts-Part-1-101446.asp>> (Accessed on 10 August 2016).

Hofstadter, D. and E. Sander, 2013. *Surfaces and Essences: analogy as the fuel and fire of thinking*. New York: Basic Books.

Holub, R., 1984. *Reception Theory: a Critical Introduction*. New York and London: Routledge.

Horn, C., 2008. Walker Trims Staff and List. *The Bookseller*, [online] 19 June. Available at: <<http://www.thebookseller.com/news/walker-trims-staff-and-list>> [Accessed on 5 July 2016].



Horsman, Y., 2014. Infancy of art: comics, childhood and picturebooks. *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 5(3), pp. 323-335.

Hunter, L. 2011. The artist as narrator: Shaun Tan's wondrous worlds. *Bookbird*, 49(4), 10-16, pp. 10-16

Hynds J., 1992. Wordless Picturebooks. *Books for Keeps*, [online] 74, Available at: <<http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/74/childrens-books/articles/other-articles/wordless-picture-books>> [Accessed 5 February 2016].

Iser, W., 1978. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Iser, W., 2000. Do I write for an audience? *PMLA*, [online] 115(3), pp.310-314. Available at: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/463451>> [Accessed 13 September 2015].

Jenkins, S., 2016. Books are back. Only the technodazzled thought they would go away. *The Guardian*, [online] 13 May. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/13/books-ebook-publishers-paper>> [Accessed 21 August 2016].

Johnson, M. and G. Lackoff, 2003. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

Jones, T., 2009. Research Degrees in Art and design. In: J. Elkin, ed. 2009. *Artists with PhDs: on the new doctoral degree in Studio arts*. Washington DC: New Academia Publishing, pp.31- 45.

Kahneman, D., 2011. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Kang, S., 2014. *Creative, practice-led investigation into the picturebook as a medium for introducing children to meditation*. PhD. Anglia Ruskin University.

Kenny, A., 1973. *Wittgenstein*. London: The Penguin Press.

King, T., 1975. Image in Motion. *Crimmer's: The Harvard Journal of Pictorial Fiction*, pp.11-18.

Kinnell, M., 1995. Publishing for Children 1700 – 1780. In: P. Hunt, ed. 1995. *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 26-45.

Kress, G. and T. van Leeuwen, 1996. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London and New York: Routledge.

Kümmerling-Meibauer, B., 2013. Manga/Comics hybrids in picturebooks. In: J. Berndt and B. Kümmerling-Meibauer, eds. 2013. *Manga's Cultural Crossroads*. New York and London: Routledge, pp.100-120.

Kunzle, D., 1973-1990. *The History of the Comic Strip* Vols. 1 and 2. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lacassin, F., 1972. The Comic Strip and Film Language. Translated from French by D. Kunzle *Film Quarterly*, 26, pp. 11-23.

Lattuca, L., 2001. *Creating Interdisciplinarity: interdisciplinarity research and teaching among college and university faculty*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Latham, A. and S. Sadie, 1993. *The Cambridge Music Guide*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lee, S., 2012. *A Trilogia da Margem*. Sao Paolo, Brazil: Cosac Naify.

Levine, S., 2013. Expecting the unexpected: improvisation in art-based research. In: S. McNiff, ed. 2013. *Art as Research: Opportunities and Challenges*. Bristol and Chicago: Intellect. pp.125-132

Lewis, D., 1998. Oops!: Colin McNaughton and "Knowingness". *Children's Literature in Education*, 29(2), pp.59-68.

Lewis, D., 1996. Going along with Mr Gumpy: polysystemy and play in the modern picture book. *Signal*, 80, pp.105-19.

Lewis, D., 2001. *Reading Contemporary Picturebooks: Picturing Text: The Contemporary Children's Picturebook*. New York and London: Routledge.

Little, L., 2015. *A Practice-Based Exploration of the Relationship between artists' Books and Children's Picturebooks*. PhD. Anglia Ruskin University.

Long, L., 2014. The Book is not Dead. *Daily Infographics*, [online] 10 January. Available at: <<http://www.dailyinfographic.com/the-book-is-not-dead-infographic>> [Accessed 21 August 2016].

Löwgren, L., 2015. Beyond conversation: palpating the hybrid materials. Presented at *Research Through Design 2015*. Available at: <[https://dspace.mah.se/bitstream/handle/2043/18744/RTD2015\\_25\\_DAY2\\_PM\\_Lowgren\\_231.pdf?sequence=2](https://dspace.mah.se/bitstream/handle/2043/18744/RTD2015_25_DAY2_PM_Lowgren_231.pdf?sequence=2)> [Accessed 16 July 2016].

Lubbock, T., 2012. *English Graphic*. London: Frances Lincoln Ltd.

Macdonald, I., 2015. Drawing on the Facts: comics journalism and the critique of objectivity. In: Worden, D., 2015. *The Comics of Joe Sacco: Journalism in a Visual World*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press.

Madden, M. 2005. *99 Ways to Tell a Story: Exercises in Style*. Reprint 2006. London: Jonathan Cape.

Manolessou, K., 2011. *A Practice-based Investigation of Animal Character Development in Picturebook Illustration*. PhD. Anglia Ruskin University.

Marantz, K. and S. Marantz, 1992. *Artists of the Page - Interviews with Children's Book Illustrators*. Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc.

Marcus, L. S., 2012. *Show Me A Story! Why Picture Books Matter: Conversations with 21 of the World's Most Celebrated Illustrators*. Massachusetts: Candlewick Press.

Martin, T., 2009. How Comic Books became part of the literary establishment. *The Telegraph*, [online] 2 April. Available at: <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/5094231/How-Comic-Books-became-part-of-the-literary-establishment.html>> [Accessed 20 August 2016].

McCloud, S., 1993. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. Reprint 1994. New York: HarperCollins.

McCloud, S., 2000. *Reinventing Comics: How Imagination and Technology are Revolutionizing an Art Form*. New York: Perennial.

McCloud, S., 2009. *The "Infinite Canvas"*, [online]. Available at: <<http://scottmccloud.com/4-inventions/canvas/>> [Accessed 21 August 2016].

McGrath, C., 2004. "Not Funnies". *New York Times*, 7 July, [online] Available at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/07/11/magazine/notfunnies.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>> [Accessed 17 March 2013].

McIntyre, S., 2008. Drawing Practice. *Jabberworks*, [online] 12 February. Available at: <<http://jabberworks.livejournal.com/76688.html>> [Accessed 21 August 2016].

Meek, M., 1988. *How Texts Teach What Readers Learn*. Stroud: Thimble Press.

Meek, M. and V. Watson, 2003. *Coming of Age in Children's Literature: Growth and Maturity in the work of Phillipa Pearce, Cynthia Voigt and Jan Mark*. New York and London: Continuum.

Meskin, A., 2007. Defining Comics? *The journal of aesthetics and art criticism* 65 (4), pp.369-379.

Michaelides, F. and P. Panaou, 2011. Dave McKean's art: transcending limitations of the graphic novel genre. *Bookbird* 49(4), p.62-67.

Moebius, W., 1990. Introduction to Picturebook Codes. In: P. Hunt, ed. 1990. *Children's Literature: the Development of Criticism*. London: Routledge, pp.131-147.

Moebius, W., 2011. Picture Book. In: P. Nel and L. Paul, eds. 2011. *Keywords for Children's Literature*. New York and London: New York University Press, pp. 169-173.

Morton, D., 2016. *Panel to the Screen: Style, American Film and Comic Books During the Blockbuster Era*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press (forthcoming).

Nabizadeh, G., 2014. Visual Melancholy in Shaun Tan's 'The Arrival'. *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, 5(3), pp366-379.

Nel, P., 2012a. Not genres but modes of graphic narrative: comics and picturebooks. In: MLA, *Modern Language Association Annual Convention*, Seattle, 5-8 January.

Nel, P., 2012b. Same genus, different species?: comics and picture books. *The Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 37 (4), pp.445-453.

Nel, P., 2016. Dancing on the manhole cover: the genius of Richard Thompson. *The Comics Journal*, [online] 3 August 2016. Available at: <<http://www.tcj.com/dancing-on-the-manhole-cover-the-genius-of-richard-thompson/>> [Accessed 6 August 2016].

Nikolajeva, M. and C. Scott, 2001. *How Picturebooks Work*. Reprint 2006. New York and London: Routledge.

Nikolajeva, M., 2010. Interpretative codes and implied readers of children's picturebooks. In: T. Colomer, B. Kümmerling-Meibauer and C. Silva-Diaz, eds. 2010. *New Directions in Picturebook Research*. New York and London: Routledge, pp.27-40.

Nodelman, P., 1988. *Words About Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books*. Reprint 1990. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Nodelman, P., 2012. Picture Book Guy Looks at Comics: Structural Differences in Two Kinds of Visual Narrative. *The Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 37 (4), pp.436-444.

op de Beeck, N., 2010. *Suspended Animation: Children's Picture Books and the Fairy Tale of Modernity*. Minneapolis, London : University of Minnesota Press.

op de Beeck, N., 2012. On Comics-Style Picture Books and Picture Bookish Comics. *The Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 37(4), pp.468-476.

Pakovska, K., 2013. *An Illustrator from Prague*. Interview by Craig at Fishink, [online]. Available at: <<https://fishinkblog.com/2013/05/01/kveta-pacovska-an-illustrator-from-prague/>> [Accessed 08.08.2016].

Palmer, R., 2014. Combining the rhythms of comics and picturebooks: thoughts and experiments. *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 5(3), pp. 297-310.

Palmer, R., 2016. From comics to picturebooks: the reading moment as focus for devising hybrid narratives. *Interjuli* 16(2), forthcoming.

Pattison, D., 2008. *Picture Book Standards: 32 Pages*, [online] Available at: <<http://www.darcypattison.com/picture-books/picture-book-standards-32-pages/>> [Accessed 20.06.2016].

- Peterson, R., 2009. The Acoustics of Manga. In: J. Heer and K. Worcester, eds., 2009. *A Comics Studies Reader*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, pp.163-172.
- Peterson, R., 2011. *Comics, Manga, and Graphic Novels: A History of Graphic Narratives*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Postema, B. 2014. Following the Pictures: Wordless Comics for Children. *Journal of Graphic Novels & Comics*, pp. 311-322.
- Pratt, H., 2011. Relating Comics, cartoons, and animation. In: D. Goldblatt and L. Brown, eds 2011. *Aesthetics: A Reader in Philosophy of the Arts*, third edition. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, pp.369-373.
- Protheroe, P., 1992. *Vexed Texts: How Children's Picture Books Promote Illiteracy*. Leicester: Book Guild Publishing Ltd.
- Pulitzer, 1992. *The Pulitzer Prizes*, [online]. Available at: <<http://www.pulitzer.org/prize-winners-by-year/1992>> [Accessed 20 August 2016].
- Pullman, P., 2016. Exclusive Philip Pullman interview. Interview by J. Meadows. *Tripwire: the Genre Magazine*, [online] Available at: <<http://www.tripwiremagazine.co.uk/headlines/exclusive-philip-pullman-interview/>> [Accessed 30 June 2016].
- Queneau, R., 1981 (originally published 1947). *Exercises in Style*. translated and edited by B. Wright. New York: New Directions.
- Raeburn, D., 2004. *Chris Ware (Monographics)*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Rogers, S. and J. Heer, 2015. In: T. Devlin, C. Oliveros, P. Burns, T. Hurren and J. Pohl-Miranda, eds. 2015. *Drawn and Quarterly: Twenty-Five Years of Contemporary Cartooning, Comics and Graphic Novels*. Montreal: Drawn + Quarterly, pp.13-57.
- Rosen, M., 1997. *A Materialist and Intertextual Examination of the Process of Writing a Work of Children's Literature*. PhD. University of North London.
- Rosenblatt, L. 1978. *The Reader, The Text and the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*. Carbondale, IL: Southern University Press.

Rowse, J., 2013. *Working with Multimodality: Rethinking Literacy in a Digital Age*. New York and London: Routledge.

Ryan, M.-L., 2003. On Defining Narrative Media. *Online Magazine of the Visual Narrative*, [online] 6. Available at: <<http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/mediumtheory/marielauryan.htm>> [Accessed 30 July 2016].

Sabeti, S., 2011. The Irony of 'Cool Club': the place of comic book reading in schools. *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 2 (2), pp.37-149.

Sabin, R., 2001. *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels: A History of Comic Art*. London: Phaidon Press Ltd.

Sacco, J., 2012. *Journalism*. London: Random House.

Salisbury, M., 2004. *Illustrating Children's Books: Creating Pictures for Publication*. London: A&C Black Publishers.

Salisbury, M. and M. Styles, 2012. *Children's Picturebooks: The Art of Visual Storytelling*. London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd.

Sanders, J. S., 2013. Chaperoning words: meaning-making in comics and picture books. *Children's Literature*, [online] 41, pp. 57-90. Available at: <<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/508929/pdf>> [Accessed 16 June 2015].

Schnatz, E., 2015. Imagine That! Word Balloons in Children's Picture Books. *Book Publishing Final Research Paper*. Paper 3. Available at: <[http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/eng\\_bookpubpaper/3](http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/eng_bookpubpaper/3)> [Accessed 30 May 2016].

Scholte, B., 1972. Toward a Reflexive and Critical Anthropology. In: D. Hymes, ed., 1972. Reprint 1999. *Reinventing Anthropology*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press pp.430-459.

Schön, D., 1983. *The Reflective Practitioner*. Reprint 1991. Aldershot: Avebury.

Schön, D., 1993. Generative metaphor: A perspective on problem-setting in social policy. In: A. Ortony, ed. 1993. *Metaphor and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schwartz, J., 1982. *Ways of the Illustrator: Visual Communication in Children's Literature*. Chicago: ALA Editions.

Schwartz, J. and C. Schwartz, 1991. *The Picture Book Comes of Age: Looking at Childhood Through the Art of Illustration*. Chicago & London: American Library Association.

Sendak, M., 1988. *Caldecott & Co.: Notes of Books and Pictures*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Shahn, B., 1990. *The Shape of Content (The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures)*. Harvard University Press.

Shannon, G., 1991. Writing the empty cup: rhythm and sound as content. *Children's Literature*, 19, pp.138-147.

Shulevitz, U., 1985. *Writing With Pictures: How to Write and Illustrate Children's Books*. New York: Watson-Guptill Publications.

Slager, H., 2009. Art and method. In: J. Elkins ed. 2009. *Artists with PhDs: on the new doctoral degree in studio art*. Washington DC: New Academia Publishing, pp. 49-56.

Smart, J., 2014. 'Shackleton's Journey' review. *The Guardian*, [online] 18 April. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/apr/18/shackleton-s-journey-william-grill-review>> [Accessed 2 August 2016].

Sousanis, N., 2015. *Unflattening*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Spaulding, A. E., 1995. *The Page as a Stage Set: Storyboard Picture Books*. Metuchen, N.J. and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Spiegelman, A. 2004. Barefoot Gen: Comics After the Bomb. In: K. Nakazawa, 2004. *Barefoot Gen: A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima*, Vol.1. Translated by Project Gen. San Francisco: Last Gasp.

Spiegelman, A. 1989. *Maus: Why comics, why mice, why the holocaust?* Lecture at Seton Hall University, New Jersey. Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ietzZBf3OD4>> [Accessed 10 September 2013].

Tan, S., 2002. Picturebooks: Who Are They For? [online] Available at: <<http://www.shauntan.net/images/whypicbooks.pdf>> [Accessed 12 December 2015].

Tan, S., n.d. *The Arrival* (notes), [online] Available at: <<http://www.shauntan.net/books/the-arrival.html>> [Accessed 21 August 2016].



Tan, S., 2010. Words and pictures, an intimate distance. *Lingua Franca*, Radio National ABC. Available at: <<http://www.shauntan.net/images/essayLinguaFranca.pdf>> [Accessed 20 August 2016].

Tan, S., 2011. The accidental graphic novelist. *Bookbird* 49(4), pp. 1-9.

The Guardian, 2001. Graphic novel wins First Book Award. *The Guardian*, [online] 6 December. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/dec/06/guardianfirstbookaward2001.gurardianfirstbookaward>> [Accessed 20 August 2016].

Tufte, E. 1990. *Envisioning Information*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press.

Tufte E., 1997. *Visual Explanations: images and quantities, evidence and narrative*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press.

Tufte, E., 2001. *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press.

Walden, T., 2016. *Make It Then Tell Everybody*. Interview by D. Berry, [online]. Available at: <<http://makeitthentelleverybody.com/2016/07/tillie-walden/>> [Accessed 10 August 2016].

Walker, M., 1980. *The Lexicon of Comicana*. Port Chester, NY: Comicana, Inc.

Wall, B., 1991. *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction*. London: Macmillan.

Wilkins, P. & Herd, D., (2015). Unpacking Unflattening: A Conversation. *The Comics Grid: Journal of Comics Scholarship*, [online] 5(1). Available at: <http://doi.org/10.5334/cg.bi> [accessed 20.08.2016].

Willems, M. 2009. Presentation and reading at the 2009 National Book Festival, [online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPABEuAMjEM> [accessed 20.10.2013].

Wittgenstein, L., 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated from German by G. Anscombe, 1972. Oxford: Blackwell.

Wolk, D., 2007. *Reading Comics: How Graphic Novels Work and What They Mean*. Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press.

Xuan, L., 2016. Graphic novelist Sonny Liew bags 2016 Singapore Literature Prize for English Fiction for bestselling comic. *The Straits Times*, [online] 14 July. Available at: <

<http://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/arts/sonny-liew-the-art-of-charlie-chan-hock-chye-the-first-graphic-novel-to-win> [Accessed 20 August 2016].

Yannicopoulou, A., 2004. Visual Aspects of Written Texts: Preschooler's View of Comics. *Educational Studies in Language and Literature* 4, pp.169-81.

Yee, J., 2010. Methodological innovation in practice-based design doctorates. *Journal of Research Practice*, [online] 6(2), Article M15. Available at: <<http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/196/193>> [Accessed 12 September 2014].

## **Narrative works**

Allison, J., 1998-2015. *Scary Go Round*, [online]. Available at: <<http://www.scarygoround.com/>> [Accessed 30 March 2016].

Ardizzone, E., 1936-1972. The *Tim* books. London: Francis Lincoln.

Beaton, K., 2006-2016. *Hark! A Vagrant*, [online]. Available at: <<http://www.harkavagrant.com/>> [Accessed 1 January 2014].

Beckett, S., 1961. *Happy Days*. London: Grove Press.

Bergman, I., 1975. *The Magic Flute (Trollflöjten)*. Stockholm: Sveriges Radio, TV2, AB svensk Filmindustri, Svenska Filminstitutet.

Blake, Q., 1980. *Mr. Magnolia*. Reprint 1999. London: Red Fox.

Blake, Q., 1995. *Clown*. London: Red Fox.

Briggs, R., 1973. *Father Christmas*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Briggs, R., 1975. *Father Christmas Goes On Holiday*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Briggs, R., 1978. *The Snowman*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Briggs, R., 1998. *Ethel and Ernest*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Broadley, J., 2010. *John Broadley's Books*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd.

Burningham, J., 1977. *Come Away from the Water, Shirley*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd.

Burningham, J., 1978. *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd.

Burningham, J., 1984. *Granpa*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd.

Burningham, J., 1991. *Aldo*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd.

- Burningham, J., 2009. *It's A Secret!* London: Walker Books.
- Burton, V., 1941. *Calico the Wonder Horse, or the Saga of Stewy Stinker*. Reprint 1997. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Carroll, L., 1865. *Alice in Wonderland*. London: Macmillan.
- Clark, D. and B. Palmer, forthcoming. *Ellie and Lump's Very Busy Day*. London: Walker Books.
- Deacon, A., 2004. *Beegu*. London: Red Fox.
- de Brunhoff, J., 1933. *Babar the King*. Reprint 1937, translated from French. London: Random House.
- Drechsler, D., 1996. The Dead of Winter. In: T. Devlin, C. Oliveros, P. Burns, T. Hurren and J. Pohl-Miranda, eds. 2015. *Drawn and Quarterly: Twenty-Five Years of Contemporary Cartooning, Comics and Graphic Novels*. Montreal: Drawn + Quarterly, pp.163-168.
- Fior, M., 2013. *L'Intervista*. Bologna: Coconino Press.
- François, A. and I. Harris, 1949. *Little Boy Brown*. Reprint 2013. New York: Enchanted Lion Books.
- Goffstein, M. B., 1976. *Fish For Supper*. New York: Dial Books.
- Graham, B., 2008. *How to Heal a Broken Wing*. London: Walker Books.
- Greder, A., 2008. *The Island*. Crows Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.
- Grill, W., 2014. *Shackleton's Journey*. London: Flying Eye Books.
- Hughes, S., 1979. *Up and Up*. Reprint 1991. London: Red Fox.
- Jansson, T., 1955. *Moomin's Winter Follies*. Reprint 2012. Montreal: Enfant.
- Kalman, M., 1990-1998. The *Max* Books. New York: Penguin Random House imprints (Viking Press Inc., Penguin Putham Inc., Viking Children's Books).
- Kipling, R., 1902. *Just So Stories*. Reprint 2003. New York: Gramercy Books.
- Kitamura, S., 1999. *Me and My Cat?* London: Red Fox.
- Kokoschka, O., 1909. *Die Träumenden Knaben*. Reprint 1917. Leipzig: Kurt Wolff Verlag.
- McCay, W., 1905-1926. *Little Nemo*. Reprint 2014. Cologne: Taschen.

- Nicoll, H. and J. Pienkowski, 1980. *Quest for Gloop*. London: Puffin Books.
- Ormerod, J., 1981. *Sunshine*. London: Puffin.
- Ormerod, J., 1982. *Moonlight*. London: Puffin.
- Palmer, R., 2014. *La Soupière Magique*. Paris: Éditions Sarbacane.
- Raschka, C., 1993. *Yo! Yes?* New York: Scholastic.
- Selznick, B., 2007. *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*. New York: Scholastic.
- Sendak, M. and C. Zolotow, 1962. *Mr Rabbit and the Lovely Present*. Reprint 2002. London: Red Fox.
- Sendak, M., 1965. *Hector Protector and As I Went Over the Water*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Sendak, M., 1970. *In the Night Kitchen*. Reprint 2001. London: Red Fox.
- Sharpe, J., 2016. *Mr Moon Wakes Up*. Swindon and Maine: Child's Play.
- Spiegelman, A., 1977. *Breakdowns: From Maus to Now, an Anthology of Strips*. New York: Belier Press.
- Stevenson, J., 1978. *The Seaview Hotel*. New York: Greenwillow Books.
- Roep, T., and C. Loerakker, 1982-2001. *Van Nul Tot Nu*. Haarlem: Uitgeverij Big Balloon.
- Tan, S., 2006. *The Arrival*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Thompson, R., 2004-2012. *Cul de Sac* [comic strip]. Distributed by Universal Press Syndicate.
- Turkle, B., 1976. *Deep in the Forest*. Reprint 1992. London: Puffin.
- Van Allsburg, C., 1984. *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*. Reprint 2011. London: Andersen Press.
- Vandersteen, W. et. al., 1945-present. *Suske en Wiske*. Weurt: Kartoën.
- Vanistendael, J., 2012. *When David Lost His Voice*. Translated from French by Nora Mahony. London: SelfMadeHero.
- Wiesner, D., 2006. *Flotsam*. Reprint 2012. London: Andersen Press.

Wildsmith, B., 1963. *The Lion and the Rat*. Reprint 2007. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Willems, M., 2007-2016. *The Elephant and Piggie Books*. New York: Disney-Hyperion.

Willems, M., 2003. *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*. London: Walker Books Ltd.

Willems, M., D. Wicks La Puma and M. Alrutz, 2013. *We Are in a Play!* Washington: John F. Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts.

## Websites

*ComiXology*. Available at: <<https://www.comixology.co.uk/>> [Accessed 18 August 2016].

Berry, D. *Make It Then Tell Everybody*. Available at: <<http://makeitthentelleverybody.com>> [Accessed 2 August 2016].

*Mangafox*. Available at: <<http://mangafox.me/>> [Accessed 28 February 2015].

Shannon, G. *George Shannon – Children's Author*, [online]. Available at: <<https://georgeshannon.wordpress.com/>> [Accessed 21 August 2016].

*Picturebook Makers*. Available at: <<http://blog.picturebookmakers.com>> [Accessed 2 August 2016].

Wiesner, D. *David Wiesner: Author and Artist*. Available at: <<http://www.davidwiesner.com/work/>> [Accessed 23 August 2016].

## Appendix 1. Planning for Rudolphus & Brown

### The Perfect Shoes

Mr Rudolphus and Bruno Brown lived next door at number 68 The Crescent.

They were not very tall. They were not very rich. But they were good friends.

"Bruno" said Mr Rudolphus one day, "I've been thinking. I have a good eye; you have a good nose. We should go into business."

So they did. They opened a small shoe shop just around the corner. ~~It was next to the laundrette, and anyone waiting for a wash would come and peer in at the window.~~

And my cousin Bobby went to work for them.

The first day they were open they sold 3 pairs of shoes. The next day it was seven. And the next day, 21.

News of Rudolphus & Brown's spread quickly. It was Bruno's nose: no matter who you were, he could sniff out the perfect shoes for you. And Mr Rudolphus was so affable and charming.

They got busier and busier. ~~They got so busy they had to move to a bigger shop.~~ The seats were velvet. The lamps were crystal. There were sweets on the counter and anyone could have one anytime they wanted. *they had to move to a bigger shop*

Mr Rudolphus had three assistants to run about for him. But Bruno was still all alone in the store-room. No-one could choose shoes like Bruno's nose chose. It was expert work.

(sequence showing Mr Rudolphus and Bruno getting more and more frustrated with each other)

"It's no good," said Bruno, "I can't keep up!"

One morning Mr Rudolphus ~~came in to breakfast~~ and found a letter ~~propped up by the teapot.~~ *in the doormat*

"My dear friend. I'm sorry, but I must have a holiday. I have gone away for a while. Your Bruno."

Mr Rudolphus was a little shocked. After that, he was a little worried. But he remembered the three young men, and Bobby to scoot about the store-room, and thought that they would ~~be alright.~~ *manage*

~~And in fact, he hardly missed Bruno at all.~~

*And they did.*  
If the shoes were not ~~always~~ as ideal as they could have been, none of customers seemed to notice. Rudolphus & Brown's was Rudolphus & Brown's and everyone knew it was the best.

One day the King came to hear of the shop. ~~The King was in desperate need of some shoes. He had a personal cobbler, and two personal footmen, but none of them could come up with a pair that he wanted.~~ *he* So the King decided to pay a visit.

Perhaps you can imagine what a surprise it was for Mr Rudolphus and those three young men. They bowed and they bowed and they bowed and they bowed until the king said "ENOUGH! I get plenty of that at home. I hear this is the place to find the perfect pair of shoes."

"Certainly sire," said Mr Rudolphus. He measured the King's feet. Then he went to the store-room and brought back the finest shoes they had.

"These are no good!" growled the King. "I have plenty like that at home!"

32: = 16 spreads  
+ 4 endpapers  
+ 2 title page.  
40

32: end paper x 4  
- 36 + covers = 38  
+ title page = 40

So Mr Rudolphus went back to the store-room, and brought back the tallest shoes they had.

"These are no good!" snarled the King. "I have plenty like that at home too!"

So Mr Rudolphus went back again. This time he thought for a long, long time, and then fetched down a number of boxes.

The King was impatient. He emptied all the boxes. "These are all NO GOOD!"

"You have til the day after tomorrow to find me the perfect shoes. If I have to wait longer..." He grinned a slow, unfriendly grin.

Mr Rudolphus did not sleep a wink that night.

The next day, he made all the phone calls he could think of. He set his three assistants searching. Bobby went out on his bike. But none of them could find even a buckle that seemed perfect.

"But I did see Bruno!" said Bobby.

Mr Rudolphus stared. "Where?"

"He's living by the harbour, just near the fish and chip shop."

Again Mr Rudolphus could not sleep. So he walked along the river out of town, towards the harbour.

It wasn't hard to tell which shed was Bruno's. But there was nobody inside.

So Mr Rudolphus left a note. A long, long note. He wrote about everything, and last he wrote about the King, who was so picky, and wanted his shoes to be just right. Mr Rudolphus was quite sure it would be the death of him.

Then he went home and slept.

Next day he walked to work with his heart in his stomach and his stomach in his boots. But on the doorstep, he found a parcel – a box! With a label in familiar writing:

FOR H.R.H. THE KING

What a relief! It was from Bruno. And shoes that Bruno found were always just perfect.

The King arrived early in a terrible temper.

"Well, man!" he said, "show us what you've come up with!"

Mr Rudolphus presented Bruno's box. They all held their breath...

"WHAT'S THIS?" roared the King. "Are you making FUN OF ME?"

The young men quailed. One of them fainted. Mr Rudolphus said in a small voice:

"Perhaps your majesty would care to try them on?"

"TRY THEM ON?" said the King. "Oh... well... alright."

His footmen tied the laces. He stood up. He walked about.

"Hmm." He said. "Hmm. They ARE very comfy.

I tell you what I'll do. I'll keep them a day or two. But if I decide I hate them...!"

"Oh of course, sire, yes of course." Said Mr Rudolphus. He was never so happy to see a customer leave. He locked the shop that afternoon and sent the young men home to their mothers.

The King wore those shoes all day. And the next day. And the next. He could walk like he'd never walked before. The shoes did not pinch him, or squash him, or trip him up. They were just perfect. Soon he wanted clothes the same. He had plain brown trousers and a plain brown hat. Nobody knew he was the King. He could see plenty of the world that way.

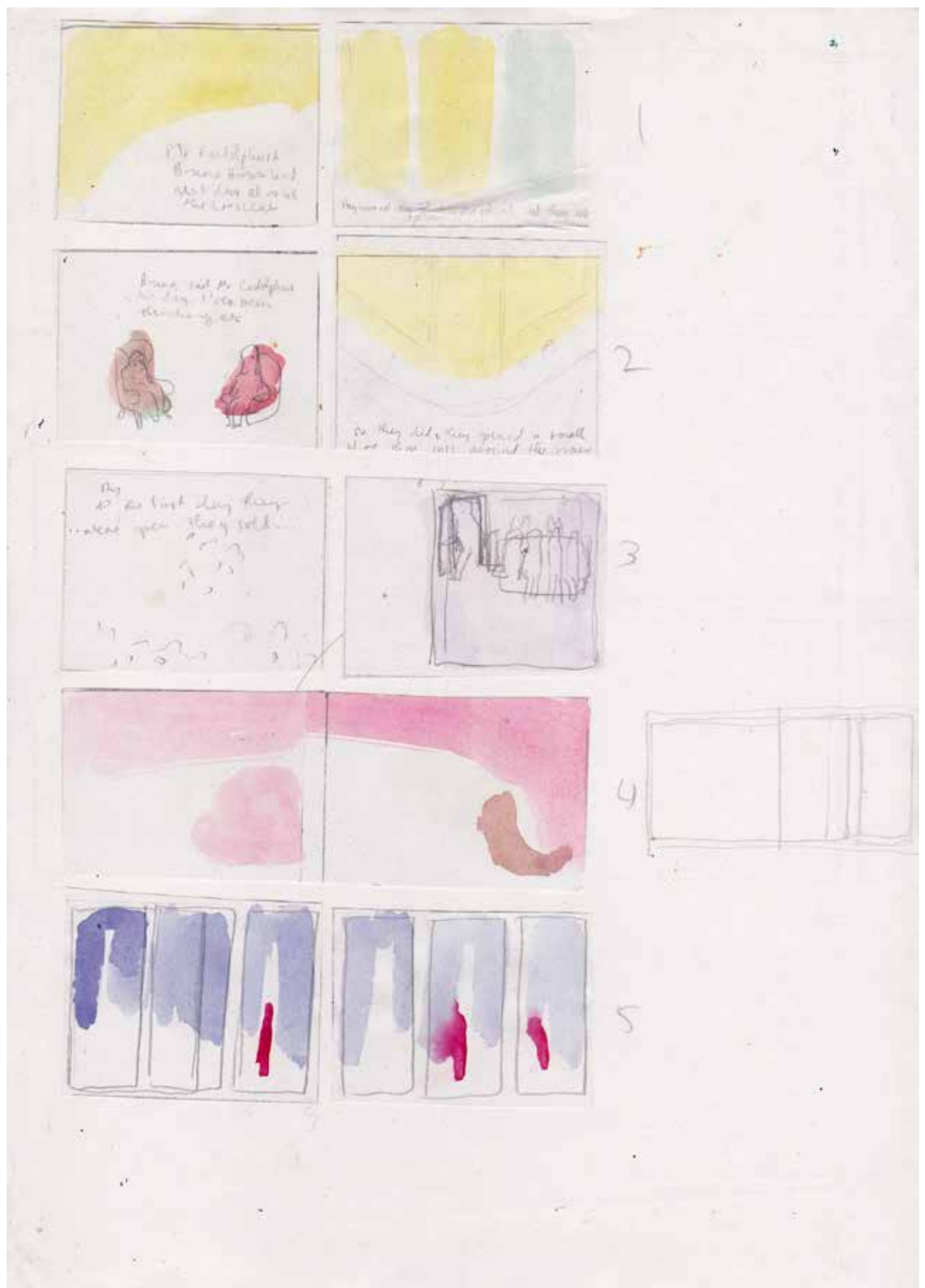
The King never brought those shoes back. In fact he never paid for them either, but on the whole that didn't matter. Mr Rudolphus decided he'd had quite enough of shoes, and left the shop to my cousin Bobby, who is very capable and still runs it now.

Mr Rudolphus packed his suitcase and walked down to the sea.

(short post-script about Bruno and Mr Rudolphus by the sea just in pictures)

end papers.

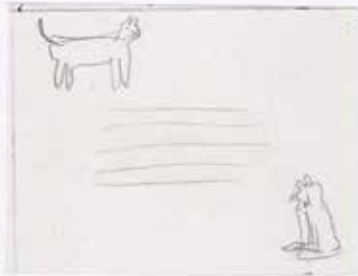
17







6



7



8



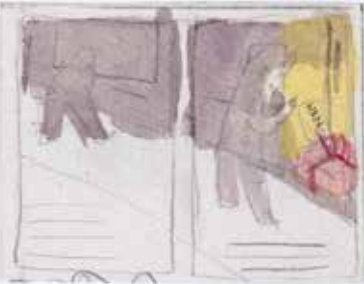
9



10



11



12



13



14

15

(30)

31  
32

33  
34

40

30

31

1 title		2 crescent		3 not v tall.		4 Bruno said Mr. R.	
5 open a shop		6 interior		7 shop grew + grew		8 all by himself	
9 one morning ...		10 it was a shock		11 shoes not always ideal		12 one day King heard	
13 King's feet		14 brought These are lots of shoes! USE		15 not sleep a wink. if I have to wait longer!		16 did not <del>some</del> sleep a wink	
17 walked out of town		18 But there was nobody inside		19 It was not hard to tell which but was Bruno's		20 so Mr. Rudb. left a note	
21 next morning King arrived early		22 what's this?		23 well alright		24 plenty of the world	
25 left shop to Bobby		26 Mr. Rudolph to the sea		27 silent page with Bruno & Mr. R.		28 X	

40 with separate ends



