Anglia Ruskin University

A Practice-based Investigation of Animal Character
Development in Picturebook Illustration.
(Written exegesis)

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A Thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Anglia Ruskin University for the

degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Please note:

This is a redacted version of the thesis. All images have been removed due to copyright considerations. You can find the full version of this thesis, including the visual record, dummy book and published picturebook, at the Anglia Ruskin University library.

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Abstract

Anglia Ruskin University, Faculty of Arts, Law and Social Sciences   PhD

A Practice-based Investigation of Animal Character Development in Picturebook Illustration

By Katherina Manolessou

This practice-based thesis investigates the development of animal characters in picturebook illustration through the process of creating a picturebook featuring animal characters. The thesis consists of a visual record of the illustration practice, a written exegesis of that record offering a contextualisation and critical reflection on the practice, and the artefact produced, a picturebook maquette.

Key considerations include the role of anthropomorphism and stereotypes in the design of picturebook animal characters; the engagement of my illustration practice with the experience of childhood; the construction of a simple picturebook story; the role of the environment as a characterisation device; the roles of the central characters within the picturebook narrative; the expression of the characters' feelings and motivations via speech, actions, body language and facial expressions; the composition, pacing and rhythm of the picturebook.

The research contributes to the understanding of picturebooks and how they are created by bringing into the foreground the practitioner's intentions, considerations, and methods. It makes connections between different stages and paths of the character development process and addresses picturebook illustration as authorial practice.

Table of Contents

Introduction

This doctoral thesis investigates animal character development in picturebook illustration through my own practice of creating a picturebook featuring animal characters. I use the term *character development* to describe the process of constructing picturebook characters through illustration practice. This process includes character design and the establishment of the character's role in a picturebook narrative. In the thesis the terms character construction and characterisation have also been used to describe this process.

This research project addresses a gap of knowledge in the form of systematic and sustained inquiries carried out by illustration practitioners into and through their practice, with specific focus on character development. The research offers a record, a critical reflection and a contextualisation of how picturebook animal characters are constructed in the individual practice of one illustrator. It contributes to the understanding of picturebooks as work-in-progress, and not as finished artifacts. Moreover the research approaches picturebook illustration as authorial practice, where the generation of ideas and concepts is an integral part of the practice.

This PhD submission consists of two visual components and one written component. The two visual components are the picturebook maquette and the visual record of the illustration practice. The written component is an exegesis of the practice. The visual record that contains all the figures, and the exegesis that refers to these figures (picture footnotes have been used to make the connection easier) are designed to be read alongside each other and not separately. Below I give an outline for each of the three components.

The picturebook maquette

The picturebook maquette, also referred to in the written essay as the picturebook proposal, follows the industry standard for presenting a picturebook idea to a publisher. It is a 32 page dummy book that contains detailed pencil drawings and full text for all the pages. This dummy book also includes final artwork for two double spreads.

The picturebook, titled *Zoom Zoom Zoom* (and referred to in the written essay as *Zoom*) features two animal protagonists, Monkey and Bird, who live in a jungle. There is also a supporting character, an alien living on the moon. The text is based on the nursery rhyme *Zoom, Zoom, Zoom*.

The basic plot is as follows: Monkey cannot fall asleep in the night. His friend, Bird, suggests they go to the moon. So they pack, put their helmets on, and they fly off. When they get there, they are warmly greeted by an alien. The alien shows them around. They all play happily on the moon while the alien counts down towards a take off in his spaceship. After taking off, they travel back to earth, and during this journey Monkey and Bird gradually fall asleep. When they get home, the alien puts Monkey and Bird to bed and flies back to the moon.

The visual record of the practice-based research

This part of the thesis is the visual record of the research through my illustration practice and contains a selection of the most representative and significant of my drawings and prints. A small number of photographs showing different stages of the practice and,

where relevant, images created by other artists that have influenced my work have also been included. I have shown whole sketchbook pages as much as possible, but at times it was necessary to isolate drawings or notes from a page in order to discuss their role in the development of this project. In keeping the visual work together in one volume, the reader can move from page to page, backwards and forwards, and is able to see the development, paths, and connections between different parts of the practice. The captions under the images provide only brief information, as the images are discussed in detail in the written exegesis.

The written exegesis

The written essay that accompanies the visual record of the research and the picturebook maquette acts as an exegesis, that is, an interpretation or explanation of the practice. It offers a contextualisation of and critical reflection on the illustration practice involved in creating animal characters in picturebooks.

Both the visual record and the written exegesis follow the same structure. They are organised into chapters that correspond to different stages in the chronological evolution of the practice. The different objectives, considerations, approaches, techniques and conclusions from each such stage are recorded in each chapter. Below a brief overview of the shared structure of the visual record and the written exegesis is provided.

Chapter 1 provides the **research context** consisting of a theoretical framework

and the cultural and physical conditions under which the research took place. This chapter offers definitions for practice-based research and research context, and gives a brief overview of practice-based PhDs in other disciplines that had a bearing on this project. The context is then discussed in relation to the picturebook genre as a commercial and cultural product, and as a focus of academic research. The contribution to the study of picturebooks by picturebook illustrators is also discussed. This understanding of picturebook research specifies the gap of knowledge in the area of research projects carried out by illustrators through their own practice. The chapter finishes with an overview of my educational and cultural influences, and my previous illustration practice.

The **design of the research** is discussed in **Chapter 2**, especially the understanding of this project as 'emergent' research, where the artistic practice is the main tool of research. This is followed by a detailed explanation of what the illustration practice consists of and how reflection, decision-making, and evaluation took place during the practice. The timeframe of the research, the role of the feedback, and the recording of practice are defined. Finally, this chapter ends with a discussion of the role of the written exegesis and my understanding of the relationship between theory and practice in this research project.

Anthropomorphism and stereotyping in picturebook animal characterisation are explored in **Chapter 3**. This is a partially subjective and primarily visual investigation through the reading of primary literature and supported by critical writing. I first discuss my understanding of the various levels of anthropomorphism involved in

animal character design in picturebooks, through my interest in the animal characters' behaviour and appearance. Then, I outline the representation of animals as stereotypes and how, in constructing animal characters, most illustrators rely on stereotypical visual characteristics. Finally I explore the use of an animal species as a metaphor for a human trait and question my method for constructing images of animals through my own practice, in creating a wallpaper installation project featuring animal characters.

The next stage of the practice, detailed in **Chapter 4**, was concerned with creating an inner life for my characters. This was attempted by engaging with the experience of childhood through observation and drawing. The drawing of events in my family life was developed into imaginative image making and resulted in ideas about animal characters and the world they inhabit. The chapter is divided according to the themes of the drawing practice: doing things, sleep, hair, friendships, environment. Two characters, a monkey and a bird, started to emerge through this drawing practice. Although a number of screenprints were also produced at this stage, the chapter is called **sketchbook drawing** because it was through the drawing practice (observational and imaginative) that the progress in characterisation was achieved.

Chapter 5 records how the practice focused on **looking for a story**, that is, the search for a simple text or narrative, on which a picturebook story could be based. This was done mainly through image making in the form of rough books. The different strands of practical enquiry were not bound by the previous work and this chapter provides a record of all these different ideas. It was during this stage in the practice that the idea for *Zoom* first arrived.

Chapter 6 is the longest chapter of the thesis and offers a record and critical reflection on the **picturebook development**. This was the process that transformed a simple idea to a fully formed picturebook maquette through the creation of successive dummy books and storyboards. This chapter has been divided in parts that follow the page sequence of the picturebook: beginning – middle – end. Through practice, it is shown how considerations about plot and character, rhythm and pacing, colour, visual contrast, simplicity and directness, credibility and consistency, have influenced the construction of the characters and the picturebook as a whole. The respective roles of the three main characters are a key consideration.

The **final screenprinted artwork** for the picturebook proposal is discussed separately in **Chapter 7**. These prints were produced once the dummy book was finalised. The practice was concerned with translating the ideas that were developed during this project in the form of rough drawings into finished, publishable illustrations. The final character designs and the double page spread illustrations are discussed individually.

The final **Conclusions** section offers general reflections on the overall research project.

Chapter 1
Research context

This chapter begins by defining the terms practice-based research, research outcome, and research context for my thesis. The research context is then discussed in detail with reference to the picturebook's artistic, cultural, and commercial status, academic research on picturebooks and my own background as an illustrator. Through establishing the research context, I will specify the gap in knowledge that is addressed in the thesis and explain the motivation for the research.

1.1 Definitions of practice-based research and research context

In recent years there has been increased publishing and research activity on the nature and purpose of practice-based PhDs. *Art practice as Research* (Sullivan, 2010) and *Artists with PhDs* (Elkins, 2009) bring together a variety of perspectives on theoretical arguments about the relationship between art practice and research, the nature of artistic thinking and studio practice. They also address issues of methodology and the relationship between theory and practice. Both books include excerpts from a number of 'art and design as research' projects, some of which are at a doctoral level. The University of Hertfordshire's electronic journal *Working Papers in Art and Design* disseminates the proceedings and papers from the biannual *Research into Practice* conference. Each conference has a different focus (e.g. 'The concept of knowledge in art and design', or 'The role of the artefact in art and design research') which is addressed from the point of view of different disciplines including Fine Art, Architecture, and Product Design. Online resources, such as the JISC online forum *PhD-Design*, create networks for research in design and act as platforms for discussions, information

exchange, and often heated debates. More recently, opinions about practice-based research have reached a wider audience in the form of newspaper articles, such as Hills' *How to Pass the Sight Test* (2010), which had a specific focus on education frameworks.

Although practice-based research in art and design at PhD level is offered by an increasing number of Higher Education institutions in the UK, it still is at the heart of an ongoing debate. The debate revolves around its definition (is research not an integral part of all art and design activity? how does practice-based research compare to research in more traditional academic disciplines?), methodology (how can a generic methodology be applied to the individual, often unpredictable nature of creative practice?), and dissemination (is the knowledge embedded in the artefact? what is the role of the written exegesis?). Although it is not in the scope of this project to investigate or indeed to answer any of these questions, they still need to be acknowledged.

Within this ongoing debate, I have based my research on the following definitions and statements. My starting point was the UK Council's for Graduate Education (1997, p.3) definition of a **practice-based doctorate:**

> 'The **practice-based doctorate** advances knowledge **by means of practice**. An original/creative piece of work is included in the submission for examination. It is distinct in that significant aspects of the claim for doctoral characteristics of originality, mastery and contribution to the field are held to be demonstrated through the original creative work.' (emphasis in original)

So what kind of research leads to a practice-based doctorate? Frayling's 1993 seminal

paper *Research in Art and Design* (referred to by most of the publications above) and its later incarnation as a lecture for the UK Council for Graduate Education (1997) offers an understanding of such research by defining three categories: Research *into*, *through*, and *for* Art and Design. A more recent understanding is that these three categories do not need to be seen as distinctive or exclusive routes of design research (Yee, 2010).

Indeed, my thesis covers two of Frayling's types of research. Primarily it is research *for* art and design (Frayling 1997, p.21)

> 'where the end product was an artefact and where to at least some extent, the thinking was embodied in the artefact.'

Frayling adds that the artefact alone is not enough for the purposes of communicating the fruits of research and of making a contribution to knowledge and understanding. The artefact must therefore 'be accompanied by a routemap showing to peers how the artist *arrived* at the artefact' (emphasis in original, 1997, p.23). My own specific focus on the process of creating a picturebook, and the recording of this 'routemap', means that my research is also conducted *through* practice, and can in particular be described by what Frayling calls 'action research'(1993, p.5):

> 'where a research diary tells, in a step-by-step way, of a practical experiment in the studios, and the resulting report aims to contextualise it. Both the diary and the report are there to communicate the results, which is what separates research from the gathering of reference materials.'

During the practice, a visual record or 'diary' was kept in the form of sketchbooks, photographs, dated drawings and prints, and a series of successive dummy books. The outcome of my research is the **two visual components** of this submission: the artefact (the picturebook maquette) as well as the visual record of the 'step-by-step' studio practice. The **written component** is an exegesis that contextualises and critically reflects on the research and its outcome. Biggs' view (2006), in agreement with Frayling, is that the written component, accompanying the visual, is necessary:

'… text delivers certain required content that the creative artefact cannot do. In particular the creative artefact cannot place its content in a critical and historical context so that it can be demonstrated to be original and significant and therefore a contribution to knowledge in its interpretation. This requirement is, for me, one of the defining features of research'

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRB, 2000) has listed the specification of a context as one of the key features of doctoral practice-based research:

'[The research]… must specify a research context for the questions or problems to be addressed. It must specify why it is important that these particular questions or problems should be addressed, what other research is being or has been conducted in this area and what particular contribution this project will make to the advancement of creativity, insights, knowledge and understanding of this area.

In trying to map out this context I have relied on Biggs' (2006) definition of research context in a practice-based PhD as

'the environment, the conditions under which research is produced or consumed…

Context can be both the physical environment; and the intellectual point–of-view,

the conceptual framework within which we make interpretations and judgments.'

What follows is a brief overview of the issues that frame my specific research context: practice-based research projects in related areas; the picturebook tradition and its current cultural and commercial status; academic research on picturebooks; Illustrators' contributions towards an understanding of their practice; my background as an illustrator including influences, training and professional practice. The definition of this framework will show the motivation for my research, as well as indicate the gap of knowledge that I am trying to address.

1.2 Practice-based PhDs

As far as I am aware, there are no PhD theses that focus solely on animal characterisation in picturebooks. I will discuss here three practice-based doctorates that are concerned with creative practice (illustration, writing, fashion design) as research, and which have informed my research.

Sarah McConnell's PhD research *The Art of Children's Book Illustration: An Exploration of Creative Practice with Particular Reference to Character, Dramatic Action and Pictorial Atmosphere* (2010) was carried out through her practice as a published picturebook author/illustrator and specifically through the making of a picturebook that features animal characters. Her thesis focuses on 'how the picturebook can be used as a vehicle for artistic expression within the process of authorship, and in turn how this

artistic activity is defined by the boundaries which shape this distinct medium' (2010, p.1). McConnell's reflection on the creative process is written in three parts. Each part contextualises one of the research objectives (Character, Dramatic Action and Pictorial Atmosphere) and reflects on the practice related to it. She offers insights into the process of picturebook animal characterisation especially in terms of using real life reference and on how ideas that emerged from character drawings initiated the work on the narrative. My approach is slightly different, in that characterisation is the main focus of my research. Furthermore, my perspective is that of a practitioner who attempts to create a picturebook for the first time, and learns through that process.

Michael Rosen's practice-based PhD research *A Materialist and Intertextual Examination of the Process of Writing a Work of Children's Literature* (1997) was carried out through his writing practice and the contextualisation of that practice. Rosen begins his thesis by examining texts about literary production written by three different poets (C.Day Lewis, Ted Hughes, and Constance Levy). He argues that some of their explanations about creativity or the production of specific poems provide 'necessary' but not 'sufficient' conditions for this production (for example the possession of language is necessary but not sufficient). Sufficient conditions according to Rosen are the material life of the poet, his or her ideological background, the intertextual processes that affect the practice, and the acknowledgement of feedback from specific or idealised audiences (1997, p.9). Avoiding engagement with these conditions resulted in statements (by the above poets) that have the effect of mystifying the creative process. Although I have not attempted a material, socioeconomic, or ideological contextualisation of my creative

practice on Rosen's scale, I have taken on board his arguments about mystification in descriptions of the creative process, and the need to establish a relationship between the circumstances of the author and the creative practice. I will also refer in Chapter 6 to Rosen's understanding of the writing process as a writing – reading – re-writing feedback cycle.

Otto von Busch's PhD thesis *Fashion-able: Hacktivism and Engaged Fashion Design* (2008) provides insights in generating self-initiated, innovative fashion projects and interventions. Through practice, he questions the hierarchy of the fashion industry and explores the issues of 'production' and 'craftsmanship', which in his experiments, have been handed over to the users. Von Busch has designed his thesis so that the visual and written part are integrated, to give a clear understanding of the different projects that form the practice element. Throughout his thesis he successfully uses a number of visual diagrams to clarify concepts, processes, and methods and to provide information about organisational systems.

The study of these three theses has given me insights into other artists' research through their practice and their approaches to contextualisation of and critical reflection on that practice.

1.3 The picturebook today

Picturebooks are illustrated books, mostly aimed at children, where the story is told through the interaction between words and pictures. The use of the term 'picturebook'

as one word (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2000; Watson, 2001; Lewis, 2001; Arizpe and Styles, 2003) emphasises this dependence on both words and pictures. The often-cited definition by Barbara Bader (1976, p.1) gives a full acount of what picturebooks are:

> 'A picture book is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document: and foremost an experience for a child. As an art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning page. On its own terms its possibilities are limitless.'

Below I will briefly discuss the evolution of the picturebook in terms of an artistic tradition, as a commercial product and in relation to our social beliefs about childhood.

Picturebooks have evolved from earlier forms of illustrated printed texts such as chapbooks, Victorian toy books and comic/cartoon stories (Lewis, 2001). Their contemporary form is a relatively recent development and is characterised by the ways in which words and pictures interact to tell a story. Most historians would agree that Randolph Candelcott's work in the late nineteenth century played an important role in giving pictures a distinctive voice in the storytelling. Technological advances in the printing industries in the twentieth century created more image-making possibilities for artists and made picturebooks widely accessible and affordable. Apart from traditionally trained illustrators, picturebooks have attracted visual storytellers from different disciplines including graphic design (Paul Rand), painting (Brian Wildsmith), and adverstising (Andre Francois, Dr Seuss). This variety of backgrounds, combined with

the tendency of picturebook makers to borrow storytelling techniques from literature, comics, film, and theatre have made picturebooks a diverse art form. Especially during the last three decades, picturebooks have become more sophisticated in terms of narrative, characterisation, word/image interaction and image making techniques. Some picturebooks have been described as postmodern in that they challenge the structures and conventions traditionally shared between writer and reader and thus disturb the readers' expectations (Lewis 2001).

Some of the most well known picturebooks feature compelling and distinctive characters. Throughout the thesis I use the term character to mean a fictional personality in a picturebook narrative. Historically, a large number of successful picturebook characters have been animals including Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* (1902), Jean de Brunhoff's *Babar* (1931), and Eric Carle's *Very Hungry Caterpillar* (1969). Some 'character-led' (McConnell 2010, p.21) picturebooks featuring animal characters have been so successful that they have been turned into series; contemporary examples include *Elmer* by David McKee (1989), *Maisy* by Lucy Cousins (1990), and *Olivia* by Ian Falconer (2000). In a broader context, much of the visual culture aimed at children is indeed character-led, such as for example *Disney* animated films, and *Sesame Street* TV series. Advertising campaigns aimed at children often endorse animal mascots or characters (e.g. breakfast cereals campaigns).

Salisbury and Styles have described children's book publishing as a 'massive global industry' (2012, p.165). The picturebook's healthy market value makes it one of the very few commercial platforms where static images are involved in storytelling. For

illustrators, picturebooks offer an attractive opportunity that combines telling stories and making a living. Illustrated stories for adults, that are not comics or graphic novels, are rarely seen in the UK market – with the exception of the Folio Society illustrated tomes and, more recently, books published by Atlantic Press, and NoBrow.

Publishers of children's books in the UK, where this research was undertaken, work closely with illustrators and writers in making a picturebook. This editorial process, or 'development', influences text, pictures, characterisation, and overall design. Illustrators and writers benefit from the editors' and designers' experience in and understanding of publishing. Nonetheless, the fact that a number of departments (such as marketing) are involved in giving feedback to the author/illustrator means that opinions may in part be based on the projected sales of a specific book and more specifically on co-edition sales (Salisbury and Styles, 2012). A focus on sales can potentially make publishers more conservative or reluctant to diverge from an already successful format:

> 'We do need to take a few more risks. There is a tendency for one extraordinary book to emerge and then everyone follows the format until it's dead. With all of these things you need the seller who will push them' (editorial director MacKenzie Smith interviewed in Salisbury and Styles 2012, p.174)

My research focuses on the stages of the creative practice before such commercial considerations arise. This decision was taken so that I could freely explore the process of making a picturebook as authorial illustration. Illustrators have often voiced the opinion that their practice should not just follow a brief but should involve the generation

of ideas and the development of concepts. Braund (2003, p.7) takes that argument further and suggests that authorial illustration practice could have a direct effect on the market:

'To my mind, much of the best illustration comes from illustrators who have a deep involvement in the origination and development of the work. Any opportunity to encourage a shift (even a small one), in our illustration culture (the culture of illustrated books, graphic novels, comics and other related artefacts), immediately engages my interest. The more examples of interesting personal work that appear in the public domain, the greater the chance of encouraging growth in the public interest. A growing audience will, in turn, create a demand which mainstream publishers may feel enticed to address or unable to ignore.'

Publishers' decisions when publishing picturebooks and parents' choices when buying them are influenced by social and cultural beliefs about childhood, and especially about what is considered appropriate for children. The majority of picturebooks present to their audience a version of childhood that is optimistic and comfortable (Meek 1988). According to Nodelman (1988), images in picturebooks for young children often express an idealised world of happiness, innocence, and order that does not always correspond to the realities of children's lives. Attitudes about how childhood should be depicted and what kind of stories children should be told have changed dramatically in the last 150 years, and still vary today between different countries around the world. Dangerous actions, death, aggression, or nudity make very rare appearances in the number of the mainstream picturebooks published every year in the UK and North

America. Exceptions to this rule include the *Sad Book* (Rosen and Blake, 2004) and *Bully* (David Hughes, 1993), books created by already established artists (Salisbury and Styles, 2012).

Although I did not set out to examine, analyse, or challenge these cultural beliefs, I can acknowledge that they must have influenced my choice of subject matter, the storytelling, and the characterisation. On the one hand, as a practitioner, I wanted to avoid the creation of something that was too sentimental. On the other hand, as a parent, I could acknowledge my tendency to present my children (when very young) with books offering the optimistic and comfortable version of the world that Meek (1988) describes.

1.4 Academic research on picturebooks

Academic research on published picturebooks originates in the disciplines of education, literacy, semiotics, literary criticism, children's literature, media studies, and cultural studies and sometimes draws on art criticism and psychology of perception.

The unique dynamics between words and images in picturebooks has been one of the focal points for academic research. In *How Picture Books Work*, Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) attempt to define a system of categories that could describe the variety of text/ image interactions: *Symmetry* (where words and pictures tell exactly the same story), *Complementarity* (visual and verbal narrative fill each other's gaps) *Enhancement* (pictures support words and words depend on pictures), and *Counterpoint* (when 'the

two narratives are mutually dependent') (2001, p.12). Nodelman (1988) has described the word/image interrelation as *ironic* when 'the words tell us what the pictures do not show, and the pictures show us what the words do not tell' (1988, p.222) and his analysis focuses mainly on books that display that irony, especially in terms of characterisation and narrative perspective. Such a view is widely held by literary critics. Agosto (1999) divides picturebook word-image interaction into two major categories: *Augmentation* when words and pictures 'amplify, extend and complete the story that the other tells' (1999, p.270) and *Contradiction* when written text and illustrations present conflicting information. Lewis (2001) refers to all these categories and also examines metaphors drawn from other art forms that have been used to describe the word/image relationship. He then proposes an ecological metaphor: words and pictures interact *ecologically*, the book acting as a kind of miniature ecosystem (Lewis 2001, p.48).

Picturebook characterisation has not been extensively researched. According to Nikolajeva (2003, p.37):

'Characterisation, that is, the set of devices used to create literary characters, is perhaps the least explored aspect of visual aesthetics. Although many studies of picturebooks examine who the characters are and what they do, or focus on the relationship between characters and the psychological implications of their actions, few if any attempt to show how the verbal and the visual level of a picturebook narrative co-operate or occasionally subvert each other in the area of characerisation'

In *How Picturebooks Work* (2001), Nikolajeva and Scott have dedicated a chapter

on characterisation where they offer an analysis of how characters are portrayed in picturebooks through description, actions and responses to events, and dialogue. Their detailed discussion on character includes specific picturebooks (such as Anthony Browne's *The Tunnel* and John Burningham's *Shirley*) with a focus on word-image interaction. They include in their analysis picturebooks in which the characters are objects (*The Egg*), animals (*Peter Rabbit*), or imaginary creatures (*The Moomins*).

Building on this analysis is Nikolajeva's article *Picturebook Characterisation: Word/ Image Interaction* (2003) that focuses explicitly on the distinct ways in which the two different modes of picturebook communication (the visual and the verbal) contribute to characterisation. She details separately the pictures' limitations, (for example the inability to convey concrete information about the characters such as their age) and the pictures' potential (such as the ability to provide a constant and detailed external description of the characters). Nikolajeva then focuses on the interplay between pictures and words and how this can contribute towards a mental representation of a picturebook character.

Nikolajeva's *The Rhetoric of Character in Children's Literature* (2002), draws on narrative theory, literary criticism and reader-response theory. Nikolajeva has divided the book in two parts. The first part offers an ontology and typology of character, discussing characters at story level: what they are and what their place in the narrative is. The second part, the epistemology of character, deals with characters on the discourse level: how they are constructed by the author and understood by the reader. Although in a theoretical analysis the story level and the discourse can be separated, during

my practice the thinking about who the characters were and how they would be constructed was inseparable. While I will not attempt a similar theoretical analysis, I acknowledge that this book has informed the discussion of my practice.

 Doonan (1993) and Nodelman (1988) have attempted an analysis of how picturebook images convey meaning, focusing on their basic ingredients (such as colour, texture, composition and stylistic approach) and how these can be part of a system that communicates information. They both refer to a meaningful organisation of visual elements but this approach was fully developed in *Reading Images: A Grammar of Visual Design* where Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) build a theory for the grammar of visual communication, partly basing their approach on Halliday's social semiotics. Kress and van Leeuwen are not concerned with the individual elements of pictures (marks) but rather with the visual structuring, the way all different elements are put together and form a visual syntax. Lewis (2001) has applied Kress and van Leeuwen's visual systemic functional grammar on picturebooks in order to establish how meaning is communicated from the organisational structure of pictures.

In *Art & Illusion: A study in the psychology of pictorial representation* (1977), Gombrich, an art historian, approaches visual art not only from the angle of the artist, whose task is to create a believable representation, but also from the point of view of the beholder, who recognises this representation. His analysis includes insights into issues that are also part of a picturebook illustrator's practice: how artists understand and represent reality by a reliance on visual formulas or 'schemata'; the visual illusion of texture and third dimension in pictorial representation; an analysis on physiognomy and the

simplification of human forms as a way of expressing emotions in caricatures.

Picturebooks, as the primary literature for young children, have also been studied from an educational perspective. *Talking Pictures* (Watson and Styles, 1996) is a 'conversation about picturebooks' (1996, p.1) that includes the responses of artists, teachers, parents, scholars and, most importantly children to picturebooks as these were recorded and analysed in readings and interviews. In his study of picturebooks, David Lewis (2001) included brief conversations with schoolchildren when reading picturebooks, in order to 'understand more fully what it means to read a picturebook' (2001, p.xvi). On a larger scale research project (involving 100 schoolchildren aged 4 – 11) conducted by Arizpe and Styles (2003) the children showed (through interviews, discussions and drawings) an understanding beyond what was expected of their developmental age and were able to interpret sophisticated images and multilayered narratives. Arizpe and Styles highlight the importance of picturebooks in developing visual literacy and their role in primary school education.

1.5 The practitioners' voice.

The critical texts discussed above focus on picturebooks exclusively as finished artefacts. My research, on the other hand, is concerned with the picturebook as a work in progress. I do not attempt a theoretical analysis of the finished picturebook, instead I investigate the practice that leads to it. Refsum (2002) clearly identifies the practice that leads to the production of an artefact, as an area of research for the visual arts:

'Artists and the field of visual arts deal primarily with that which happens before
artworks are made, this is their specialist arena, what comes afterwards is the arena
of the humanistic disciplines. If the field of visual arts wants to establish itself as
a profession with a theoretical framework it must, in my opinion, build its theory
production on that which happens before art is produced, that is, the processes that
lead to the finished objects of art.'

Refsum's quote now leads to the question: How have other picturebook makers
contributed to the knowledge and understanding of their practice and of what happens
before a picturebook is finished? The critical works which are discussed in the rest of
this section fall into the category of artistic, sometimes informal, professional writing or
interviews about illustration and are therefore less academic than those commented
on above.

Books such as *Illustrating Children's Books* (Salisbury, 2004) and *Writing with Pictures*
(Sulevitz, 1985) are written by children's book illustrators and offer a clear insight
of the different stages involved in creating a picturebook. Both publications include
work created by a variety of illustrators (as well as the authors themselves), which is
accompanied by interviews and anecdotal comments about practice. The glimpses of
different artists' practices give a clear sense that although different, all these practices
have similar concerns such as drawing, storytelling, and characterisation. The
purpose of these books is educational rather than to offer a detailed insight into single
approaches of individual artists. *Children's book illustration: step-by-step techniques*
(Bossert, 1998) contains a visual record of the illustrating techniques of established

picturebook illustrators. Their processes are presented as clean, predetermined, and linear narratives whereas the artists' interview comments focus mainly on technique.

Scott McCloud's *Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels* (2006), is an in depth guide of visual storytelling. Although his reflections refer specifically to comics they can also be applied to picturebooks. McCloud analyses different approaches to visual narratives, the creation of believable and compelling characters (or casts of characters), the role of the written text, and the importance of setting. His insights are presented as a generalisation, as guidelines that can help both an intellectual understanding and the studio practice of creating a successful comic, but this is not necessarily the way that each individual artist goes about making comics.

Quentin Blake's *Words and Pictures* (2001) offers a personal overview of Blake's long and successful career as a children's book illustrator, focusing on a number of his picturebooks (alongside other projects). Blake discusses his own approach to drawing, choosing moments to illustrate, creating characters, and how pictures work with text. Maurice Sendak's *Caldecott & Co* (1989) is a collection of his essays on picturebook illustrators and their practices. They are illuminating in providing a practitioner's understanding of picturebooks as well as allowing an insight into what drives Sendak's own practice. The acceptance speeches and interviews that are also included in this volume make specific reference to the strong link between his practice and his childhood memories, the intertextual references to other artists' work, and the importance of fantasy in his picturebooks. Selma Lane's biography of Sendak *The Art*

of Maurice Sendak (1980) is to an extent based on his writings from *Caldecott and Co*. The inclusion of his development rough drawings and dummy books (for example a visual record of how *Where the Wild Things Are* evolved) gives a better understanding of Sendak's illustration process and intentions.

A Life Drawing (2002) is Shirley Hughes' autobiography, in words and pictures, that details her childhood influences (comic books and films), studies, and professional practice. The book provides an invaluable record of her drawing practice, the working relationship with publishers and the relationship she has formed with her audience, children. Concluding the chapter dedicated to the publicity work required for promoting her books, Hughes (2002, p.165) writes:

> 'People like to have some kind of insight into the creative process, but to actually watch an author or artist at work would certainly be the most boring show on earth – a back view hunched over a desk or drawing board for hours at a time. So, for the adult public at least, we invent a persona. Not a mask exactly, it contains a good measure of ourselves. But not all of ourselves, not by a long chalk.'

It could be argued that this consideration of the illustrator's practice as boring or irrelevant for the general public (which is the intended readership for some of the books I have refered to) might be the reason why a detailed record of such practice is not offered.

A detailed, reflective account of the process of making a single illustration for a children's book is given by John Vernon Lord in the article *A Journey of Drawing: an Illustration for a Fable* (2005). Vernon Lord describes his drawing method and reflects on the use

of media, the importance of visual reference, and his approach on composition and experimentation. Each step of his illustration process seems to be driven by a set of questions, which are answered through the drawing practice.

In *Voices Off* (Styles, Bearne, and Watson, eds, 1996), Watson provides an analysis of Satoshi Kitamura's work based on Kitamura's seminars and letters to the author. Kitamura clearly and fluently discusses elements of his practice such as technique, the use of colour and line, the use of humorous visual references. It is interesting that when asked about aspects of the creative process that involved the origination of ideas and stories, or about how emotions are expressed through images his responses were 'mysterious' or 'enigmatic' (Watson 1996, pp.237- 338).

Other picturebook makers' reflections have taken the form of interviews, where the questions are posed by the interviewer. These interviews appear in books focusing on children's literature such as *The Pied Pipers* (Wintle and Fisher, 1975), *Children Reading Pictures* (Arizpe and Styles, 2003), and *Children's Picturebooks* (Salisbury and Styles, 2012). Often interviews with picturebook illustrators and authors can be found in newspapers (for example *The Guardian*) or specialist magazines such as *Books for Keeps* (in regular features *Windows into illustration* and *Authorgraph*).

All the above testimonies express directly the practitioner's understanding of their practice of illustrating or creating picturebooks. Most of these reflections are addressed to a general audience and some are put together to offer an educational guide or to generalise an image-making methodology. A number of statements focus on specific

aspects of the illustrator's practice (for example media used, drawing and observation) while other considerations (the generation of ideas, the 'boring' labour involved in creating a picturebook, 'mistakes' or unsuccessful paths) remain invisible or opaque. Some accounts present an impression of order, or a 'narrative' of practice, which does not necessarily correspond to the realities of that practice. Most importantly, none of these reflections (with the exception of McConnell's thesis which I discussed earlier in this chapter) has been the result of a systematic and sustained inquiry, that is, a research project, into and through illustration practice.

The **gap of knowledge** is situated in the area of research carried out by picturebook illustrators, through their own individual practice, that offers a record, contextualisation, and critical reflection of that practice. My research addresses this gap with a specific focus on the development of picturebook animal characters. Such practice-based research can offer new understandings on picturebooks, and enrich the discourse on how picturebooks work and are understood, by bringing into the foreground the practitioner's intentions, considerations, and methods. This gap of knowledge should also be addressed in order to provide an understanding of picturebook illustration practice that would be beneficial for other practitioners, especially those in the formative years of their careers.

1.5 My personal background and illustration practice

This part refers to my origins, education, influences since childhood, and my illustration practice. The purpose of my research is not to investigate or clarify the exact connection

between past events or influences on this research project. In his article on Studio-Art PhDs, Elkins (2009, p.149) argues that such an attempt cannot be reliable:

> 'But in history of art, artists' assessments of their influences are notoriously unreliable: artists commonly claim to be influenced by other artists even when those influences turn out to be inscrutable, idiosyncratic, or otherwise unavailable to historians and other viewers.'

Still, the work produced for this research project cannot be seen in a cultural or social void. My aim is to provide a short description of my background, thereby placing my research within a specific cultural and educational context.

I was born and grew up in Greece, the oldest of four children. As the gaps between siblings were around 4-5 years, I was constantly in touch with picturebooks, illustrated books, comics, and stories for children until I left home for London, at the age of 22. My childhood memories of reading books with pictures are always infused with the enjoyment of entering a world free of the laws or rules of everyday life.

My memories of illustrated books and picturebooks are dominated by the characters rather than the stories or words. *Alfavitario* (1949), the Greek language book used for the first year of primary school throughout Greece (until 1981), was the first book I learned to draw from (**Figure 1**). Words and pictures had to be copied daily on to a notebook. Years later, my MA dissertation (2002) focused on how *Alfavitario* was used not only for teaching language but also for building a post war Greek identity, by setting standards for family, religion, school, gender relationships, work ethics etc. In contemporary Greece it has acquired an iconic status and its images are often used

to convey a nostalgic and idealised view of childhood and the past.

Another childhood favourite was the Greek children's magazine *Rodi* (1970 to 1996), my first introduction to cartoons and comic strips. This magazine was also the first platform for the anthropomorphic characters (vegetables, animals and other creatures) created by Eugene Trivizas (best known in the UK for *Three little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* (1993), illustrated by Helen Oxenbury). As I was growing older I developed a preference for comic books such as *Disney* comics, *Superman*, *Asterix,* and *Tintin*. I vividly remember that even when I was a fluent reader, I read comic books by relying mostly on the images while usually ignoring written captions.

Picturebooks that made a lasting impression were those brought as presents by my aunt who lived in Paris. These books included the *Barbapapa* (**Figure 2**) book series (Tison and Taylor, 1970), and books illustrated by Quentin Blake, Richard Scarry, and Dick Bruna. These were books that – to my knowledge – were not available in the Greek market at the time.

After school I studied Chemistry graduating in 1995. My studies were coloured by the fact that I did not like what I was studying and that I was trying to find out what I wanted to do. I think this period was important in forming a keen interest in any visual narrative and especially world cinema and comic books (by artists such as Enki Bilal, Charles Burns, and Moebius).

During my studies I attended numerous drawing lessons (still life, life drawing), went through an inker internship for a Disney comic book artist in Athens, and then an

animation training (run by Greek animation studio Artoon), which enabled me to find work in London in 1995 as an animation assistant. I worked in traditional hand-drawn 2D animation projects (later also as an animator and layout artist) such as *Space Jam* (Warner Brothers, 1996), *The Rugrats Movie* (Paramount, 1998), and *Gorillaz* (Passion Pictures, 2001).

I give the details of my training here because of the way it affected my drawing method, through work rather than study. I developed a drawing technique focused on specific outcomes such as making characters move and keeping characters and backgrounds consistent. Although the work demanded universality and not originality in drawing, I became confident in animating movement and in my understanding of film preproduction stages. During this time I also discovered the work of animator Richard Williams on *The Thief and the Cobbler* (which he never completed himself) as well as the comics published by Drawn and Quarterly (based in Canada), and the illustrated books by Edward Gorey. I finally realised I wanted to be an illustrator when, at one of the evening classes I attended, the tutor, Elizabeth Harbour (herself a children's book illustrator), showed us a slide show of the history of the picturebook.

I studied illustration at Kingston University (1998-2000) and the Royal College of Art (2000-2002). During these years a lot of effort was invested in developing a personal method for solving problems visually and in finding a 'style' that would distinguish my work from other illustrators. A significant amount of time was spent in the print room, where I worked by directly painting filler on silkscreens – a method that allowed me to break away from the perscribed way of drawing that my animation training had

instilled. My illustration practice developed through telling stories and making books –

although none of these were for children. Meanwhile I became aware of contemporary

illustrators who used pictures to tell stories such as Sarah Fanelli, J. Otto Seibold,

Gary Baseman and Jeff Fisher. Some of the feedback I was given during my studies

is still, I think, the motive behind some of my decisions, when I try to avoid making

work that is – in the words of my former tutors – 'too beautiful' (Dan Fern) or 'formal'

(Quentin Blake).

Screenprinting enabled me to release complete control over the image making

process. According to Salisbury and Styles (2012, p.137)

> 'placing a technical process between artist and paper introduces an element of
>
> accident and surprise to the outcome: this lessening of control frequently has the
>
> by-product of lessening self-consciousness in mark-making'.

Often the limitations of the process, would inspire new directions of practice. For

example, the limited number of colours I could use encouraged experimentation with

overprinting of transparent layers. Picturebook illustrator Gwenola Carrere has had

a similar experience: 'The limitations of the screen-printing technique gave me an

amazing new sense of freedom' (Salisbury and Styles 2012, p.157). It has been very

encouraging to see that a number of illustrators use printmaking as their primary image

making method. In *Red Light, Green Light* (1992) Andrew Kulman used linocuts to

create characters, people, and animals in motion (**Figure 3**). The dynamic compositions

work well with the expressive shapes and lines cut out of the lino block. Isabelle

Vandenabeele's woodcuts point at the potential of printmaking in a picturebook

context. Even when only two colours are used, as in *Rood Rood Roodkapje* (2003) (**Figure 4**), Vandenabeele uses colour overprinting, line, texture and compositions that create striking visual imagery. The *Haunted House* (2008) by Kazuno Kohara contains illustrations that were produced as lino cuts (**Figure 5**). The limited colour palette (black ink printed on orange paper with the addition of collaged white tissue paper) worked very successfully with the characterisation and the story. For *Moon Rabbit* (2009) printmaker Natalie Russell created multicoloured screenprints, where it seems that her initial line drawings were directly transfered to the screen for the final artwork, thus retaining the vitality of the originals (**Figure 6**).

Following my studies, freelance commissions included editorial (**Figure 7**), book jackets (**Figure 8**), editorial illustrations (**Figure 9**), and character design (**Figure 10**). I was soon pigeonholed as 'someone who draws animal characters', which I did not see as a problem. Creating animal characters was an important part of my visual language: something that I could do well and that could make my work recognisable. It also meant that I could bring humour into my images. I continued to use screenprinting but I also developed a method of imitating screenprinting effects in Adobe Photoshop for projects with tight deadlines (**Figure 11**). Time limitations and brief restrictions in most projects meant that my animal characters were never developed any further than the original briefs. They existed in single images, often against a white background.

At the same time, there seemed to be a boom in the culture of stand-alone characters (*Hello Kitty* by Yuko Shimizu (1974) being an early precursor) either digital, on paper, or as limited edition vinyl or plush toys. The *Pictoplasma* project was set up in 1999

to celebrate the art of character design. Its founders, Denicke and Thaler initially created an online character archive that was then expanded into print in the form of the *Pictoplasma Encyclopedia* (2001, 2003, and 2006) and a yearly international conference and festival in Berlin (and more recently in New York). Denicke and Thaler (2009, p.11) have described this trend in character design:

> 'Character design' was hijacked as a technical term from the animation industry, where it still defines a fixed set of shapes necessary for the unvarying reproduction of a drawn actor. What differentiated the new breed of characters, as we saw it, was their ability to communicate emotionally and bypass the need for biographical explanations. Unlike pictograms that function as signs to transmit meaning – giving directions or warnings – these characters were focused solely on eye contact, on triggering a simple process of communication. Free of all narrative and cultural restrictions, they operated as reflective surfaces, empty screens onto which viewers could project the psychology, attitude or emotion of their choosing'

There also seems to be a trend for publications such as LeGun, and more recently NoBrow as anthologies of images created by different illustrators on a given theme. These images, while containing narrative elements, usually stand alone without being part of a sequence. Although my practice was influenced by and was part of this way of working (my work appeared both in *Pictoplasma* (**Figure 12**) and *LeGun* (**Figure 13**)), I felt that my characters needed stories if they were going to be developed into something more substantial than a freestanding visual form.

During that period, the narrative side of my practice took the form of limited editions

artists' books that were based on preexisting texts (**Figure 14** and **Figure 15**). Creating these books resulted in a good understanding of all the production stages from generating ideas to selling the books at artists' bookfairs. I learned about paper stock, paper folding, and pagination. In terms of content, I understood that these books, although popular at artists book fairs, were not addressed to a specific audience but myself. Part of the **motivation behind this research project** (apart from addressing the gap in knowledge) was to bring together two aspects of my practice that seemed to work independently: the commercial side, based on animal characters which were created for specific briefs but were not part of a story, and the personal side that involved making personal narrative books with no particular audience.

A number of arists' book collaborations between myself and another illustrator/ printmaker, Dettmer E. Otto (**Figure 16**), gave me an insight into a completely different process of creating an artist's book – as well as into a different, more political point of view expressed in the final outcome. As a keyholder at East London Printmakers, I have also had glimpses into other artists' practices, as during the printing process ,the shared studio space becomes a place of questions, discussions, and suggestions about the work in progress. I have been intrigued by how the motivation behind each artist's project (an attempt to master a new technique or format, the translation of an abstract idea or a personal experience into a print, the production of a pattern or a limited edition print) can shape the studio practice.

I think that my interest in the process of making pictures springs not only from my unorthodox path in looking for my own method, but it is also strongly related to my

work as a tutor and lecturer at an illustration university course. I have observed my students' developing illustration practices and I have been interested in the ways these practices are formed and encouraged. The relationship between theory and studio practice, as well as the balance between academic achievement and professional enterprise, are issues relevant to both my teaching and this research project. Teaching practice is mentioned here not as a parameter of my research but as a part of my professional life that could be linked to the motivation of my inquiry.

The last element that completes the context framework in terms of my background is more personal. During the course of the research (which up to now has taken seven years) I had two children. I believe that motherhood had a major effect on this specific research project because it allowed me, as an individual, a stronger emotional connection with the subject of my practice and consequently the practice itself. It gave me new insights not only into childhood but also new insights into picturebooks: how they are actually read to and with children.

Chapter 2
Research design

Having established the research context, the gap of knowledge, and the motivation for the research, this chapter will give an overview of the research aim and the research design. The methods, that is, the 'individual techniques' (Sullivan 2010, p. 35) involved in the research, will be discussed and explained.

2.1 Research Aims

In their 1997 pamphlet *Practice Based Doctorates in the Creative and Performing Arts and Design* the UK Council for Graduate Education (1997, p.22) states that a practiced-based research project does not necessarily set out to answer specific questions:

> 'Research in the practice of the Arts related subjects … does not, typically, begin with a predetermined set of questions or assumptions but arises from particular situations or contexts, which can be described with sufficient precision for a project to emerge.'

Although there is no predetermined set of questions, my thesis has a specific **research aim**: to investigate animal character development in picturebook illustration through the practice involved in creating my own picturebook featuring animal characters. The research is carried out from the point of view of the illustrator as a practitioner, through her own practice, and is concerned with authorial illustration by focusing on the early stages of creating a picturebook.

2.2 Research design

The **research design** was not entirely predetermined but follows the trajectory of the creative practice through which the research is carried out. McConnell (2010), in describing the link between research design and her illustration practice, refers to the UK Council for Graduate Education (1997, p.22) definition of the term **'Emergent'**:

> "Emergent' is the key term as, significantly, decisions and directions within the project are determined by the development of the project. As a research project, such decisions and directions within the project would be consequential upon a systematic application of a process and level of self-reflection, critical analysis and synthesis, evaluation, conceptual frame building, acquisition and applications of contextual knowledge and an understanding of the way the practice is related to theory, in relation to the specific work being undertaken.'

I also have followed this approach which acknowledges that creative practice can move towards unpredicted directions, and does not obstruct its dynamics, imbalances or impulses.

2.3 Methods

Given the lack of a universally accepted or established research framework for art and design, researchers often adopt 'hybrid' (UWE, 2007) or 'pick and mix' (Yee, 2010) methodologies, combining methods from the fields of sciences, social sciences, and humanities. My investigation will use the methods referred to in the statement above: 'systematic application of a process and level of self-reflection, critical analysis and synthesis, evaluation, conceptual frame building, acquisition and applications of

contextual knowledge and an understanding of the way the practice is related to theory' (UK Council for Graduate Education 1997, p.22).

What follows is a clarification of the methods and parameters of the research project, in the form of answers to a series of questions.

2.3.1. What is the illustration practice on which this research is based?

As my already established illustration practice is the central tool for the research, I will give a brief description here. The illustrations or images are produced by a process that can be described in two parts. The first part involves the generation and development of ideas, in the form of rough drawings (in pencils, markers and pens). For a commercial project these ideas are in response to a specific brief or written text. For a personal project, ideas originate in personal experiences or found texts. The second part involves translating these developed drawings into final artwork. The pencil drawings are traced in a lightbox and re-drawn with a brush and black acrylic paint. The black and white artwork is then either coloured in Photoshop or transferred on to a silkscreen to be printed. For this project, I have used screenprinting for the production of all the artwork.

For the purpose of this research, the practice initially adopted a more exploratory approach so as to specifically investigate the process of authorial illustration. At the beginning of the project the research aim was specific whereas the nature of the final artefact was not strictly defined and the outcome was open-ended. This allowed me

to start the project with a state of mind free of restrictions, and encouraged openness in exploring ideas and possibilities, which might not have been the case if I was concentrating on a fixed and pre-determined outcome or an illustration 'brief'. As the work progressed, the shape of the final artefact became more evident and specific: a picturebook proposal (or maquette) for a children's book publisher.

2.3.2 What was the timeframe?

There was no specific time frame – except the one applied by the degree regulations. During my studies I had two children, which resulted in two one-year intermissions. The initial study of critical literature and reading of picturebooks happened before the first intermission. The practice was completed in the three years between the births of my children. The writing of the critical reflection (written component of the submission) took place after the second intermission.

2.3.3 What was the role of the feedback?

During the research project, discussions and comments on the work influenced the practice and my understanding of it. Feedback took the form of informal discussions that were not designed or structured. They were interpreted intuitively, with no attempt for a quantitative or scientific evaluation. The written submission refers to specific feedback when it was influential for the practice.

Meetings with my two supervisors took place throughout this project and, depending

on the project stage, influenced the direction of the research. They affected the understanding of the research context, helped with decisions to revise and improve the practical work, brought into the discussion the relationship between picturebook and audience, enabled a better understanding of the work in progress towards building the characters and the plot.

Since 2008, when a first full size dummy book was completed, a publisher has been interested in the picturebook. This resulted in informal occasional meetings with the same team of editor and designer. These ensured that the practice was linked to the real world of publishing and gave me an insight into practical considerations (such as page numbers, visual weight, clarity, and consistency). I was not bound by a contract or a development fee during my research, and so I could be selective about what feedback to take on board. I was offered a contract for the picturebook when it took the form of the final proposal as it is submitted here.

Informal reading sessions of my rough dummies with my son were aimed at understanding how the book would be used by a parent and a child reading together. My research will not look at my work in relation to how it could be read, understood, or responded to by children and there will be no analysis based on reader response theory or developmental psychology.

Finally, I have included some feedback which was given to me in the form of comments or discussions and which, later on, came to influence the practice: A comment about the alien's role and a discussion about animal species co-existing in picturebooks

(both discussed in chapter 6).

2.3.3. How was the practice and the reflections on the practice recorded?

A fundamental component of the research was the recording of the development of the creative practice. All drawings, dummy books and prints were dated and collated. Photographs were taken and digital files saved to record some aspects of the practice. Notes containing thoughts, plans, decisions were written next to the drawings/artwork and were dated and collated. A record was made of any other material (photographs, exhibitions, books) that might have influenced the creative process and the feedback from supervisors and the publisher.

At the outset of the research I was constantly observing my practice and keeping notes, thus operating on two levels: that of the practitioner and that of the observer/researcher. I soon realised that working on both levels simultaneously interfered with and inhibited the creative process. I found myself consciously thinking about decisions and outcomes of the practice before even beginning the work. In my previous experience as a practitioner, an important part of the creative process (the part of generating ideas, making conceptual links and moving into new directions) was intuitive and tacit although its outcomes or realisation could be observed, understood and explicitly described. This part needed a state of mind free of self-consciousness where I could be totally immersed in the practice itself. The act of constantly and consciously observing myself deprived me of such freedom.

What seemed to be needed was a way of recording and reflecting which would not compromise the research and would not inhibit the practice. The solution was to date and collect all the material as it was produced but only pause to write observations and consciously reflect once a body of work had been completed.

2.3.2. How did I reflect about the practice and the work produced? How were decisions taken?

During the creative practice I was thinking through making, while making and because of making. I agree with Makela and Routarinne's (2006, cited in Sullivan 2010, p.78) argument that making plays an integral part in practice-based research:

'In established fields of research, making is generally regarded as consequent to thinking – at least in theory … in the field of practice-led research, praxis has a more essential role: making is conceived to be the driving force behind the research and in certain modes of practice also the creator of ideas.'

In order to best describe how thinking and reflection took place during the creative practice, and how decisions were taken, I will use Donald Schön's (1983) terms *Reflection-in-action* and *Reflection-on-action*. I need to clarify that I did not set out to be a 'Reflective Practitioner', but rather that Schön's terms best described the reflection that took place during the studio practice.

While in the action of producing the work, I was aware that thinking and decision-making was in progress – although this thinking was inseparable from doing. I could not put it into words and I was not able to give an accurate or complete

description; when I tried, the creative process was inhibited. This instinctive, intuitive reflection, which was not articulated but manifested in the actions I was taking, is what I understood to be *reflection-in-action* (Schön, 1983). The criteria used for reflection and decision making *in-action* were also difficult to put in to words and would revolve around phrases such as: 'does this feel right', 'does this design/form/colour fit'.

Once a body of work was completed and collated I would then *reflect-on-action* (Schön, 1983), that is, reflect after the creative event has ended. This part of the reflection process allowed me time and space to bridge the above-mentioned intuitive and tacit knowing with a more conscious and articulate understanding. I was able to understand motives behind actions, evaluate outcomes, re-frame problems and take decisions regarding the next steps of the research. It was also possible to reflect on 'accidents' or 'mistakes' in the creative process and their impact as well as make suggestions as to where inspiration had originated. This reflection was written down in the form of notes next to the work. Reflection *in* and *on* action would feedback into, and influence the creative practice.

The criteria employed to reflect, evaluate, and take decisions *on*-action were a more articulated version of the criteria used when reflecting *in*-action and were focused on how to achieve the objectives of the practice. These criteria and objectives evolved with the practice and were different for each stage of this project. Objectives for the practice are clearly articulated in each of the chapters that follow. For example, at the earliest stage of the practice I aimed to explore animal representation and challenge my method of drawing animal characters (chapter 3) whereas at a later stage (chapter 6)

the objectives were concerned with the creation of a publishable picturebook featuring animal characters.

As much as I would like to explain every detail of my practice, specifically my decisions or generation of ideas, part of the experiential knowledge evades communication and remains tacit. A significant part of the process was not conscious, but based on intuition or instinct. Although in the written reflection on the practice I attempt to de-mystify the process, I am often not able to trace my thinking or decisions to their origin. Other times I make suggestions as to where inspiration might have originated or offer hypotheses as to how different parts of the practice could have influenced each other.

2.3.4 What was the role of writing in this research project?

The written part of the PhD submission offers a record of, critical reflection on and contextualisation of my practice with a specific focus on characterisation. The act of writing this exegesis involved a different kind of thinking and reflection to the reflection involved in the studio practice. This thinking was primarily concerned with the dissemination of knowledge, with explaining clearly and unambiguously the process and its development so that it could be understood by others (whereas in the studio practice short notes were written for my own benefit). The writing brought together my own studio reflection on the process (in the form of written notes), my memories of the practice, the evidence of the work produced (drawings, illustrations, and dummy books), and the context (theoretical framework and physical conditions).

Moreover this synthesis, primarily focused on communicating to others, contributed towards a more conscious understanding of my characterisation and illustration practice and of the links between the different stages of this project. Surprisingly, it also highlighted discrepancies in my conscious thinking during the creative practice and what was being expressed by the outcome. An example is my belief that I was free of gender stereotyping when creating the monkey character, whereas the cultural context of monkey characters in picturebooks points towards a strong association of monkeys as male (Chapter 4).

As a practitioner who is immersed in her practice, I am writing from a subjective point of view. This is the record of an individual practice, and although the understandings would be relevant to other illustrators' practices, the written part does not attempt any generalisations.

2.3.5 What was the relationship between theory and practice?

Theory was involved with the creative practice in the following ways:

First of all, the theory created a framework for the research. At the beginning of this project there was a period dedicated solely to the familiarisation with critical studies on picturebooks and characterisation. This defined the context for the practice and the gap of knowledge that the research was going to address and gave me an understanding of the potential of characterisation in picturebooks. At the time, my way of coping with this new knowledge was by organising and linking the information

visually, in the form of a mind map (**Figure 17**).

Second, the theory influenced the practice. At the early stages of the practice, theoretical concepts acted as starting points that inspired some of the exploratory work. For example my attempt to not rely solely on predetermined 'schemata' (Gombrich, 1977) in my drawings of animals (see Chapter 3), or the inspiration from Jane Doonan's (1993) writing on the illusion of texture in picturebook illustrations (Chapter 4). These visual explorations were initiated by the critical writing but were not produced in an attempt to 'illustrate' that writing.

Third, I theorised on my own practice. If theory is 'an explanation or system of anything' (Chambers Dictionary 1998, p.1720), then by reflecting on the practice (in the studio) and writing about the practice (at a later stage) I was forming an explanation of that practice.

Finally, the theory informed the writing. The critical writing on picturebooks, when revisited during the writing up period, equiped me with the terminology and helped me to make explicit some of the experiential knowledge. For example when I was working on the picturebook plot, the decisions were mostly intuitive and focused on the objectives of the practice. When writing about this part of the practice I realised that I had created what Nikolajeva defines as a 'basic' or 'master' plot (2002, p.160) and what Booker calls a 'Voyage and Return' plot (2004, p.105). In discussing the plot, I use this terminology, but when I was creating the work I was not consciously aware of it.

In summary, although theory and practice were connected, I did not approach the research from a theoretical or critical perspective of a specific discipline. The point of view was that of the practitioner, immersed in her practice.

Chapter 3
Anthropomorphism and Stereotypes

In this chapter I will explore the concepts of anthropomorphism and stereotyping in picturebook animal characterisation through the study of a range of primary literature and critical secondary reading, and through my own practice. First, I will provide a brief overview of anthropomorphism in published picturebooks with an emphasis on my own, subjective experience as reader and practitioner. Secondly, I will discuss the depiction of animal characters as stereotypes and investigate whether the design of such characters depends on formulaic representation. Finally, through exploratory practice, I will look at how my own image making is influenced by anthropomorphism and animal stereotypes.

An understanding of past and present animal characterisation in picturebooks was necessary in order to investigate the creative process that leads to it. Therefore I combined the review of theoretical and critical literature on picturebooks with the study of 60 published picturebooks featuring animal characters. The choice of books, while highly subjective, was made according to the following criteria. All 60 picturebooks were published in the English language since 1900. The majority originated in the UK and USA, were relatively well known (therefore easily accessible) and published by mainstream publishers. All featured at least one animal as a 'central' character, that is, a character without whom the plot cannot develop (Nikolajeva 2002, p.112). Two books feature monster characters: *Not now Bernard* (David McKee, 1980), and *Where the Wild Things Are* (Maurice Sendak,1963). A number of picturebooks were chosen for their cultural importance, some having been recommended by my supervisors or referred to as significant in the critical literature. Other books are on

the list because I have considered them influential on my own practice and others because of their popularity and commercial success. A smaller number of books were found through a search in my local library, as I did not want to refer only to critically acclaimed picturebooks but have access to a wider variety and thus attempt a better understanding of the market. A full list of the books is given in the references section. In the discussion that follows, I will only refer to the picturebooks that I have found most representative, or the ones that best exemplify the ideas I am discussing.

The study of these picturebooks affected the research, including the practice. I did not attempt a theoretical analysis or historical review of the use of anthropomorphism and animal stereotypes in picturebooks. Rather, combining the study of critical literature with that of published picturebooks, enabled me, as a practitioner, to achieve a better and more conscious comprehension of these concepts and their manifestations. It also worked the other way round: finding something interesting in a picturebook, initiated more reading on characterisation, visual representation of animal characters, and a closer examination of the interaction between pictures and words. On a more intuitive level, experiencing these picturebooks, both as a reader and practitioner, I was able to understand more about the illustrators' practice. This understanding was not consciously articulated; rather it consisted of a mental visualisation of how, within my own practice, I could achieve similar outcomes in terms of concepts and image making. Finally there was the feeling of enjoyment I derived from the images, stories and characterisation, the enthusiasm it gave me for the genre's potential, and the inspiration it provided for generating my own work.

3.1 Anthropomorphism

When studying the picturebooks I gravitated towards what I found one of the most fascinating aspects of the animal characters: the degree of anthropomorphism involved in their creation. Anthropomorphism is 'the ascription of human characteristics to what is not human - especially an animal' (Chambers Dictionary 1998, p.63). In this section I will discuss my understanding of anthropomorphism in animal characterisation in specific picturebooks, expressed by the characters' appearance and behaviour. Then, picturebook anthropomorphic character design is discussed with reference to my understanding of illustration practice: the use of human facial expressions and body postures, clothing, and the overall design of characters as humans wearing animal costumes or masks. Finally I will briefly refer to the motivation driving the illustrator's practice.

According to Watson (2001, p.32):

> 'The association between children and stories about animals is very ancient. Not only do animals figure strongly in many myths, folktales, and legends but they also constitute the core of the fable tradition which, from Roman times, has featured centrally in the early stages of children's literacy development.'

A large number of animals, or rather animal characters, appear in children's literature, including illustrated children's books and picturebooks (Townsend, 1965; Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001; Watson, 2001). The species of animals that feature in stories for children and the function of these characters in the narrative (moralising, charming, absurd, magical) have changed over time, reflecting social and cultural changes

(Watson, 2001). In picturebooks there has been a steady increase of such characters. According to Carey (2002, p.17): 'Although there were some talking animals in Victorian times, it wasn't until the 20th century that anthropomorphism became endemic in children's books'. This increasing popularity of animal characters in picturebooks (as well as in animated films, comic books, and toy designs) has taken place while real animals are 'disappearing' (Berger 2009, p.36) from children's lives – to be encountered only as pets or 'displayed' in zoos: 'Zoos, realistic animal toys and the widespread commercial diffusion of animal imagery, all began as animals started to be withdrawn from daily life' (Berger 2009, p.35).

One reason for the popularity of using animals as characters in picturebooks may be associated with the fact that animal characters are free of ethnicity, race, gender, and age associations and therefore are sometimes preferred in order to reach a wider – often worldwide – audience. In picturebooks, text and image contribute to the creation of a wide spectrum of animal creatures which vary from

> 'almost zoologically accurate representations, in which human characteristics are conveyed primarily through the text, to upright walking biped versions, who are really humans with animal faces.' (Salisbury 2004, p.69)

Illustrators create ambiguous creatures, part human and part animal, which can only inhabit picturebook pages. This ambivalence does not seem to hinder the enjoyment of young readers who tend to take such inconsistencies in their stride and find such extraordinary creatures at once incredible and believable, fantastic and familiar. The gap between animal and human nature, an intrinsic part of these characters, 'keeps

alive a sense that the world is strange and full of wonder' (Watson 2001, p.32).

When studying the published picturebooks, my interest focused on how anthropomorphism seemed to be constructed through each animal character's *appearance* and *behaviour*. Appearance in picturebooks is mostly communicated by the pictures and varies depending on whether the character displays human facial expressions, whether the posture, body language and use of limbs is animal or human, and whether the character wears clothes and lives in a house. The animal's behaviour can be communicated by both pictures and words and depends on the role the animal plays in the plot. It varies greatly according to the animal character's ability to think, speak, feel (in human terms), have relationships (again, as understood by humans), and generally lead a human life – including family life, work, holidays etc.

In discussing animal stories, Townsend (1965, pp.120-130) conveniently divides them into two categories: stories about 'humanised' animals who talk, wear clothes, and have a family life like our own, and stories about 'animals as such', who are presented, as nearly as possible, in their animal nature. This distinction could also be made about picturebooks. Through my interest in animal appearance and behaviour, and using Townsend's distinction, I will discuss a selection of some representative anthropomorphic picturebook animals.

At one end of the spectrum are Richard Scarry's fully humanised animals. Their actions, emotions and speech are entirely human (**Figure 18**). In their majority they are constructed as anthropomorphic not only in behaviour but in their appearance as well:

walking on two legs and wearing clothes. The only visual references to their animal origins are the forms of their faces, paws, and tails. Some of the characters' names also help in identifying them as animals (e.g. *Lowly Worm*, *Huckle Cat*). Beatrix Potter's highly influential animal characters, such as *Peter Rabbit* (1902), are also humanised (Townsend 1965, p.120). They are distinctive for their naturalistic and detailed visual representation (**Figure 19**). This depiction is combined with human clothing, and the ease with which Potter's characters seem to change from an animal to a human pose. This ambiguity between human and animal extends to Potter's plot, where people (Mc Gregor) and anthropomorphic animals (Peter Rabbit) interact.

'Animals-as-such' characters appear in Brian Wildsmiths' illustrations in *The Hare and the Tortoise* (1966). He has favoured a naturalistic representation with almost no anthropomorphic elements (**Figure 20**). It is worth noticing that although each animal is depicted as it is in real life, the compositions of animal groups on the page are staged and reminiscent of human behaviour. The words are a re-telling of the Aesop fable and attribute speech, thinking, motivations, and feelings to these animals. Moreover they ascribe specific human traits to them. The anthropomorphism here originates mostly in the words.

Out of the picturebooks I studied, the only representation of a real animal in a central role was the dog in *The Dog* by John Burningham (1975). Burningham's story is narrated by a boy who is left in charge of a dog for a day (**Figure 21**). The boy's words describe actions, events, and his own feelings but do not ascribe any personality traits, human emotions or thoughts to the animal. The dog looks like a dog (in Burmingham's visual

language) and his behaviour is animal like. Burningham's observation brings across the immense joy that the little boy has derived from spending time with the dog and his enjoyment in the dog behaviour. I understood that in this book the roles of the child and the animal were distinct and well defined.

In some picturebooks two different kinds of animals (humanised and animal-like) seem to co-exist happily in the same secondary world. An example is Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park* (1998). In this picturebook the gorillas, who are the protagonists, are entirely humanised. They take on entirely human roles: they live in houses, go to the park, wear clothes and own pets. The story is about their differing (human) points of view, feelings, social attitudes, and outlook on life. This insight is combined with Browne's detailed, naturalistic depiction of their gorilla heads. At the same time, the pet dogs, who are peripheral characters in this picturebook, have been constructed as animal-like (**Figure 22**). They appear and behave like dogs with no anthropomorphic element involved in their design.

Following his distinction between stories that feature 'humanised' and 'animals as such' characters, as outlined above, Townsend (1965, p.120) goes on to discuss the difficulty in creating naturalistic animal characters in children's literature: 'we do not and cannot know what it feels like to be an animal' and this makes the procedure of creating stories about animals speculative. In the majority of the picturebooks I read, this speculation seems to have led to the central animal characters taking part in mostly human stories in the sense that even when the events or actions are based on an animal's life, the characters are ascribed human motivations, feelings, and thoughts

– even when they cannot speak.

Anthropomorphic characterisation is often achieved by the attribution of human facial expressions to animals and, indeed, inanimate objects. I have used this device extensively in my own practice in order to communicate specific emotions. Influenced by my animation training I would model facial expressions and then I would apply them to the animal characters I was working on (like the animator in **Figure 23**). A human-like face enables the illustrator to directly apply the visual vocabulary of 'basic human emotions' and their modifications (McCloud 2006, p.82), which can be understood by readers around the world. The visual manifestations of some of these basic emotions have been drawn by Falconer (2000) on Olivia's face in **Figure 25**. It is worth noting that even when the animal visual representation is not anthropomorphic, facial expressions can be enhanced and humanised. For example the animal's gaze or stare is often drawn as that of a human, in order to reveal information about character relationships and/or character feelings and thoughts. An example can be found in Brian Wildsmith's painting of the hare looking back at the animals following him in the race (**Figure 24**).

Furthermore, animal characters' bodies are often drawn moving like human ones: walking on two legs, using their hands like humans do, and 'acting out' their role through recognisable human body language (**Figure 25**). The use of a prehensile paw, claw, wing or tail opens up another set of possibilities for the illustrator, as the animal can gesture and interact with its environment and other characters in a more human and therefore familiar way. Activities such as driving, using tools, eating with cutlery, putting on clothes, writing, using a phone, dancing, holding hands, can now be part

of the animal character's life. The character can take part in activities or situations that would be known to a young reader.

This familiar, human way of expressing emotions and doing things is often paired up with the physical abilities of animals, and/or their captivating and unusual appearance. In *The Tiger who came to Tea* (Kerr, 1968) the tiger is humanised enough to be able to ring the door bell and have tea with the family, but more importantly the tiger is beautiful, and mysterious, and exciting because of its looks, size, and enormous animal appetite (**Figure 26**). This combination delivers a creature that can come into a child's life and break all the rules – and the outcome is still positive: the family goes out for dinner. For practitioners, mixing the expression of human emotions and the ability for human movement with the looks and abilities of animals creates numerous possibilities for creating characters who are emotionally familiar and understandable, and at the same time intriguing and extraordinary.

In discussing Disney animation characters, Thomas and Johnston (1981, p.415) write that 'in addition to the obvious eye appeal of the colour and design, the specific articles that the character wears make him a specific individual'. The same is true for picturebook characters. Clothing can be used by the illustrator to convey specific information about the animal character's age, gender, social status, self image, and occupation or about the period that the story takes place in. Other times, clothes can be used to consciously make a specific statement about a character's traits or relationships. Anthony Browne has said that in *Voices in the Park* (**Figure 27**) the woman's trilby hat 'was used in many of the illustrations to show how Charles felt a bit dominated

by his mum' (2010). Finally, clothing can amplify the human/animal dichotomy and for characters such as Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit it can highlight 'the conflict between human, civilized expectations and animal urges' (Nikolajeva and Scott 2001, p.95). Peter Rabbit is depicted more humanised when wearing his clothes (**Figure 28**) whereas he resumes rabbit-like poses when he is drawn without clothes (**Figure 29**).

Although some characters appear to be animals wearing human clothes, often the overall impression of humanised animals is that of a human (and more specifically a human child) wearing an animal costume. In *Can't you Sleep Little Bear?* (Waddell and Firth, 1988) the protagonists of this otherwise human story about a child's reluctance to sleep and fear of the dark are two bears (**Figure 30**). The two anthropomorphic bear 'costume' designs look like a successful remix of elements from a real bear and a soft, cuddly teddy bear.

Other animal characters are designed with a human body and an animal head thus resembling a person wearing not a costume but an animal mask, for example Anthony Browne's gorillas in *Voices in the Park*. The use of the mask can refer to theatre, traditional rituals, carnival, or the tradition of earlier illustrators such as Grandville (1803-1847) who portrayed human characters with animal heads (**Figure 31**). Berger (2009, p.28) describes this latter use as a device that 'was like putting on a mask, but its function was to unmask', with the animal representing, and therefore revealing, the human's most distinctive trait. This portrayal of animal characters as symbols of human qualities will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

From the point of view of the practitioner, the degree of anthropomorphism involved in the characterisation could be traced back to the illustrator's intention and motivation. I would like to bring into the discussion the practice involved in picturebook animal characterisation by focusing on the work of two illustrators who have used almost exclusively animal characters in their picturebooks and have approached animal characterisation from different perspectives.

I have already briefly discussed Richard Scarry's entirely humanised animal characters. In an interview with Justin Windle (1974, p.72) this is what he had to say about the considerations behind his practice,:

> JW: Why are there never any humans in your books, but only animals? Is it just because you prefer drawing them?
>
> R.Scarry: That's one reason yes. I have drawn people a long time ago, but I didn't care for it.
>
> …
>
> JW: Is your interest in animals entirely in what they look like, not how they behave?
>
> R.Scarry: Yes. All my characters act and dress as if they were human beings. If I have an owl and it wants to fly, then it takes an airplane. The animals have none of the particular characteristics we attribute to animals. My rabbits are not timid creatures. They are all just people, parents and children. They're completely human to me.'

The thinking behind who the characters are ('they are completely human to me') combined with a practical ability or confidence in drawing animal creatures ('I didn't care for [drawing people]') can give an insight into why Scarry's creatures behave and

look the way they are. What practitioners 'like', 'prefer' or 'are good at' drawing plays an important part in their practice and often comes up in interviews.

Beatrix Potter's animal characters have been the focus of numerous studies, not only because of the popularity and influence of her picturebooks but also because of the way these animals are depicted. They are underpinned by an accurate animal anatomy, expressed in their forms and movements – the way they run, tilt their heads, or turn their paws. This exact visual representation is combined with the necessary human movements and postures (standing on two legs and wearing clothes) and above all with the warmth and charm of a real person. Potter's interest in animals and nature is well documented. She was a keen observer not only of live animals and pets (**Figure 32**), but she would also perform dissections in order to draw and study the animals' underlying structure. Her letters reveal her involvement with and deep interest in her pets' life and behaviour (Taylor, 1986). The fact that her characters are 'true to their animal selves' (Carey 2002, p.17) could maybe be traced back to her interest in these animal selves. It is interesting that, in a letter to her publisher, Potter has also expressed her lack of confidence in drawing the human figure:

> 'My brother is sarcastic about the figures; what you and he take for Mr McGregor's nose was intended for his ear, not his nose at all… I never learnt to draw figures' (Taylor 1986, p.75).

3.2 Stereotypes

Having discussed some aspects of anthropomorphism in picturebooks, I will now look

at how stereotyping works within animal characterisation, both in terms of the cultural associations that animals seem to posess and in terms of visual stereotyping involved in a character's visual design. I will do that by discussing two animal species that have been very popular as picturebook characters: pigs and mice. Finally I will refer to animal stereotyping in my own character design practice.

In children's literature, characters, human or animal, often appear as stereotypes. A stereotype is an oversimplified character, possessing 'only one feature amplified almost to caricature' (Nikolajeva 2002, p.115). Anthropomorphic animal characters have traditionally been used as stereotypes of human behaviour in folk tales, myths and fairytales. In Aesop's fables (5th century BC), some of the first stories considered suitable for children, supposedly characteristic animal attributes are identified with human behaviour (Nodelman, 1988). For example the fox represents craftiness, whereas the mouse is associated with timidity or shyness. Such one-dimensional animal characters are distinctive and recognisable to children, and historically, have served the exemplary function of traditional fables (Watson, 2001). Once such a stereotype becomes widely recognised, the animal species acquires a symbolic meaning and can be used in popular culture and everyday speech to signify a particular human quality. Aesop's fox association still stands today. For other animals, such as the deer, the qualities we associate with them seem to have changed over the years. Although in Aesop's fables the deer is often portrayed as thoughtless, Disney's 1942 film *Bambi* established the deer as an innocent, fragile animal. In western culture - visual, written, and oral - there seems to be a working animal vocabulary of human qualities where

animals are used as stereotypes of our own traits.

In picturebooks, authors and illustrators have used this vocabulary in creative ways. The discussion that follows focuses on the stereotypes projected on to one popular picturebooks species: pigs. I am not attempting an analysis or a history of the representation of pigs in popular visual culture for children, but I have used this species as an example of my developing understanding of animal stereotypes in picturebooks.

In *Piggybook* (1986), Anthony Browne uses the widely accepted understanding of pigs as gluttonous, messy animals to portray the male members of a family in order to highlight the workload imbalance that the mother faces (**Figure 33**). This point is amplified by the fact that the mother always remains a human character. More broadly, in film, a similar portrayal of gluttony and greed can be found in Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* (2001), where the protagonist's parents are transformed into pigs (**Figure 34**).

Other artists have chosen to play with or subvert our cultural preconceptions of this species. In *The Amazing Bone* (Steig, 1976), the heroine, Pearl, is also a pig, but there is nothing greedy or dirty about her character (**Figure 35**). She is depicted daintily dressed in pink, enjoying the world around her. This elegant portrayal, paired with what the reader assumes about pigs, is ironic (Nodelman, 1988) and can possibly make the character look vulnerable, a bit out of place. Looking at the wider visual culture, another such ironic animal character is Miss Piggy (**Figure 36**) from *The Muppet Show* (Henson, 1976). Here feminine charm and glamour are juxtaposed with cultural preconceptions about pigs, creating a humorous character. In the last two examples gender stereotyping

of the character contradicts the animal stereotype. *Olivia* (Falconer, 2000) is another female picturebook character who is a pig. The choice of animal here might have been influenced by the visual similarity of a chubby, pink, intelligent animal to a young human child (**Figure 37**). A similar correspondence of a pig to a young child can be found in the successful animated series *Peppa Pig* (Astley and Baker, 2004).

Apart from the cultural associations that animal characters bring with them, it is also important to consider how such characters are constructed visually and whether animal images can be classified as stereotypical. Picturebook animal character designs vary from naturalistic (Peter Rabbit) to minimalistic (Miffy). The truth value of such animal representations depends on our judgement about reality. From the point of view of naturalism, considering truthful a pictorial representation from nature, 'reality is defined on the basis of how much correspondence there is between the visual representation of an object and what we normally see of that object with the naked eye' (Kress and Van Leween 1996, p.163).

The fact that the design of picturebook animal characters often involves human characteristics makes them less naturalistic than a photorealistic representation. What about the animal elements of the design? Are they somehow dependent on how naturalistic the animal's representation is? I will now try to understand how, in designing animal characters, illustrators make them look like animals by discussing successful characters of one picturebook animal species, mice.

One of the picturebook character designs that I consider influential on my own practice

is Lucy Cousins' *Maisy* (1990). Maisy is a mouse, and although she does not look like a mouse that a child might have seen in real life, this does not seem to make the representation less credible within the picturebook context. What defines her as a mouse are her round ears, long tail, whiskers, and pointy nose (**Figure 38**). We find exactly the same set of distinctive mouse features on another popular character, the mouse from *The Gruffalo* (Donaldson and Scheffler, 1999) (**Figure 39**). Looking back at earlier picturebooks and animated films for children, the same characteristics are also present to make a character recognisable as a mouse in Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Two Bad Mice* (1904) (**Figure 40**) and Walt Disney's *Mickey Mouse* designs (**Figure 41**).

Independently of how humanised or how close to a photorealistic representation these designs are (for comparison I have included a photograph of a real mouse in **Figure 42**), they rely on a convention or tradition for the use of a specific set of defining visual characteristics, which communicate the visual essence of an animal species. These stereotypical features seem to be indispensable in designing an animal character and their use is embedded in picturebook visual language. To use Kress and Van Luween's (1996, p.6) semiotic terminology, 'it is never the 'whole object' but only ever its criterial aspects which are represented'. In terms of designing a picturebook animal character, these 'criterial aspects', are the visual conventional defining characteristics of its species. An image-maker would be aware of this pictorial convention, combining it with observational drawing to establish a visual 'vocabulary of forms' (Gombrich, 1977) for designing animal characters.

Reflecting on my own illustration practice and my method for creating animal characters,

I could understand that it was based on a formula of building animal characters by using this established vocabulary of distinctive animal features. Working as an animator, I learned to construct all characters out of basic three-dimensional shapes, or volumes (**Figure 43**). These volumes could be combined to construct a potentially infinite number of characters. Once the main body frame was built the details would be added. Often these details would define the species of the animal character. The last stage was to add textural details such as clothes or fur. In a large animation production it was vital that all the artists used this way of building characters, as it helped with animating movement and, crucially, with keeping the design constant throughout the film despite the fact that the same character might have been drawn by a number of people.

According to Gombrich (1977), artists base their representation of nature on 'schemata', mental preconceptions or loose categories of what they are trying to depict. Each schema is gradually adapted to match the artist's observation from nature and the purpose of the representation. I have often found that my early training as a commercial animator established a pattern of working that was too strongly embedded in the tradition of using a formula and relied on other designs or visual categories, rather than personal observation or first hand experience. The review of anthropomorphism and stereotypes in published picturebooks, made me consider my way of working, which, although having been challenged and improved over the years, depended heavily on pre-constructed schemata.

3.3 Anthropomorphism and stereotyping in my own practice

I will now discuss the impact of the above overview of anthropomorphism and the use of stereotypes on my own practice. Before the practical part of the research had begun, an opportunity came up to take part in a large group exhibition for *Patras, 2006 European Capital of Culture*. The show took place in a disused school building and each artist had to produce a site-specific piece for an open brief. This was a good opportunity to make a start on the practice and work on concepts relating to animal characters while pushing my illustration practice out of its known and safe frame. At that point, the outcome of my practice-based research was not strictly defined so I set myself the challenge to work without being restricted by a book or page format. I also wanted to focus on the concept of animals as stereotypes of human behavior and to question how much my own illustration practice was relying on formulaic representation of animals.

The starting point for the development of this project was my understanding of anthropomorphic animal characters in picturebooks and how the line between what is human and what is animal can be very fine or blurred. This proximity led to my decision to produce imagery of the species that is closer to us: apes. I looked for the human traits most associated with apes in our culture. The one I projected on to them was mimicking and imitation. According to my memories from my school education in Greece, copying, rote learning and essentially imitation were intrinsic parts of our schools' daily routine. I decided that the driving force behind this piece of work would be to use animals (apes) as a stereotype for human behaviour (imitation) in order to communicate my experiences and memories from Greek schools when I

was a child. This project, though related to childhood, school education and learning, would not necessarily address an audience of children. Through practice, I would try to reconsider my use of visual stereotypical elements in portraying these animals and to understand the role of anthropomorphism in my practice.

Influenced by my reading, I felt that if I was to develop my image making practice I should use visual reference of real animals and attempt to re-train my self in looking and drawing without relying too much on formulaic solutions. Although I had designed ape characters in my practice before, I would try to observe, and understand through drawing what an ape really looks like. Then, I could balance how much I needed to rely on known and/or given formulas of constructing an animal and how much on seeing. In creating the preparatory work for the exhibition, I started by drawing from photographs and visiting London Zoo, concentrating on a more representational approach to the drawn forms.

Drawing from photographs helped with studying in detail what the animals looked like. The outcome was a set of relatively accurate and detailed drawings that focused on specific details and textures such as fur, limbs, and faces (**Figure 44**). Drawing from life was more about experiencing the animals, the way they move, the interactions with each other, and the sounds they make. These drawings were looser, as I was trying to record glimpses of the moving animals (**Figure 45**). In both cases, I found that, while drawing, anthropomorphism seemed to creep in to my thinking and I often chose to draw animals that seemed to be part of a (human) story (for example **Figure 46** showing a mother looking after her baby). I was interpreting animal bahaviour through a human

prism. Through the drawing practice, I also realised that although I was looking at real life more than before, I was still basing my depictions on what I knew an ape to look like. Nonetheless, while this knowledge of schema was still present it was not so dominant and it was now more informed by personal observation. Reflecting on my practice before this project, I could clearly understand that anthropomorphism and the use of schema and stereotypical animal features in drawing were an intrinsic part of it. The research into anthropomorphism and stereotypes gave me a conscious understanding of how these two concepts affect my illustration practice.

The finished exhibited piece, titled *Mimesis* (2006), was a wall installation, consisting of a screenprinted wallpaper featuring a number of ape-like black figures against a repeated pattern. In designing these ape characters I referred to the shapes, forms, and textures from my observation drawings. I made a conscious effort to rely on my understanding of apes resulting from observation than from using a pre-existing formula. In the sketchbook, the development from observation drawing to final print can be seen in the design of the central ape's face (**Figure 47** to **Figure 52**). I also employed my tendency to project human stories on to the observed animals in order to create anthropomorphic characters that would communicate the concept of mimesis through posture and facial expression. The ape figures stand or sit in a way that shows uncertainty (**Figure 54**). They are looking for some guidance, to find someone to imitate. Their posture is part animal and part human, highlighting their closeness to humans. Their stare is directed at each other and at the viewer. The background acts as an artificial reminder of their natural habitat; it is an endless repetition of a pattern,

referencing again the process of imitation and copying.

3.4 Conclusions

Once the wallpaper project was completed, I set out to understand its impact on my practice and the influence of theory on practice, and through this understanding make decisions about the next step of the research.

I started by examining whether the goals I had set out to achieve had actually been fulfilled. One of the main aims in producing this artwork was to use animal imagery in order to communicate ideas about human behaviour and in particular my childhood memories of school education. Feedback from critics and the exhibition audience confirmed that through the use of animals as stereotypes, this communication had been achieved successfully. The second aim was to push the boundaries of my image making in both the format of the work and in the way I construct images of animals. This was also achieved by designing, printing and planning the installation of the wallpaper (a scale I had never worked on before) and by basing the design of the apes on observation drawing.

Through this exploratory project, I was able to glimpse the relationship between theoretical concepts and my practice. First, the review of animal stereotypes in picturebooks gave me the inspiration for the installation project, hence in this instance the theory was a starting point for the development of practice. Second, investigating the stereotypical visual representation of animals made me want to re-evaluate my own

image making methods and take steps towards changing them. An understanding of theoretical concepts (stereotypical imagery) and practice (how this stereotypical imagery is used by illustration practitioners) led to a change in my own practice. Third, through the theoretical overview of anthropomorphism and the reflection on my work I became conscious of the fact that anthropomorphism has always been an important part of my illustration practice. This understanding led to a conscious acceptance of my way of thinking and drawing animal characters.

I will now discuss how the installation project contributed to my research in picturebook animal characterisation. Reflecting on the finished piece, I could see that although using apes as stereotypes of human behaviour was effective in communicating the ideas at the heart of this project, these characters would not be suitable for a picturebook. They seemed too generic and symbolic, and had not been developed to be part of a specific story or secondary world. They were designed to communicate visually a human trait, aiming at engaging the audience with this human quality. In contrast, all the published picturebook character designs discussed in this chapter are visually attractive and distinctive, but more importantly the designs work with the story to reveal the feelings, thoughts and motivations of the characters. One of the most important aspects of characterisation is creating a compelling inner life for the book's characters (McCloud, 2006). However humanised or not, abstract or realistic the animal representation is, the reader understands and empathises with a character because of the character's emotional qualities and because of their story. In the installation project, my characters were missing that inner life.

Furthermore, it is not enough that the characters have inner lives, but these lives should be understood by children, who are the main readership of picturebooks. It is important to find a common ground between the experiences of the characters and those of the reader so that the reader can connect emotionally with the characters (McCloud, 2006). As an artist I also felt that it is important for me to create a relationship with both the character and the audience. In creating this connection between children and picturebook characters, illustrators and authors have created anthropomorphic animal characters which, because of the closeness of their inner life to that of a child, have been described as children in disguise (Nikolajeva, 2002).

My primary concern then did not need to be how formulaic or naturalistic my animal designs are. I should focus my practice instead on creating inner lives for my characters, and make sure that their designs and their stories express that inner life. To achieve this, I could engage more with a personal understanding of and closeness to the reality of children's lives, their feelings and their expressions. While being open-minded about how realistic or not my animal designs were, I would now turn the focus of my observation and drawing on children and their family life (and more specifically on my own son and his life). This was going to be the next step of the research.

In conclusion, understanding the concepts of anthropomorphism and stereotypes through the review of picturebooks and critical theory, motivated me to investigate their use within my own practice. Through that, I was able to understand the relationship between theory and practice, and to consciously comprehend drawing and character design methods in my own practice. The installation project, although experimental in

its format and approach, gave me an insight into what needed to be done to further my research. Its successful completion gave me the confidence to make the leap towards the unknown territory of creating a picturebook, and encouraged a more experimental approach, where each step would contribute to the understanding of practice without having to be part of the final artefact.

Chapter 4
Sketchbook drawing

This chapter contains a record and a reflection on the work produced in my attempt to observe and come closer to the experience of childhood through personal observational drawing and imaginative image making. First my approach to the drawing practice is discussed. Then the work produced is discussed according to the themes that the practice focused on: doing things, sleep, hair, friendships, and environment.

4.1 Drawing practice

The subject of the drawing practice was my then one-year-old son, Dimitri, and his life. Milton Glazer (*Milton Glazer draws and lectures*, 2006) has said that 'drawing for me has always been the primary way of encountering reality'. Glazer's comment expresses my attitude to drawing in previous projects, but in this particular instance my attitude was slightly different. Motherhood meant that I was already immersed in that reality, so I was not using drawing in order to encounter it, but as a process of acute mental concentration and as a method of capturing and visually understanding events and emotions. I was hoping that this understanding, conscious or unconscious, would trigger the generation of picturebook ideas and the creation of characters I would be able to believe in.

Starting out with the aim to observe and draw without responding to a specific brief or concept was intimidating. Shaun Tan, in discussing the process of creating the illustrations for *The Rabbits* (Marsden and Tan, 1998) describes how, when he received the text for the book, he 'experienced a sensation that usually accompanies the beginning of a new project: not knowing what to do' (Tan, 2001). In the years I

have worked as an illustrator and printmaker, I had first to recognise, then accept, and finally embrace this feeling of uncertainty at the beginning of projects (commercial or otherwise) as a necessary ingredient for creativity. This uncertainty, the inability to predict what the work will look like, is for me the driving force behind being inquisitive and looking for the best solution through the means of drawing, doodling, reading, and carrying out visual research. Uncertainty prevents me from investing too much on any one route. On the contrary I move from one idea or drawing to another one, with different avenues explored simultaneously. Unsuccessful paths can be discarded as easily as they were enthusiastically begun. I have often found that the best ideas arrive as part of this process. In the work that will be discussed in this chapter, this approach is evident in the sketchbook pages, where drawings from life or from memory co-exist with imaginative drawings exploring ideas or translating emotions and actions into images.

The sketchbook drawings discussed in this chapter have a different function to drawings produced for a commercial illustration brief. Responding to such a brief, I first work out the concept, and how this concept will be best communicated visually. This is done by doodles, roughs, and layouts. Once a rough has been approved, I then introduce observational drawing or drawing from reference in order to create a successful illustration. Even for the wallpaper project, discussed in Chapter 3, the observational drawing was partially dictated by needs of the concept behind the artwork. On the contrary, these sketchbook observational drawings were different because they were speculative, done without a specific outcome in mind; they were

made to explore an unknown territory.

For practical reasons, explained in the next few paragraphs, most of the drawings of my son were done from memory when he was not present. As a result, when drawing I had to rely on the empathetic emotional connection with my subject. I was, by definition, not an objective observer: as the mother of the child I was not only extremely partial, I was also part of what I was observing. When drawing, I used my son's absences and the fact that I was missing him as a way of summoning my loving emotions for him and it was through this emotional charge that I recalled the events I was trying to depict. Emotional intensity did not cloud my memories or perception but somehow made them clearer, with specific events standing out. I purposely started each drawing session in this emotional state. I think that this enhanced my ability to 'see', feel and imagine in my memory. In discussing life drawing and drawing from memory, Quentin Blake (2000, p.36) writes that he balances seeing and imagining and that the essence of drawing is in 'trying to become the subject'. In my case, this emotional connection helped me to empathise with and essentially become the subject I was drawing.

Choosing what to draw was not something I consciously deliberated on, and during the drawing process I felt that I did not have control over the choice of subject matter. In retrospect, I can see that a lot of the drawings focus on events that generated strong emotional reactions: My son having fun, being with friends, cuddling, being ill, crying when not able to sleep at night, getting upset when having a haircut. Other drawings focused on his movements, or the things he was interested in. On reflection, it also

seems that unconsciously I was producing drawings that I thought could potentially be material for a story.

The work discussed below consists of sketchbook observation drawings from life and from memory, imaginative drawings that used observation as a starting point, and a series of screenprints translating these drawings into more finished images. Apart from my experiences, the work was also influenced by the critical reading undertaken at the time. The work revolves around the following themes: doing things, sleeping, hair and texture, friendships, environment. Although these themes merge in the pages of the sketchbook, the work has been slightly reorganised here to make the discussion easier. What is presented is a representative sample of the work.

4.2 Doing things

My original intention was to closely observe my then one-year-old son and draw him while he was doing things and acting out his everyday life. This proved to be an impossible task as the fact that I was drawing immediately attracted his attention and he would stop what he was doing and come to play with his mother, her pencils and sketchbook. After a hurried couple of drawing sessions were I managed to catch glimpses of Dimitri playing, eating, moving, and trying to stand and walk (**Figure 55**), I had to resort to drawing from memory. The vast majority of drawings in the sketchbook were done a few hours or days after the event, when my son was asleep or at nursery.

Working from memory meant that the sketchbook drawings were not accurate

depictions of what had taken place. In trying to record my memories of events, my approach was interpretative and not representational. These drawings are loose and economical as all my effort was focused on capturing the essence of the action or emotion rather than on trying to produce a beautiful or accomplished drawing. It is for this reason that mark making or composition was not even considered during this period. Another significant point is that this work was made for my own personal use and not to communicate or be shown to others. So even though when I review this work I am still able to see or re-experience the expression of my son's emotions, actions, and personality, I can guess that this is not necessarily the case for an observer.

In the first drawings, my son looks like any other child would at that age, as I was not interested in a faithful pictorial representation, but in capturing gesture and emotions. These rather generic drawings of a child were then gradually replaced by drawings of a monkey character. This was not a deliberate decision. I think that this substitution happened in part because of all the previous drawing of monkeys I did for the wallpaper project and in part because I found it easier to draw a monkey creature rather than a little boy. In **Figure 57** he is drawn both as a boy and as a monkey in a quick succession of drawings aiming at capturing the emotional impact of the little boy being 'sick and scared'. As I did more drawings, I became increasingly confident about producing more detailed images, especially of people (**Figure 58**).

The drawings record the things that Dimitri did as part of his everyday life. I was fascinated by his enjoyment in being inquisitive and discovering the world (**Figure 59**), and his love of moving around despite the fact that he could not walk properly yet (**Figure**

60). This fearlessness of exploring new things or places would sometimes be replaced by distress with something that for an adult would seem mundane, such as having a haircut (**Figure 61**). Seeing his hair being cut, he became very upset and tried to put it back on his head. Although for an adult this would be a humorous situation, for Dimitri it generated a strong negative emotional reaction. The two quick drawings of the event made me consider the possibility of a story about a monkey who didn't want a haircut and did not want to part with his hair. This event and the drawings from memory led to a series of sequential images (which have been edited out of the sketchbook in **Figure 62** to **Figure 63**) exploring this narrative idea.

Another time, I made drawings of an afternoon when I played with Dimitri in our patio garden and the parking lot at the block of flats where we lived at the time. The drawings show him enjoying the world around him, touching the parked cars, attempting gardening with flowerpots and a dust pan (**Figure 64**). While trying to 'see' these events in my memory and draw them, I found myself unintentionally making another, bigger drawing showing our shadowy patio garden transformed into a luscious garden full of trees, with the little boy of the previous drawings still performing his strange gardening (**Figure 65**). This was the first time that a drawing of a garden/ forest appeared in the work. Here the observational drawings led not to a narrative idea but to imagining and drawing a specific environment.

In the garden drawing in **Figure 65**, a parent figure can be seen looking at the boy through the glass door. In retrospect this detail is quite poignant as I think that this drawing expressed my own wish for a large garden in which Dimitri could play. Throughout the

sketchbook work there are a few more drawings of a child and a parent figure, usually a mother as these were my memories (**Figure 66**). There are also some drawings that express my own feelings, such as my distress at leaving him at the nursery (**Figure 67**).

4.3 Sleep

One of the issues that evoked strong emotions in my family, for both child and parents was sleep or, rather, the lack or it. The drawings that focus on sleeping are more imaginative and interpretative than the ones discussed above. In trying to describe the difficulties around sleeping, the shape of Dimitri's cot refers to that of a cage and the darkness around the characters appears oppressive (**Figure 68** to **Figure 70**). The child/ monkey in the drawings is unwilling or unable to go to sleep, but eventually settles down and the parent figure is present to comfort or watch over him (**Figure 72** and **Figure 73**). Some quick sketches of ideas could be the beginnings of a story: a child who does not want to sleep and sees plants growing out of his or wardrobe (**Figure 74**), a little monkey who argues about going to bed (**Figure 75**). In one of these sketches the mother's sleeplessness is expressed by her appearance: she appears ruffled, with hair that 'looked funny when she woke up during the night' (**Figure 76**).

4.4 Hair

In the work discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3, it is clear that the monkey character emerging from the sketchbook pages appears different in every drawing. Although for an observer all these drawings might appear as drawings of different monkeys,

for me they were versions of the same character. At that point in the creative process I felt that all the work was exploratory and that it should be free to move towards different and possibly unexpected directions. The work was also focused on recording my life, and therefore a finalised design might inhibit absorbing further observations or experiences. Furthermore, although the monkey character was fundamental in the work so far, I was not certain that he would appear in the picturebook I hoped to produce. To summarise, the monkey character design was constantly evolving, without any conscious effort, and it could potentially develop in different directions or, if necessary, be discarded.

One of the issues I did focus on in terms of character design was the texture of the character's fur and hair. When reading Jane Doonan's *Looking at Pictures in Picturebooks* (1993), where she discusses how picturebook images convey meaning, I was very interested in the connection she makes between childhood and the depiction of texture in picturebook illustrations: 'Texture is perceived as a general quality of surface and therefore has strong association with touch, which in turn has strong associations with our earliest infancy' (Doonan 1993, p.12). She describes the tactile qualities of Robert Ingpen's illustrations and refers to the teddy bear in his illustrations as if 'asking to be hugged'. These comments made me think about my observational drawings and how touch – in hugging, comforting, putting to sleep, kissing, and in discovering the world – had indeed been part of them. I now wanted to concentrate on how I could make characters with a texture that would firstly make this connection with touching and infancy and secondly become an expression of the character's

inner life.

There are various approaches used by picturebook illustrators in giving the illusion of texture in their character design work, from Patrick Benson's (1992) realistic representation of the owl babies' feathers (**Figure 77**), to Sarah Fanelli's solution of using different media or processes to imply the different texture of different animals (**Figure 78**). In *This Little Chick* (2002) John Lawrence, using linocuts, has made sure that each character's texture is representative of their species. The lambs have an instantly recognisable curly fleece and mother hen has a coat of splendid feathers (**Figure 79**). For characters that are drawn in line and flat colour, it is often the quality of the contour line that gives an illusion of texture. For example Lucy Cousins' *Maisy* (**Figure 80**) is rendered in a painted, irregular line giving the impression of softness, and childlike playfulness, despite the use of strong flat colours.

My intention was to use texture as something that would make the character more tactile and real, and would also reveal his or her traits. Additionally, I did not want the animal character's hair to be restricted by any kind of clothing. I felt that human clothing somehow represented a repression of the animal nature, a compromise based on human etiquette (as already discussed in Chapter 3). My character's hair would not necessarily be the soft, cuddly and comforting fleece of a soft toy. Nor would it be the styled, tamed and combed hair of a human head. In making sketchbook notes about form and qualities of animal hair (**Figure 81**), I came up with a list: colourful, full of pattern and movement, shiny, wild, unruly, messy, difficult to control, dirty, unpredictable, not smooth. It seemed to me that the hair as described above would be a visual metaphor

for the character's traits. For example an unruly character would have unruly hair, a neat character would have neat hair etc. I wanted to create an animal character whose outward texture would communicate a young child's nature: loving, soft and cuddly, but also potentially instinctive, unpredictable, unruly.

Drawing the animal's hair and fur could also be a way of describing the shape of his or her body (**Figure 84** and **Figure 85**). In extreme cases, the body shape could actually be affected by the amount or shape of hair (**Figure 86**). In the pencil drawings, it was relatively easy to give the illusion of a three-dimensional character by adding shading to the body (**Figure 87**). I felt that I now had to start exploring the potential of images done through screenprinting and attempt to depict texture and hair in that medium. Before I embarked on the first prints, I was apprehensive of the fact that screenprinting produces areas of flat colour and that this flatness might limit my ability to portray texture or to produce the illusion of three dimensional characters.

I used some of the sketchbook drawings (for example **Figure 88**) as starting points for the prints. The first screenprints were those of a sleeping monkey (**Figure 89**) who has thick, floating hair. This design was rendered in different colour combinations as an attempt to depict hair texture by using both transparent and opaque layers of colour (**Figure 90**). The effect here is that of a halo of floating, thick hair surrounding a peaceful, soft body. This hair texture gives the monkey a friendly look. On another version of the same print the hair has been added on top of the printed layer with a pen (**Figure 91**). This hair is short and spiky and gives the character a more mischievous look, which is also mirrored by the open eyes and smile. In **Figure 92** the monkey's hair has the same

length across the whole body. It is wiry and stands up, consistent with the monkey's overexcited face. In other prints the hair has been printed as a separate layer on top of the body (**Figure 93** and **Figure 94**) or rendered in pencil (**Figure 95**). In the last two prints (based on a real life incident that was not recorded in the sketchbooks) the hair-dryer adds a narrative element, and the unruly nature of the monkey's hair indicates he has done something naughty.

4.5 Friendships

As my son grew older, his interactions with other children developed from playing alongside them to interacting with them. I watched and drew these interactions and I was particularly interested in the individual children's different behaviour, attitudes, and reactions to events.

My son's friends were drawn as animals in my sketchbook. **Figure 96** shows a page of drawings featuring a little girl monkey. These quick sketches were done after spending a day with T (I will refer to other children only by initial on the grounds of ethics), a little girl of the same age as Dimitri. She had spent most of the time hiding behind her mum's leg and in the drawings she appears as a shy monkey. Her hair looks like it did in real life; the monkey has a human hairstyle with a clip. At the top of the page she appears in a house, as a member of a monkey family.

I had the opportunity to make more drawings of another friend of Dimitri, a little girl called E. I was able to witness how the relationship between the two children evolved,

as they got older. In **Figure 97** , when they were already two years old, they are shown making noise, holding hands and enjoying each other's company. The first drawing I had made of Dimitri and E was done a year earlier (**Figure 98**). This was a completely different interaction than the one just discussed. E was friendly, trying to hug Dimitri while he was shy and looking away. I was very interested in the balance between the two personalities and the expression of different feelings. In the sketchbook, the pages containing the drawings of this interaction are followed by a page where a little bird character clearly stands out for the first time (**Figure 99**). The bird wears the same stripy jumper as E and the note next to this character reads: 'bird is monkey's friend'. In this drawing my son's friend was not drawn as another monkey but as a bird, a very different animal. In the translation of an observation into a drawing, a child with a different personality was represented by a different animal species, though this correspondence was not deliberate or planned.

In the drawings discussed above, my son and one friend have changed into monkeys, while another friend turns into a character who is a different animal. In the case of the little girl monkey, the character could be part of a monkey family and may therefore be a sibling to the central character of the sketchbook work. The little bird on the other hand, could not be a family relative, but he or she could be a very good friend. I was very interested in further developing, through drawing, relationships with characters of the same age, without involving parents or grown up characters.

I would like to examine the use of stereotypes, both animal and gender, at this stage of the work. While the sketchbook work was being produced I believed that I was not

drawing the animal characters specifically as boys or girls. Nevertheless, because of the connection between the monkey and my son, I always thought of him as a boy. I did not think of the bird as a boy or girl and I made sure that I did not use any visual gender stereotyping on the animal characters I drew (with the exception of the little monkey girl who wears a hair clip in **Figure 96**). I also believed that despite the earlier 'wallpaper' work relying heavily on animal stereotypes, I was now drawing free of these concepts, and that my only guidance was the visual form of my son. The monkey character I was drawing was essentially a boy wearing a costume, having the body shapes and poses of a child with a monkey appearance.

When writing about the practice after the completion of all the creative work, I came across an article by Ingebor Mjor (2010), where, through a semiotic perspective, the author examines the challenges faced by parents in reading and explaining a picturebook to their toddlers. Focusing on the protagonist of the book, a girl monkey, Mjor describes how parents and children talked about her as a 'he', making an immediate connection between a monkey and a boy. The article discusses the long cultural tradition connecting monkeys and masculinity, referring to *Curious George* ('a male adventurous trickster'), *King Kong*, and *Julius*. Mjor (2010, p.187) concludes that ' It seems that culture's use of the monkey in different discourses has created a provenance that has masculinity as its most salient dimension. This provenance plays an important part on how we understand monkeys, also when they show up in skirts'. This understanding is supported by other ape or monkey characters in picturebooks (such as the majority of Anthony Browne's ape characters) and in animated films (for

example in Disney's 1967 *Jungle Book*). In retrospect I can understand that although at the time I felt that my decisions were only influenced by my observations, I must have unconsciously taken these decisions influenced by how cultural stereotypes convey the characters' traits and gender.

The relationship between the monkey and the bird was explored further through a series of drawings showing the two characters interacting (**Figure 100**). Although E originally inspired the little bird, I did not use her as a reference point for any of the subsequent development of the bird character. I knew very well who the monkey was, because of empathy towards my son, and I imagined the bird to be someone who is both very close to him and at the same time very different, someone who can counter balance the monkey's behaviour. For example, in the first drawing of the sequence in **Figure 100** the monkey seems confused or upset, holding his comfort soft toy. On the other hand the bird talks to him confidently, hanging upside down from a tree, possibly showing off. In the succeeding drawings they enjoy each other's company. The monkey is bigger and more emotional. The bird is smaller, more energetic, and quicker to react. They both love having fun. To be able to draw the visual manifestation of this friendship through the sequence of the two characters' interactions, I made a conscious effort to imagine and feel who they are.

Some of the thinking behind the work on relationships between characters was influenced by the study of critical texts on children's literature. The importance of human relationships in literature is pointed out by Maria Nikolajeva (2002, p.110) who argues that our interest in literature is primarily based on how it treats human

relationships. This interest is a driving force in having characters interacting with each other. In picturebooks, even when the characters are animals, their interactions and relationships with others usually have a human quality. Apart from that primary interest mentioned above, Nikolajeva (2002) lays out the reasons why a solitary protagonist is impossible in literature for children. First of all, picturebook worlds mirror real life, where children normally grow up with adults and other children. A child does not live on his or her own, unless under special circumstances. Secondly, including more than one character in picturebooks has a pedagogical reason: 'young readers must be socialized, trained to handle human emotions' (Nikolajeva 2002, p.111). Finally an isolated character has a limited scope for actions and interactions and therefore cannot provide the author and illustrator with enough interesting material to work on.

I was interested in developing, through my practice, a group of characters and their relationships and was particularly interested in the concept of the collective character. Collective character is 'a group of characters who seem to be equally important in the narrative and who … can equally lay claim to being sole protagonist'. (Nikolajeva 2002, p.67). A group of equally important characters offers suitable subject positions to readers of various ages, genders and dispositions. Every reader can find someone to identify with. This device also ensures a clear manifestation of character traits that are divided between separate figures in the plot. I think that my fascination with the concept of the collective character can be traced back to childhood favourite books like *Barbapapa* (**Figure 101**) and *Alfavitario* (**Figure 102**). Both of these illustrated books feature collective characters in the form of a family – a family of shape shifting beings

in the former and a traditional Greek family of the 1950s in the latter. I felt that I would like to have more than one protagonist in my picturebook so that I could develop differences as well as a balance between characters. The limited number of pages in a commercial picturebook would be a considerable factor in how many characters I could successfully include in my story.

Following the sketchbook work on friendships and relationships, I explored how I could produce finished illustrations containing characters that look essentially different to each other. My motive was to link differences in external appearance to differences in the character traits, although at the time any such link was not consciously articulated. At first I tried to explore how scale could affect the character's presence in the picture. In **Figure 103** the monkey is playing with a large group of small birds. They behave as one bird and balance the visual weight of the big character. Building on the previous printing work, I tried to explore the potential of differences in texture and colour when depicting different characters. In **Figure 104** the monkey is playing with a bird character, and the differences here lie in size, texture and colour. These prints focus not so much on the expression of feelings or inner thoughts of the characters, but on finding a way, though the use of screenprinting, to depict characters that look fundamentally different.

I tried to take this idea of characters who look different further by attempting to make a print of a large group of animals. I wanted to see how I could achieve a variety of designs that would communicate the different species in terms of colour, texture, shape and size. I was also aware of the fact that all these animals should be part of the

same 'world' and therefore their designs should give the impression that they belong together. Here the animals are laid out flat on the page, without any consideration about the representation of a three dimensional world or the characters' relation to their environment (**Figure 105**).

4.6 Environment

Setting plays an important role in picturebooks, and it has been a regular focus of academic research. In their books, Graham (1991), Schwarz and Schwarz (1991), and Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) have all dedicated a chapter to setting and the sense of place in picturebooks. In my practice, since the garden drawing (**Figure 65**) was produced, I started thinking of how setting could affect picturebook characterisation in my work. In that drawing, the addition of plants and trees turned an ordinary back yard into a fantasy world, a place where the little boy could play, explore, or even have an adventure. The setting therefore could not only offer a range of possibilities for the narrative (playing or having an adventure) but could also help define the character (different characters would respond differently to such a place). In attempting to explore the role of setting in characterisation through practice, I was particularly interested in the concept of the 'integrated setting', that is, setting which is not just a decorative backdrop but an indispensable component of the narrative (Nikolajeva and Scott 2001, p.69).

Here I need to make a distinction of the terms I will use in discussing this exploration. In academic discourse, (Graham, 1991; Moebius, 1991; Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001;)

the backgrounds in picturebook illustrations are referred to as *setting*. In my subjective understanding as an artist, the terms *background* or *setting* seem to imply a distinction or division between the characters and the place where the story takes place. These terms also refer to the artificiality of such a place. When I was exploring setting through practice, I thought of it as the characters' *habitat* or *environment*, a place that felt real to me and was interlinked and connected with its inhabitants. I used empathy to understand it and achieve some sense of place for the characters. For these reasons, when discussing my work I will use the term *environment* (which also happens to refer to the natural world) and when referring to critical writing on picturebooks I will use the term *setting*. Schwarcz and Schwarcz (1991) also use the term *environment* in making a direct link between the environment that real children live in and interact with and the environments that appear in picturebooks.

Some of the first drawings exploring the potential of environment constitute a sequence, containing a narrative about a character and an imaginary jungle (**Figure 106** and **Figure 107**). These drawings were not planned intentionally as a sequence and neither were they based on a predetermined idea. Each drawing, as it materialised on paper, generated the idea for the next one. In the first drawing of this sequence a monkey is asleep. As he sleeps his hair grows and floats above his body. As it grows longer, it gradually transforms into plants and trees. The trees finally become a forest and the monkey, when he wakes, can walk independently into this forest and wander in amazement. I understood this sequence of drawings to describe a dream. When I was drawing, I was not consciously aware of the fact that a lot of the visual ideas involved

in this sequence are ideas that had been explored previously in the sketchbook work (sleeping, the animal's hair and fur, my wishing for a growing garden). Significantly, the idea of dreaming is introduced here for the first time.

In the above sequence, as in all the sketchbook drawings about the character's environment, all work was done from imagination. For example, no reference was used in designing the shapes of the trees and the patterns formed by the leaves. My intention was to not to depict a realistic environment but to find ways of conveying a sense of place and reveal information about the characters and the story through that environment. I concentrated on the places that seemed to matter most to a young child, and which could evoke strong emotions. First of all my characters needed an immediate environment providing safety and comfort such as a home, a bedroom or a nest. Secondly, there would be a broader, more complicated environment outside the home, which would also be inhabited by others. This place could cause excitement and curiosity, but it could also perplex a small child; it would be a place of adventure and a place where the friendship between characters developed and blossomed (**Figure 108**).

I was very interested in exploring how I could create images about a character's home that reflect their lives, feelings and thoughts. In some of the picturebooks I had examined there was a powerful use of the home as a characterisation device, in some cases showing us how the characters feel or think and in other cases giving us clues about their lives and relationships. In *Voices In The Park* by Anthony Browne (1999) the house is depicted both as a symbol of status, when we read the story through the

mother's eyes, as well as an empty, inhospitable place, when we see it through the eyes of the little boy who feels lonely (**Figure 109**). In *Can't You Sleep Little Bear* (1987), the two bears live in a cave furnished like a human house (**Figure 110**). The objects contained in the bears' home (a framed photograph, a trophy on the mantelpiece) give us clues about the relationship between parent and child and their everyday life.

When creating a room or home in my drawings, I was first inspired by my son's cot (**Figure 111**) to draw a similar bed on a tree for the little monkey to sleep on (**Figure 112**). The little monkey seemed at home on a tree branch. I was unsure as to whether the monkey's home should include man-made objects such as a bed, chairs and television as in **Figure 113**. On one hand, such artifacts could help me recreate scenes from a child's everyday domestic life in any imaginary environment. On the other hand, when creating a consistent believable secondary world, such artifacts can pose the question of their origin, manufacture, and use. This dilemma was not resolved but it was something I kept thinking about and experimenting with. In **Figure 114** the monkey lives in a nest, or house, up in the trees, but this home contains no furniture. From within his safe environment he can look out on to the forest to see his friend, the little bird. The bird lives in a different kind of home that looks more like a real bird's nest. As these drawings developed, a neighbourhood evolved, which could contain homes for a number of characters including monkeys and birds (**Figure 115** to **Figure 117**).

The environmental theme I wanted to explore, in terms of a broader habitat, was that of a jungle or forest. This was something that felt 'right' at the time, as this environment would allow the monkey to move and act freely. I did not explore at all the possibility

of a man-made or built environment, such as a city, because I did not want to impose a restrictive environment upon the movement of the characters. In picturebooks such as *Elmer* by David McKee (1989), the jungle is the protagonist's and his friends' home. It is a beautiful, bright, and visually intriguing place. In *Snail and the Whale* by Julia Donaldson and Alex Scheffler (2003), the two protagonists travel around the world and each double spread depicts different scenery, providing a visually stimulating experience for the reader. In this picturebook, the environment - a shallow bay - also has the crucial role of threatening the whale's life and, in doing so, reveals the true brave nature of the snail. I was interested in creating a natural environment for my animal characters that would be a visually exciting place with an important role in the story, and act as a home as well as a place of exploration and adventure.

It was one thing considering all these possibilities and drawing or doodling in the sketchbook and another to translate the rough drawings into finished illustrations. All my printmaking work up to that point did not contain backgrounds, as for example in *Bikes* shown in **Figure 118**, where the main idea of 'car hunting' is communicated by the group of characters on their bicycles. When I did create a background, it was very minimal or was rendered quite differently from the characters. For example in the double spread from *Lovehearts* (**Figure 119**) the main characters were drawn freehand, whereas the background was a vector image drawn in Adobe Illustrator. I was aware of the fact that it might not be possible to create what I had envisaged and that it would be a long process of trial and error and of learning through making. The first print I produced for this project, which included an environmental element, showed a

little monkey hanging from a tree (**Figure 120**). I wanted to make sure that the rendering of the monkey and the tree would at the same time differentiate them and bind them together, as part of the same imaginary world. A tricky technical detail (because of the printmaking process that was used) was the depiction of the monkey's hand holding on to the tree. As I made more prints, I deliberately worked on improving how, by overlaying colour layers, I could depict an animal touching an object.

I then tried to take a more ambitious step in creating a print that would show the interaction of the two friends, the monkey and the bird, within a jungle environment. I wanted to try out the idea of visual complexity as a metaphor for the complex world that children have to get used to. At the same time this would also be a safe world, beautiful, and full of places and things to explore. The process of creating such a print started by drawing rough layouts of the two friends playing within that environment (**Figure 121** and **Figure 122**). The initial idea, to show several such interactions between the monkey and the bird within the same picture in the form of a 'simultaneous succession' (Nikolajeva and Scott 2001, p.140), was discarded, as it was, at the time, too complex to achieve. Once the artwork was scanned in to the computer, the first attempts of putting such a print together were done in Photoshop (**Figure 123**). This 'preview' of what the work might look like when screenprinted increased my confidence in attempting to combine a complex background with characters. The artwork layers were then transferred onto screens for printing and the result was a series of variations in colour and composition of the same basic design (**Figure 124**). I had achieved the production of a print where the characters and a complex environment co-existed and were

rendered in the same way.

4.7 Conclusions

In this chapter I have discussed the work that I produced in my sketchbooks and in the print studio in attempting to observe and come closer to the experience of childhood. Through personal observational drawing I had recorded events of my family life and my son's everyday activities and feelings, not as an objective observer but as an empathetic participant. I then tried to express this understanding through imaginative image-making, as well as the creation of fictional characters and the imaginary world they inhabit. Thus, some of the first hand observations were translated into visual metaphors. I also made attempts to discover how I could develop my craft as a printmaker so that I could produce artwork that can potentially communicate those ideas.

Although I understood this work to be speculative and not restricted by expected outcomes, it resulted in some specific ideas or views on animal characterisation that could influence the picturebook I was going to create. First of all, I wanted the picturebook to be based on my own experiences and observations. Second, human relationships and especially friendships between children would ideally be at the heart of the picturebook. I also wanted texture to contribute an important part in the animal characters' design, without the use of human clothing. Finally, the environment that the characters inhabit would also ideally play an important role in my picturebook. All these specific wishes surfaced through the exploratory sketchbook work. At that

stage I did not know whether I would be able to develop them further or use them within a picturebook.

The main character emerging through this body of work is a little monkey. The monkey has a good friend who is a little bird. Although I believed in the potential of these two characters, as well as others within the sketchbook pages, they seemed incomplete and vague. Despite the fact that they were developed from real life observation, I found that I could not develop them any further because I did not know who they were as fictional beings and that in order to do so I needed a story. Through a story, I would be able to develop them more in terms of their appearance, their inner life, and the secondary world they exist in.

Some sequences of images had already been produced in the sketchbooks and these could offer possibilities for a story, but overall the work so far had focused on image-making without much consideration of written text. In order for the characterisation to progress through the creation of a picturebook, I needed a story that could form the backbone of that picturebook. This story would be told not solely by images but by the working together of images and words.

The work that has been discussed so far was submitted for my Confirmation of Candidature in 2007. This body of work was criticised by the examiners who felt that a definite picturebook story needed to have been developed at that stage. They also suggested that my open-ended approach in exploring ideas might be inhibiting the creation of a good story. Following this negative feedback, I decided to move away

from all the previous exploratory work and try to find a simple written text on which I could base my picturebook. I realised that I might have to discard the development of the monkey and the bird characters and all the ideas surrounding them, if this did not fit the development of a picturebook story.

Chapter 5
Looking for a story

In this chapter I will discuss how, through considering simple existing written texts and by putting together simple image sequences, I tried to find a story that could become the backbone of a picturebook. Section 5.1 provides a record of all my attempts in the form of drawings and a number of rough books. Then, in section 5.2, I will reflect on the process of making these books and more specifically on my concern for originality, consideration of my audience and, finally, my understanding of creative moments in the practice.

I need to clarify two of the terms that appear frequently in my critical reflection from this chapter onwards. A *story* is defined as 'a narrative of incidents in their sequence' (Chambers dictionary 1998, p.1630). The picturebook story is communicated through the interaction of the written text (words) and the visual text (pictures). Words and pictures interact to form a multimodal text, incorporating the visual and verbal mode, which, is also referred to in critical studies as iconotext (Nikolajeva and Scott 2001, p.6). In the discussion that follows, the term *text* refers to the written text only.

5.1 Rough books

In my previous illustration practice, communication has always been primarily visual, conducted through images. For commercial projects, illustrations are produced to accompany a pre-existing text whereas for personal projects, such as artists' books, sequences of images tell a wordless story or work with a very simple written text. This text, already in print and produced for a different purpose, is taken out of context and re-interpreted through my images. As an analogy to the term *found object* used

in fine art practices to describe an object that has not been designed for an artistic purpose, but which exists for another purpose already, I could use the term *found text* to describe the texts on which I have based my artists' books. For example, in *Lovehearts* (2002), the text from a number of Lovehearts sweets was used as the basis of an image-based sticker book about a contemporary love story (**Figure 125**). In *Godzilla*, (a collaboration project with Dettmer E. Otto) the sequence of images follows the fragmented text taken from spam mail (**Figure 126**). My reliance on such found texts is partly caused by my lack of confidence in writing in a language that is not my mother tongue.

For this project, I was confident that I would be able to create a multimodal story out of a simple text. This text did not need to be fully formed. Fragments of speech, or a list of words put together could be taken out of context and the gaps created by the words would be such as to allow my images to carry the storytelling. A written text was necessary to provide structure and rhythm to the narrative, and to allow me to explore, through practice, the potential of word-image interaction in picturebooks. For these reasons I did not consider a wordless book. I started looking for simple written texts and narratives from within my son's life. I consciously decided that this search would be conducted through work produced in the form of rough books. These small books were made out of paper stapled or stitched together, without any consideration for shape or the number of pages. Some were just single folded pieces of paper. Their main purpose was to encourage me to focus on how the words and pictures could tell a story in a book format. I use the term *rough books* to differentiate these from the

dummy books (which have the same number of pages as the proposed picturebook) that were produced at a later stage.

One of the first such sequences is in the form of a wordless little book about a toddler's day (**Figure 127**), which builds on my observational drawing and personal experience. Another rough book, containing images made in collage and drawing, is a visual catalogue of my son's favourite things (**Figure 128**). Gradually, written text was introduced in the form of very simple lists. One such list was that of sounds that a small child would know (**Figure 129**). Some of the sounds were selected and applied to a visual narrative about a day in the life of a group of animal characters (**Figure 130** and **Figure 131**). In another mock-up book the sounds accompany images showing different kinds of cars and other vehicles (**Figure 132**). In these sequences the main characters are a group of animals, including a monkey and a bird. Another idea was to create a book about opposites (**Figure 133**) based on a rhyming text.

Using numbers as my written text resulted in the development of a counting book idea (**Figure 134** to **Figure 137**), featuring an elephant as the main character. The story starts with the elephant escaping from the zoo and ends with him reaching his home in the jungle, reuniting with family and friends. The numbers are rendered the same colour as the objects they correspond to on the page (**Figure 135**). A similar elephant and a little bird are the main characters in another set of sketchbook drawings (**Figure 138**) based on my son's love of greeting people. For this picturebook idea, the text would consist of greetings uttered by a cast of different animals who would be the elephant's friends. Each animal's greeting would be rendered with a different typeface.

Another source of inspiration were the nursery rhymes that were sung in playgroups I attended with my son. These sessions were my first encounter with British nursery rhymes being sung, performed, and danced by children and their carers. I wondered how such a playful and physical experience could be translated into a picturebook. One day, when I was working on the rough book about everyday sounds, I remembered a rhyme from the playgroup sessions called *Zoom Zoom Zoom* and I drew on a piece of paper a few very simple images of a monkey and a bird looking at the moon and then traveling there (**Figure 139**). The version of the rhyme I knew was as follows:

Zoom Zoom Zoom we are going to the moon/

Zoom Zoom Zoom we'll be there very soon/

Five – four – three – two – one – BLAST OFF!

Through further Internet research I came across different versions of this rhyme, with the second most popular (after the one mentioned above) being an extended version:

Zoom Zoom Zoom we are going to the moon/

Zoom Zoom Zoom we'll be there very soon/

So if you'd like to take a trip/

Just step inside my rocket ship/

Zoom Zoom Zoom we are going to the moon/

Zoom Zoom Zoom we'll be there very soon/

Five – four – three – two – one – BLAST OFF!

I found this nursery rhyme inspiring because of its strong rhythm and its association with my own physical experience of singing it and dancing it with my son. The rhyme

works as a song, as a dance, and as a story. It has a simple structure, a repetitive catch phrase, a counting element, and a climax in the form of a lift-off at the end. I felt that this text contained the necessary gaps between the words that could be filled by my pictures and that it could be divided into different pages to give the book a strong underlying rhythm. Perry Nodelman writes that often 'picturebook text is more like a poem in a regular pattern than like most regular prose' (Nodelman 1988, p.249). In searching for the author of this rhyme on the Internet I have to my knowledge never come across any copyright issues. In contacting three companies who have released audio versions of the rhyme I was informed that they had registered their performances for copyright but that the lyrics were in the public domain.

These first four drawings were developed into a 32 page dummy book (**Figure 140**) featuring a monkey and a bird character. I was especially interested in the idea of having the main characters transported to a completely new environment and in their reaction to this change. This transportation was inspired by the content of the rhyme 'we're going to the moon'. The text guided the development of the story towards an adventure theme, possibly taking place during the night, when the moon could be visible in the pictures. This first dummy book followed the exact text of the rhyme with the two characters (the monkey and the bird) leaving their jungle home to fly to the moon. The rhyme was used as a direct dialogue between them, and was placed in speech bubbles: an easy solution to the problem of allocating speech to specific characters. Even when later on these speech bubbles were dropped, I imagined my characters speaking in different typefaces.

The first few pages of this book were drawn without much effort or speculation, almost automatically. The two characters were shown in their jungle home not being able to sleep like everyone else, then getting ready and flying off for their adventure. The main part of the story was not at all resolved at that stage, but at the final double page spread the monkey and the bird are depicted asleep at home, making me consider that this book could potentially be about a dream sequence.

The next important step was to choose which narrative idea out of all the ones in the rough books I was going to develop into a book. After reviewing the work and further discussions with my supervisors it was concluded that I would develop this latest idea into a picturebook featuring the monkey and bird characters, thus continuing the previous development work. I was confident in my connection to the text, and in my understanding of the characters. This confidence created an excitement, which I find necessary at the beginning of a creative project. The next step would be to resolve the basic plot and characterisation, and work on the book structure so that all my ideas, images, and text could fit into the standard 32 page format.

5.2 Conclusions/ Reflections on the practice

Before I begin the discussion of how the picturebook structure was developed, I would like to outline some issues that arose during this stage of the practice, when I was looking for stories through the search for simple texts, and the production of image sequences and rough books.

This stage of the work was marked by a different attitude regarding sharing or discussing my work with others. Previously, the work was discussed only with my supervisors as I felt that it was produced as a personal exploration and therefore it did not make any difference yet how well these images communicated my ideas. When I started putting together the rough books, I often looked at them with my family and especially my son. These were informal reading sessions during which I looked out for the things that he seemed to notice and the details he enjoyed looking at. Above all, I tried to immerse myself in the experience of reading a picturebook with a child and to a child – an experience fundamentally different to reading it for myself.

Understanding the experience of reading a picturebook with a child did not mean that, as a consequence, my creative practice was constantly preoccupied with my potential audience. Through my image-making practice I was primarily interpreting my own experiences while looking for ideas and characters that would be exciting and fun for me to work with. Decisions were taken because I thought something worked in terms of story and characterisation, not because it would work for the audience. Picturebook illustrators such as Satoshi Kitamura (Watson, 1996), Shaun Tan (2001), and Stian Hole (Salisbury, 2008) have talked about the need to tell the picturebook story right for themselves without spending too much energy 'thinking about the reader, and his or her age' (Hole interviewed in Salisbury 2008, p.26).

The ideas I worked on in order to create a picturebook narrative were based on fragments of written text. Therefore these ideas were not original, in the sense that an original idea is a novel one, one that is not derived, copied, imitated or translated

from anything else. Although my intention has never been to imitate or copy other picturebooks, it is a fact that countless counting books, books about opposites, about sounds, or nursery rhymes have been published around the world. The matter of originality did not seem problematic to me at that stage, and I can identify with Shaun Tan's point of view that "originality' is more about a kind of transformation of existing ideas than the invention of entirely new ones' (Tan 2001, p.1).

To limit any anxiety caused by originality issues I intentionally stopped studying published picturebooks at that stage, and concentrated solely on finding a simple text or idea that would allow me to tell a story, through pictures, in my own way. I hoped that my own personal visual interpretation of the text would make my picturebook an original piece of work. I started researching picturebooks again at the very last stage of this project when the practice focused on the production of final artwork. I need to clarify that although I did not research picturebooks while working on the plot I am not claiming a cultural or artistic isolation – unconscious influences were at work throughout the process.

Even though my intention was to look for story ideas without being restricted by the sketchbook work that I had produced so far, on reflection it can be seen that the drawing and development work in the sketchbooks filtered through into the rough book narratives. Most of the books were based on my understanding and interpretation of a child's life, as for example in the book about a toddler's day (**Figure 127**) or about his interests (**Figure 128**). Some of the sequences feature a group of animal characters as the protagonists, with their relationships and friendships playing an important part

(**Figure 130**). Elsewhere the importance of the character's environment is reflected by the function of a forest or jungle as the place that a character longs to return to (**Figure 137**), or as the protagonist's home (**Figure 140**). Finally there is the re-appearance of monkey and bird in different rough books (**Figure 131** and **Figure 139**). Although the above ideas had previously developed independently of a narrative, they influenced what kind of stories I wanted to say and what kind of images I produced for the found written texts.

I complete the reflection on this part of the work by briefly touching on creativity in my practice. To do this, I will focus on the four first pencil drawings for *Zoom* (**Figure 139**). At the time these drawings stood out for me: they seemed different, more immediate and expressive, and not as constructed or artificial as some of the other work produced at this stage of the practice. Whereas some other ideas were the results of a conscious effort to create a story, this little sequence seemed at the time to come out of nowhere. The act of drawing this sequence was accompanied by a feeling, which I have gradually come to recognise in my practice: the calm realisation that a good idea has arrived. Such moments of inspiration or otherwise 'eureka' moments have been described by a number of artists, scientists, designers, and authors (Lawson, 2006). Some attempts to describe inspiration, such as the ones that Rosen (1997) critically refers to in his practice-based research, often rely on metaphor. C. Day Lewis (cited in Rosen 1997, p.13) has described the moment of inspiration for a poet:

> 'The best way I can describe this moment is to say that it's rather like switching on your radio to get some distant station: you move the dials, oh so delicately, there is a long silence, the instrument begins to warm up, and at last a faint voice is heard -

words growing gradually more easy to hear and understand. Where this inspiration

comes from, nobody really knows.'

Lewis continues with the radio metaphor to claim that only poets have the special radio

apparatus that can receive such transmissions. The acknowledgment of a mysterious

and unknowable transmission and the idea that the artist sits and waits with their

radio for this idea to arrive, do not advance the understanding of creative practice.

Although at the time when my four drawings were produced, I also felt that 'they came

out of nowhere' (see above) on reflection I can see that such an explanation is not

satisfactory. I agree with Lawson's (2006, p.148) claim that:

'We must not get too carried away with the romantic notion of the creative leap

into the unknown. Creative thinkers also characteristically work very hard. True that

great geniuses seem to find life fairly easy, but for most of us ideas come only after

considerable effort, and may then require much working out'

There are indeed parts of the creative process that cannot be completely understood

or consciously recorded. Practice often relies on moments of intuition rather than

consciousness. But when reflecting post-practice, some understanding can be gained

by taking a closer look at this process. Lawson's research focuses on design methods

and design thinking and is based on interviews and observations of practitioners in the

disciplines of architecture and product design. Lawson has identified five phases in

the creative process (**Figure 141**) and I have found that his insights could also be applied

to my own picturebook illustration practice. I will use the five-stage model by Lawson

(2006), as it is shown in **Figure 141**, to attempt a better understanding of the practice

involved with the making of these first four *Zoom* drawings.

First there was the 'first insight', that is, my acknowledgement that there was a problem (I needed to create convincing animal characters and find a picturebook story for them) and my commitment to solve it through my illustration practice (Chapters 4 and 5). The next period of 'preparation' involved conscious, intense, and deliberate work, which resulted in the production of all the rough books described in this chapter. Most importantly, I consider this preparation period to also include the sketchbook development work (Chapter 4) – as it was the content of this work that emerged through the new idea.

This conscious effort (in my case maybe self-conscious because of the negative feedback from the Confirmation of Candidature) according to Lawson (2006) is then followed by 'incubation': a relaxed period when no conscious effort is being made. I did not have such a break from the practice, but rather the idea for these drawings emerged while I was working on another book concept (based on sounds). Designers have reported that this way of working where two or more dissimilar lines of development are followed means that 'you can rest one groove in the mind and work in another' (Moulton interviewed in Lawson 2006, p.149). It could be argued that by distancing myself from the monkey and bird characters and the rest of the sketchbook development work, and by concentrating on other ideas and characters, I created this 'incubation' period.

I found that this is when 'illumination', 'the sudden emergence of an idea' (2006,

p.149) happened. Such moments have been described elsewhere in this thesis (the drawing of the garden, the emergence of the bird on a sketchbook page), and they have all followed the same pattern, as an idea arrives while I am concentrating on something else. What is important for my practice and research is not to claim an exact understanding of why such a moment arrived or how the human mind works – this would be impossible – but to acknowledge that this one moment of inspiration was linked to the rest of the practice and did not arrive out of nowhere. Equally important is the understanding that one such moment is not enough to solve the problem or inquiry, but that it is then followed by the 'verification' stage (Lawson 2006), which requires again conscious development of this idea. In my case, this verification stage consisted of the longest and most demanding part of the practice, the construction of the picturebook, and is described in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6
Book development

This chapter focuses on the process of constructing the picturebook proposal (or maquette). It starts with the definition of the practice objectives and an outline of the methods and considerations of this practice: the role of storyboards and dummy books, feedback cycles, the use of colour, and the identification of the protagonists. The rest of the chapter has been divided into parts that follow the page sequence of the picturebook: beginning – middle – end. The linear narrative of this discussion is not the same as the organic, unexpected narrative of the practice where spreads were developed in a sequence dictated by the needs of the plot and characterisation, and not by their number sequence. Although the clear-cut order of the discussion is artificial, it is nevertheless necessary in order to present clearly the details of the gradual development of characterisation. The chapter ends with reflections on this stage of the practice.

The images shown in the visual component of this submission have accordingly been arranged. For each section, that corresponds to a specific picturebook spread, the images are shown in chronological order: the first images are the earliest ones and the last are the most recent (unless otherwise stated). This organisation helps to identify the changes and evolution of the images, and the development of the characters. It also means that this display has often condensed the development work that took months to achieve into a single page.

6.1 Objectives

The creative process resulting in the picturebook maquette needs to be discussed

in context of the objectives that the picturebook was going to fulfill. The first aim was to create a picturebook featuring animal characters. Secondly, I wanted to allow my recently acquired understanding of how picturebooks work, as well as the observational and imaginative work produced in my sketchbooks, to filter in to the animal characterisation. A third objective was to create a picturebook narrative based on a simple text and to allow the images to carry the story. As already discussed, the rhyme *Zoom* was going to be developed into a picturebook. Equally important was the fourth aim, to make a book for a specific audience. It was fundamental that the picturebook would be appropriate for children. The simplicity of the rhyme and its content made the book suitable for preschool children between 2 and 5 years old. Finally, the fifth goal was that I intended this book to be commercially publishable. This meant that it had to conform to the standard format of 32 pages, and that it could go through the process of commercial publishing, without hopefully losing too much of its integrity.

It is important to stress that this part of the creative practice was fundamentally different from the open ended, exploratory work described in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, where my conscious understanding was that each drawing or picture was not 'bound' by the previous ones, and was free to take the practice into a new direction. At this stage the work had a predetermined outcome and specific objectives as stated above. Using a gardening metaphor, and heavily paraphrasing Paul Klee's (1945) simile of the artist as a tree, it could be claimed that initially the work was free to grow in all directions – a number of phrases could describe this process: branching out, dying back, self

seeding. Then, in the book development stage the growth was 'trained' or 'pruned' back to fit the objectives – but without being forced and still retaining the appearance of growing in a natural way.

6.2 Dummy books and storyboards

The evolution from a simple nursery rhyme to a fully working proposal was achieved through the production of successive storyboards and dummy books.

A storyboard is a two-dimensional plan of the picturebook where the pages/spreads of the book are laid out in sequence on the same sheet of paper, making them all visible at the same time (Salisbury, 2004). Storyboards were particularly useful at the beginning of the picturebook development when I was trying to structure the story and resolve the basic plot. They helped me to simultaneously be aware of all the elements of the picturebook.

Dummy books are three-dimensional models of the picturebook with the same number of pages as the proposed picturebook, containing text and rough drawings instead of finished artwork, and vary in size. Thumbnail dummy books are smaller than the actual book and are invaluable when solving problems by concentrating only on the essential elements on the book. Actual-size dummy books are the same size and proportions as the final book and allow the illustrator to come as close as possible to the finished book and the experience of reading it (Shulevitz, 1985). I found dummy books to be very useful in making sure that the pacing and rhythm of the story worked with the act

of reading the book and turning the pages. The picturebook is a physical object, and it was crucial that its relation to the content was put to the test while the work was still evolving. Janet and Alan Alhberg's use of dummy books was very important in their book-making process:

> 'In order to see if you've made something that's any good, you have to make the book. You can't just draw it on a layout. So Janet would make something like this, and then we could begin to see how the whole book would come together. You can like all of the images separately, but they have to turn and flow together.' (Ahlberg interviewed by Pauli, 2011)

Finally, dummy books were also valuable in showing and explaining to other people (in my case my supervisors, my son, and the publisher) the proposed picturebook at its different stages.

6.3 Feedback loops

Each successive storyboard and dummy book was an improved version of its predecessor, involving gradual improvement in *construction* and *craft*. I use these words advisedly to emphasise the notion of creating or adding something to what has been achieved before. Construction refers to planning and building the book, bringing the necessary elements together and making sure they interconnect. Craft refers to specific skills developed through the repetitive construction of the different versions of the picturebook story.

Every improvement and successful new idea could not have materialised if I had not

created the previous versions of the picturebook. It was only when a new idea was applied in the form of a dummy book, and then read and tested, that I was able to decide if it worked. McConnell describes her process of constructing a picturebook as 'looping back on itself' (2010, p.89), constantly changing and enhancing the artefact. Reflecting on his writing practice, Rosen (1997, p.85) argues that it is 'virtually impossible to think of the act of writing as separate from the reading process' and that he has

'grown to understand that what takes place is a feedback process where an idea

1) is concretised into text which is then in turn

2) tested for potential impact on an imagined or idealised reader (s) and then

3) kept, changed or scrapped as the writer thinks fit.'

Whereas in the previous stages of my practice a similar feedback cycle involved the making and understanding of images, when creating the picturebook I was 'writing' and 'reading' a multimodal text. I gradually came to understand, through the practice, that my imagined reader was none but myself – in a double existence as a child and as an adult practitioner. The changes in the multimodal text that resulted from this looping feedback aimed at a more concise, clear, intriguing story, and more believable and compelling characterisation – for both my child and adult self. Storyboards and dummy books proved to be indispensable thinking and planning tools in this process.

6.4 Colour

I discuss colour here because it was an integral aspect of the book development

process. I initially introduced colour on the dummy books as a way of 'previewing' the finished illustrations (that would eventually be made of colours and shapes without the use of contour lines) and thinking about the production of multilayered screenprints. I soon realised that I relied on colour as a design tool for both individual 'pictorial organisation' (Arnheim 1974, p.344) but also for organising the book as a whole. There was a gradual building of an 'internal system of colour associations' (Nodelman 1988, p.144) for the picturebook, where a specific hue was associated with one (and only one) specific character or place. This system affected the characterisation, the secondary worlds, and the continuity and direction of the narrative.

I could claim that during the making of the pictures, the choice of colours did not consciously originate in my understanding of their cultural significance or 'traditional associations with moods or feelings' (Moebius 1986, p.143). Despite my statement, it could be argued that subconsciously, as a visually literate practitioner, I was aware of such associations and meanings and that this must have affected my choices. The conscious decisions about colour choices started with the allocation of a bright red colour to the monkey. Disregarding real life monkey colours, I based my decision on the success of a previous monkey character that I had designed a few years before (**Figure 142**). This character's warm red hue made him advance to the foreground, as if stepping out of the paper. This would be a useful visual attribute for a picturebook protagonist. I had also used red central characters in some of the rough books discussed in Chapter 5 (**Figure 143**). Indeed, according to Nodelman, a lot of picturebook protagonists are depicted wearing red clothes (1988, p.144). The decision to allocate

green to the jungle environment was based on photographic reference (**Figure 144**) and on the understanding that a green background would provide the necessary visual contrast that could advance the monkey's red even further to the foreground. The bird, whose character complements the monkey, would initially have been green (as red's complementary colour) but as this was taken up for the jungle, I used another colour that would visually convey their difference: blue. The moon world was going to be colourless, rendered in black and white, a decision influenced by the NASA Apollo photographs and footage (**Figure 145**). I hoped that the lack of colour and the addition of sharp shadows would create a strong visual contrast with the home world. The alien's colours would be the same as the moon surface – but the words he uttered would be colourful. For the countdown colours I used hues that had not been used for any other purpose. These specific colour hues changed with each successive dummy book. For the production of the final artwork, a specific palette, a set of colours, was selected from acrylic paint samples (**Figure 146**). To summarise, the picturebook colour system was based on successful previous choices in my practice, it was influenced by photographic reference, and by practical considerations for balance, contrast, and recognisability.

6.5 Protagonists

While working on sketchbooks I thought of my two characters as 'the monkey' and 'the bird' without ever feeling the need for more specific names and I never consciously investigated the implicit characterisation in characters' names. When I had to introduce

the protagonists in the first spread, 'Monkey' and 'Bird' were used as personal names without the definite article. While their names are the generic description of their animal species (they could be any monkey or any bird), their visual depiction makes them distinctive and recognisable. The names also clarify that these are animal characters. Although this is confirmed by their external appearance, it could be argued that their speech, actions and feelings make them more human than animal.

In my mind, Monkey and Bird were always going to be the protagonists of the story because of their central role in the development practice and the connection to my son. The picturebook was created around my understanding of them. Post practice I applied Nikolajeva's analysis of protagonists in children's literature on my two characters, in order to gain a better understanding of their roles. Monkey and Bird fulfill most of her proposed criteria (Nikolajeva 2002, pp.49-65). They are introduced in the first spread (by both pictures and words) and their presence is constant as they both appear in all the picturebook spreads. They speak in dialogue giving the text a first person perspective and allowing the reader to know them better. Moreover, when Monkey and Bird go through the story they seem to undergo a change or 'evolution' in their state of mind. Finally, It could be argued that these two characters are 'focalized' (Nikolajeva 2002, p.61), which means that the multimodal text is created in a way that the reader follows Monkey and Bird but not other characters (such as the alien or the peripheral jungle animals). In *Zoom* the events are narrated with a focus on them and the reader can enter into their world and share their dream.

Although my practice has given more weight to Monkey's development and

understanding, I considered both protagonists to be equally important and have a very similar function in the narrative, thus constituting a collective protagonist (Nikolajeva, 2002). When I was working on the moon sequence, I understood it as an experience shared equally by both: a shared journey or a shared dream. My intention was not that the characters would be identical but complementary and I sometimes (but not exclusively) thought of Monkey and Bird as two different sides of the same child: one is more emotional, easily upset or excited (Monkey); the other more calm, making decisions and taking action (Bird). Within the picturebook's limiting space and need for simplicity I tried to develop these differences as far as I could.

I did not intentionally create a gender specific picturebook, and never consciously favoured a specific representation of gender. While writing the reflection on the practice, I came upon a study of 5,618 children's books published throughout the twentieth century in the United States (McCabe et al, 2011) that found a large disparity of gender representation for animal characters: 'male animals are central characters in 23.2 percent of books while female animals are in only 7.5 percent.' (2011, p.209). The authors suggest that although publishers use animal characters in an attempt to avoid the problem of gender representation, readers tend to 'interpret even gender-neutral animal characters as male' (2011, p.220) and that this can exaggerate female under representation. Reflecting on my practice I cannot help but feel concerned that I have added to this inequality, although I would not for that reason change Monkey – as he is based on my son. If the motivation behind my practice was a little girl (as I hope in the future I will be inspired by my daughter) or an equal representation, then I might

have ended up with a different story. This reflection makes me wonder if my practice has been influenced by the availability and representation of female characters when I was growing up (the 70s had one of the widest disparities of gender representation according to this study). I remember often finding male characters more interesting than the female ones who were much fewer and stereotyped as doing 'girly' things. I hope that this new understanding of practice will influence my work in the future.

6.6 The beginning: introduction and leaving home.

This part discusses the making of the beginning of my picturebook, where Monkey and Bird decide to leave home for an adventure on the moon.

6.6.1 An introduction (dummy book pages 5 and 6)

My initial intention when designing the first image of the first spread (taking up pages 5 and 6) was to introduce Monkey and Bird, their home environment, and the unsettling situation they are in: they are awake while everyone else in the jungle is asleep. This introductory picture was extended from one page (**Figure 147**) to taking up a whole double page spread (**Figure 148**), as a large unframed image could be more effective in drawing the reader directly into the secondary world.

This first picture was developed to contain numerous visual details of the jungle and its inhabitants (**Figure 150**) that were inspired by visual memories (such as nighttime colours and shades, the shape of sleeping children or animals) and other sensory

memories such as countryside night sounds and smells, the sound of sleeping (or sleepless) children. This detailed visual description could potentially trigger similar memories in the reader and it could help to create a sense of recognition of the setting and situation (McCloud, 2006). The amount of visual details in this spread could also increase its 'discourse time' - the time needed to comprehend it, discuss it, and take in all the information. When the discourse time is long while the story time is zero (as in this spread) there is a pause in the narrative (Nikolajeva and Scott 2001, p.157). In *Zoom* this pause was intentionally placed at the beginning of the book and has two functions: Firstly it allows the reader to enter the secondary world at his or her own pace. Secondly the long discourse time stands for the subjective or unspecified time that Monkey and Bird have laid sleepless on their branches when we first encounter them. It could have been only a few minutes or it could have been hours.

Their home, a large tree shared with many other animals, has a prominent place in the first picture (**Figure 150**). It evolved from the sketchbook drawings (see Chapter 4) that focused on the idea of a treetop neighbourhood (**Figure 151**). I decided against using nests or built structures, as these would conceal the view of sleeping animals juxtaposed beside the sleepless protagonists. The tree branch where each character sleeps fulfils the function of a bedroom. In discussing the role of bedroom scenes in picturebooks, Moebius (1991) argues that they can stand for the character's origins (when appearing at the beginning of the story) and/or for their destiny (when at the end) – in *Zoom*, as in numerous other picturebooks, the home or bedroom is also the place 'that leads into and out of a dream world' (1991, p.55).

Although this picture is about the protagonists' origins, and in its final version a number of animals are shown in family groups, I chose not to depict Monkey's or Bird's parents, continuing my focus on relationships between characters of the same age. This decision was also reinforced by my own childhood preference for stories in which parents were absent, allowing children to take on the central roles. In terms of plot development, the presence of parents could make the protagonists' departure problematic. The depiction of other families would imply that Monkey and Bird's parents were also nearby, but out of the picture frame in order 'to allow the characters full freedom to explore the world on their own' (Nikolajeva 2002, p.119)

The original text 'zoom, zoom ,zoom' initially allocated to the first spread (**Figure 148**), created a very abrupt opening to the plot. A few lines of dialogue were added (**Figure 149**) to convey introductory information about who the characters are, what is happening to them, and why they would want to zoom off to the moon. The new text (initially placed in speech bubbles as shown in **Figure 150**) made a significant contribution towards characterisation because of its nominative function, introducing the two central characters by name, something that the pictures could not do.

Additionally, I wanted this introductory dialogue to offer an insight into the characters' feelings and their friendship – within the limited scope of the picturebook space. By explicitly stating Monkey's difficulty ('I can't sleep') the added text complemented the picture and focused its meaning – a visual representation of sleeplessness, could have been misinterpreted for fear, worry, or being ill. In admitting his problem, Monkey reveals that he is close enough to Bird to be able to confide in him. Bird shows concern

('are you still awake'), a sign of his caring nature and their close friendship.

Getting the plot in motion

Reflecting on this first image in isolation, I realised that its composition in the early dummies was static and symmetrical (**Figure 152**). Such bilateral symmetry in a picture can often suggest 'repose or peacefulness' (Nodelman 1988, p.140). Moreover Monkey and Bird's relative positions and similar body sizes gave them equal visual weight and that could imply that their roles within the story were identical. Their body language was indistinguishable, giving the impression that their feelings at that point were very similar too. Their smiles and the relaxed posture contradicted the information that the words communicated ('I can't sleep Bird') rather than reinforcing it. This contradiction diminished the validity of Monkey's statement and did not create the necessary motivation for the adventure that would follow. Finally, another concern I had (**Figure 152**) was that Monkey's words stated that he had a problem ('I can't sleep') and that he was, at the same time, in possession of a solution to this problem ('I have an idea'). Therefore, he appeared self-sufficient, making Bird's presence redundant.

In picturebooks, pictures are not created to be seen in isolation. Instead, they are part of a continuing and unfolding action. They need imbalance and directed tension towards the next image or page, so as to make the plot progress – and make the reader turn the page. The symmetry and balance in both design and content that gave the first versions of this picture a 'satisfaction of wholeness' (Nodelman 1988, p.126) had to be changed. This change was driven by the characterisation: I assigned the

problem ('I can't sleep') to one character (Monkey) and the suggestion of a solution ('I have an idea') to the other (Bird) (**Figure 153** and **Figure 154**). I thought that this new dynamic between the two protagonists, combined with the contrast between them and the background characters, could create a momentum that would move the plot forward. Moreover this allocation of roles matched my understanding of the two characters as they were developed in the sketchbooks (**Figure 153**).

A further improvement in the introductory spread was moving the dialogue out of the main picture and into a vertical sequence of three images taking up the right end of the double spread (**Figure 154**). In these three images the characters are separated from their environment. This separation is very common in picturebooks (Blake, 2000; Nodelman, 1988) and relies on the reader to assume a background even when none is depicted. By omitting the background, I wanted to focus the attention solely on the conversation between the friends and the manner of their interaction (**Figure 155**). The white space around the characters, and the fact that each character speaks in a different picture made speech bubbles redundant. Without words, the large image was freed from the implicit time contained in the dialogue exchange and this enhanced further its function as a pause.

The final layout for the first spread (**Figure 156**) created a clear direction for the unfolding of the plot. The initial pause of the large image is succeeded by a quick succession of images creating acceleration towards the turning of the page. This direction from left to right is also supported by the overall composition of the images and their placement within the spread. For example the tree branches' position and direction had to be

changed (see **Figure 154** to **Figure 156**) to lead the eye towards the moon on the recto and the turning of the page. I also used the direction of the protagonists' glance to create imaginary vectors. Bird directs his gaze at Monkey, while Monkey looks out of the picture frame. In all four pictures of the spread Monkey's body is intentionally placed to face towards the right and therefore towards the adventure that awaits him. The momentum is enhanced by the unfinished comment ('I have an idea…') that acts as a verbal 'pageturner': a detail that 'encourages the viewer to turn the page and find out what happens next' (Nikolajeva and Scott 2001, p.152).

Providing contrast

Although the composition and content of the first and last spreads of the picturebook were similar (**Figure 157**), it was fundamental that the illustrations made a clear distinction between the protagonists' situation before the story begun (sleepless, restless) and their situation after the story was concluded (asleep, content). One way I could achieve this contrast was by using the characters' body language and facial expressions as an external manifestation of their states of mind. I had to act their feelings through my drawings. The development of this 'acting' for the first spread is seen in the successive dummy books (**Figure 154** to **Figure 156**) and it was based on a rough drawing (**Figure 158**) exploring the idea of Monkey behaving more like a monkey when upset.

The final version of the first spread (**Figure 156**) shows Monkey hanging upside down, to indicate that he is active, uncomfortable, and feels out of place. As the dialogue between the protagonists progresses on the spread, Monkey's posture gradually

takes on a more human form. His facial expressions confirm that he is unsettled. In particular, his eyes are shown wide open in the large image, gazing out of the picture frame. Kress and Van Leeuwen argue that such a gaze leaves the viewer to imagine what the character is thinking about or looking at and that this 'can create a powerful sense of empathy or identification' (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996, p.66). The reader's possible identification with the character made the decision about the appropriate facial expression (defined mainly by the shape of his mouth) crucial. If Monkey appeared too unhappy, a small child might get upset. If he was not unsettled enough, the contrast with the last picture of the book as well as the motivation needed for the story to begin would be diminished. Bird's body language and gaze express concern, as he looks down at his friend. This is matched by his words, which, in the picturebook proposal, included the added phrase 'Don't worry Monkey'. These words were based on my understanding of Bird as an empathetic character.

6.6.2 Closing in (dummy book pages 7 and 8)

This spread was designed as a full bleed illustration that initially showed a close up of the two central characters (**Figure 159**). I imagined the framing of this image as if I was holding a camera, moving from the first spread's objective longer distance shot, to a closer distance that could imply involvement and subjectivity (Nodelman, 1988) and allow the reader to get to know the protagonists. This implied sense of closeness was also enhanced by the lack of frame and the frontal angle (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). This initial composition showed Monkey and Bird enthusiastically putting their

helmets on, preparing for their adventure. Influenced by animation techniques, I drew the characters' bodies in mid-movement, in an exaggerated gesture, with full extension of their arms. The action is captured at the moment before its completion, creating a sense of rapid movement and anticipation (Lewis, 2001). I hoped that the readers' anticipation would match that of the two protagonists.

The gap between pictures

Picturebook images contribute to the storytelling by showing specific moments (events, actions, or situations) from the story. The choice of which moments to depict is crucial for the illustrator as Quentin Blake reflects in *Words about Pictures* (2000). In *Zoom* the pictures carry a lot of the narrative weight and my choice of moments was largely directed by this narrative function. Pictures, unlike words, are 'disjunctive' (Nikolajeva 2010, p.29) and in relying on them to tell a story it was crucial that the narrative gap between them could be bridged by the reader. The young reader should be able to make a temporal connection between the moments depicted and also be able to understand the causal link between these moments. If the gap between sequential pictures is too small, the story might lose its pace and the reader lose interest, whereas if the gap is too large the reader might not comprehend the story and fail to keep up with it.

In my first dummy books, the gap between the moments depicted in the first and second spreads was too big (**Figure 160**). The first spread established that the two characters face an unsettling situation whereas in the second the protagonists were

shown in a positive frame of mind, excitedly putting on their helmets and exclaiming 'we are going to the moon!'. In order to bridge this gap the pictures had to provide an answer to three questions: How much time has passed between the two depicted moments? What happened during this time? Why did the characters' feelings change?

Following the decision to have Bird leading the flight, the second spread was solely dedicated to the exclamation of his idea and the action of putting on helmets was moved to the following page. The initial symmetrical composition of the second spread was abandoned for a composition with a strong diagonal dynamic that expressed the Bird's leading role (**Figure 161**). In this version, Monkey's smiling facial expression did not succeed in decreasing the gap from the first spread where he appeared upset.

The final design of this spread, inspired by one of the first drawings I did for *Zoom* (**Figure 162**), shows Monkey and Bird sitting on a branch with their backs turned towards the viewer (**Figure 163**). The two characters' position (on the tree branch) refers back to their exact position in the previous spread (the viewing angle remained the same) creating a strong visual link. Bird's words complete the unfinished sentence from the previous spread thus clarifying that no time has elapsed between these two moments. The body language of both characters also bridges the gap with the first spread, while at the same time it implies that some changes are taking place: Monkey is still unsettled, but now listening eagerly to his friend's idea. One of Bird's hands rests on Monkey's shoulder in a caring gesture and the other is pointing towards their destination. Mc Cloud (2006, p.112) writes that in drawing a character 'act' through their body language, hands can play an important role in delivering more deliberate messages

than whole-body postures. This is exactly how Bird is acting, with deliberate gestures: pointing and patting. Finally, in framing this picture (**Figure 163**) I placed the viewer (my self or the reader) just behind Monkey and Bird so that he or she can share their subjective point of view. Their faces are turned away and this implies an intimate moment.

6.6.3 Getting ready (dummy book pages 9 and 10)

From early on this spread was divided into two distinct pages, the verso and recto each containing separate full bleed pictures (**Figure 164**). This layout was directly influenced by the rhyme's rhythm and my memories of how it was performed by adults and children. On the verso, a vertical sequence of three framed pictures followed the three repetitions of 'Zoom' (**Figure 165** and **Figure 166**). The words act as sounds, providing a 'soundtrack' and rhythm to the narration, which is carried out by the pictures. On the recto, the longer phrase 'we'll be there very soon' indicates what will happen next. This phrase was placed within a full bleed picture that makes a visual link between the character's present (the jungle) and the future (the moon, where they 'will be very soon'). The busy, monochromatic decorative pattern on the verso was juxtaposed with both the repetition of Monkey and Bird's red and blue colours as well as with the flat colour of the night sky (on the recto).

In the vertical sequence, the characters' actions were placed within identical white circles creating a deliberate separation from their environment (**Figure 167**). I wanted the white circles to mirror the shape of the moon and to symbolise its influence on the characters. The jungle environment was treated as a pattern that was initially made

out of trees and plants. In the final versions the sleeping animals were also part of this pattern (**Figure 168** and **Figure 170**). The implied distance between the foreground sequence and the background pattern implies a hierarchy (the moon takes over and the jungle recedes) as well as a temporal message (the jungle and its animals are still while Monkey and Bird busily prepare for their adventure).

In this spread the characters' actions were depicted in a way that could imply energetic movement – a sign of their increasing excitement towards the take off. I drew the characters in extreme poses or, in animation terms, 'key frames' that best represented each action. All the depicted moments show the characters in mid-movement, before the action is complete: the spades are about to be put in the rucksack, the helmets are about to be placed on their heads, they are about to take off (**Figure 171**). Nodelman (1988) discusses the wide use of such depictions in picturebooks as a way of implying motion and the passage of time in a static medium (pictures). He quotes Penrose: 'Art has the unique quality of being able to halt the march of time while still giving the illusion of movement' (cited in Nodelman 1988, p.159). The illusion of movement was also supported by the depiction of the two characters in a series of successive poses.

Dream or Journey?

A focal point throughout the construction of the picturebook was that the plot takes place in two imaginary secondary worlds: the jungle (inhabited by talking animals) and the moon (inhabited by an alien). Within the jungle world, the moon journey could be interpreted as a real journey or as a dream. My understanding of the two possible

interpretations was geographical: if this was a real journey, Monkey and Bird move from one planet to another within the same secondary universe. If this was a dream, shared by Monkey and Bird, then they enter a completely different world (a world within a world), which only exists in their own imagination.

My intention was that, in *Zoom*, words and pictures would complement each other in presenting the moon journey as true within the secondary universe (that contains both jungle and moon). In other words, within the imaginary, non-mimetic picturebook world, the adventure would be constructed primarily on a mimetic level. The verbal text never suggests that Monkey and Bird are dreaming and the first person dialogue enhances the effect of a direct, truthful communication. The pictures narrate from a third person perspective, implying an objective depiction of the events. Words and pictures never contradict each other.

At the same time I felt that small details in the pictures depicting key transitional moments into and out of the journey/dream could suggest a symbolic reading. The protagonists'

helmets, rucksacks and spades first appear in this spread, when Monkey and Bird are already in a mindset of leaving their home world. On a literal level the astronaut's helmet could be understood as a device necessary to survive on the moon surface, thus supporting the assumption that the journey was true. On closer inspection, the intentional omission of an oxygen container or a protective suit rendered the helmet useless in that situation. Although a small child might not comprehend this detail, my intention was that an adult could interpret the helmet as a dress up accessory and the moon adventure as a make-believe game or dream. In the final picturebook maquette, when Monkey and Bird are shown back at home at the end of the picturebook, the helmets are not included in the picture. On a symbolic level, provisions or toys taken on imaginary journeys can serve as 'objects for the transference of fearful emotions, so that the character can be brave and strong' (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001, p.182). It could be argued that in *Zoom*, these human-made objects were out of place in the jungle world and therefore could only exist in the character's imagination.

Although there is no explicit boundary between the jungle reality and the dream, I imagined this shift to happen when Monkey and Bird fly off the end of the tree top

(**Figure 171**). This specific moment was not depicted; instead I drew the two characters as they accelerate towards it. I wanted the reader's imagination to fill in this moment of disbelief and wonder, and take a leap with the characters.

6.6.4 Flying (pages 11 and 12)

This transition between reality and dream coincided with the turning of the page and the following spread contains a full bleed picture of Monkey and Bird already in mid flight. This picture changed very little throughout the various dummy books (**Figure 172** to **Figure 176**) and was influenced by my own childhood memories of a recurrent flying dream. I planned the picture so that, on a symbolic level, it would communicate a departure from their previous state of mind. Their departure from the home environment is implied by the vastness of black space that has replaced the blue night sky and the jungle pattern. Their flight on an ascending diagonal direction conveys weightlessness, an escape from the pull of gravity. The spread contains no text, making the depicted event free of time boundaries. Monkey and Bird's eyes are closed and this allows the reader to decide whether they are sleeping or just enjoying their flight.

I tried to ensure that the depicted action could also be credible on a literal level, that is, it could be credible as the beginning of their moon journey. The flight picture evolved slightly with each dummy book: at first the two characters were shown flying separately (**Figure 172** to **Figure 174**) and then holding hands with Bird leading (**Figure 175** and

Figure 176). Within the secondary jungle world, where monkeys and birds talk and wear astronaut's helmets, it could also be accepted that a winged creature can help any other animal to fly. This idea was inspired by one of my childhood favorite secondary worlds, that of the *Superman* comic books (DC Comics), where the protagonist has the ability to transfer his flying powers to a person just by holding their hand.

6.7 The middle: playing with the alien on the moon

This section reflects on the development and role of pages 13 to 26 that describe what Monkey, Bird and the alien do on the moon. Although central to the plot, this section of the picturebook was the most difficult to resolve. I did not work on these spreads in the sequence they appear in the picturebook. The easiest spreads to resolve were those whose function in the picturebook plot was already partially determined by the events preceding or following.

In the discussion that follows, I first look at the spread depicting Monkey and Bird's arrival on the moon. Then a detailed reflection on the practice resulting in the countdown structure is given, before I resume the discussion of individual spreads, following the countdown numbers from 5 to 1 to Blast off.

6.7.1 Arriving on the moon (dummy book pages 13 and 14)

I start the discussion of this spread by reflecting on the development of its design and

layout. Then I will focus specifically on the alien's character development in terms of his appearance and speech.

This picturebook spread was dedicated to Monkey and Bird's arrival on the moon and its role was to make a clear causal and temporal link between the flight from earth (on the previous spread) and the moon countdown sequence (following in the next spreads). These two pages should also provide an introduction to the alien character. The initial page design was of a single full bleed image (**Figure 177** and **Figure 178**) showing the moment before landing. This composition seemed to freeze the moment in time and implied a significance and duration that were not needed at this point in the story. In addition, this layout made this spread too similar to the one before.

In trying to accelerate the pacing, I divided the spread into two distinct pages. The verso would depict the landing on the moon and the first meeting with the alien (different versions of this page are shown in **Figure 179** to **Figure 183**). I found that a succession of pictures instead of a single picture quickened the pace towards the alien's introduction. On the facing page, the recto contained a large picture where the alien introduced himself and the countdown. Even though I have drawn a lot of possible layouts for this spread, its final version has not yet been decided. The publisher has suggested that the landing sequence could be moved to the previous spread. This would make a clear connection between the flight and the landing and would help to share the amount of words between the two spreads. This spread will have to be developed further before the picturebook is published.

Understanding the alien: external appearance

An important step towards resolving this spread further was to gain a better understanding of the alien character through drawing. The idea of using aliens as inhabitants of the moon first occurred in the early stages of the book development process, when I was trying to resolve the basic plot. Initially there were sleeping aliens in a cave (**Figure 184**), then a group of hiding (**Figure 185**) or scheming (**Figure 186**) aliens. The depiction of a large number of characters that were not mentioned in the text, and did not necessarily contribute to the plot development, made the picturebook too complicated and this idea was simplified by reducing their numbers to just one character. At first the alien character was depicted as hiding (**Figure 187**), because he was not mentioned in the text. Then, through the addition of text, his role was developed into a central one in the picturebook plot. My initial reason for adding such a character was to make the moon world exciting, thus providing a credible motive for Monkey and Bird to leave home and making the picturebook adventure interesting for the reader. Another reason for the alien to exist at that stage was to assist the plot towards the climax, by guiding the two protagonists towards the rocket.

In order to fulfill these two functions, the alien's traits and his external appearance would have to be designed in relation to the two protagonists. Because he emerged from the work on the moon playing sequence, I thought of the alien as Monkey and Bird's playmate. Throughout the development of his design, this similarity in age was expressed visually as a similarity in body size (**Figure 188**). A larger body size might make the alien appear intimidating or older; if he were smaller than the protagonists, he

might lack the necessary visual presence on the page. Although I never consciously thought about the character's gender, I imagined him to be a little boy just like Monkey and Bird. This probably was a consequence of both my drawing practice and personal observations focusing on my son.

Apart from a similarity in size, the alien's looks would have to convey traits necessary for the desirable reaction from Monkey and Bird and therefore the development of the plot. For example I thought that vibrant colours or patterns on his skin could make him different and interesting to look at; a big smile and round eyes could convey friendliness (**Figure 190**). At the same time I had to ensure a clear visual distinction between an alien creature and Monkey and Bird (or indeed any other creature from Earth). The alien's appearance would be a metaphor for 'otherness' while at the same time it should conform to the secondary universe of the specific picturebook. This consistency of the secondary world should be independent of whether the alien was 'real' or 'imagined'. As such an alien creature cannot be based on real life reference I based these first drawings on my imagination. I found that some of these designs were influenced by memories of aliens' visual representations in comics, picturebooks, films, and cartoons.

In an attempt to make my design more my own, and to strengthen the character's 'alien-ness' I worked on a visual connection between his appearance and the moon countdown game. I drew him with body parts in numbers that corresponded to the countdown: five legs, four eyes, three teeth, two ears, one nose (**Figure 191**). This design was later discarded because it created technical difficulties in describing the

character in motion as the five legs gave the design an unwanted awkwardness. The only element of this connection between numbers and body parts that was retained in the final design was his four eyes, as they made him clearly identifiable as an alien without compromising any other aspect of his design. In drawing him with four eyes I would always instinctively make sure that two of his eyes would look at Monkey and the other two at Bird (**Figure 192**) and this sparked an understanding that the alien would be someone who would look after and watch over the two protagonists.

Finally, I worked on a design that would visually reflect the alien's origins and the world he inhabited (**Figure 193** to **Figure 196**). His pale, round body echoed the shape and colour of the planet. The texture of his body was rendered like that of the lunar surface, giving the impression that the alien was made of the same substance. Through these drawings I was able to see the alien clearly in my imagination as a creature emerging from and made of another world. I imagined that he could – if needed – disappear into the moon world like the Cheshire Cat in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1865) disappears leaving behind just a grin (see notes in **Figure 196**). This design was developed further in each dummy book and through screenprinting and featured in the final picturebook artwork (Chapter 7).

The alien*'s words*

The next step was to develop the alien character through his actions and words. I used my understanding of the two protagonists to answer the following questions: Who

does the alien need to be in relation to the protagonists? What would he do and say that would result in the playing countdown sequence? How could my understanding of his otherness be expressed in terms of his behaviour and speech? The mental image that prevailed was of the alien welcoming Monkey and Bird to the moon with his arms wide open, talking in rhyme with big gestures and a big voice. He would deliver sincere, friendly words in a manner of someone giving a performance, rolling his eyes and smiling (**Figure 197** and **Figure 198**). He would be confident in approaching them, shaking hands, and introducing himself. The manner of his welcome in those first drawings revealed a warm, extrovert character and inspired the content of his speech.

Following discussions with my supervisors, I had already experimented with adding text to this spread, even before the alien became a central character. The purpose of this text (that was initially supposedly spoken by both Monkey and Bird) was to link the moon landing to the countdown (**Figure 177**). As the alien was gradually emerging in my imagination as a distinct individual, I wanted these words to be uttered by him and to match the drawings of his 'acting'. I made several attempts at drawing and writing (**Figure 198** to **Figure 201**), indeed acting out the scene and different versions of the text to my family.

The final welcoming rhyme (**Figure 202**) puts the visitors at ease ('Welcome to the moon!') acknowledges their difficulty in falling asleep ('I see that you are not in bed'), and reassures them that this is not a problem ('Never mind'). So far the alien's words have made a strong link to what has already happened in the story. Then, the rhyme anticipates things to come ('… lots of things to see! … we can take a trip'),

and encourages the turning of the page by making a direct link to the countdown ('Countdown!'). It is worth noticing that on this spread, as also through the book, words and pictures alternate in leading the progression of the plot. On the verso the pictorial sequence of incomplete events (the first meeting) leads onward towards the alien's introduction. On the recto, where the image is static and most of the space is taken up by the text, the words ('Countdown!') move the story beyond what the picture shows, into the future.

Although the primary role of the alien's speech was to move the plot forward, I wanted it to contribute to characterisation as well. I hoped to reveal a character who is both friendly as well as exciting enough to follow on an adventure. The relatively long speech (contained in just two pages) and the manner of delivery, create a contrast with Monkey and Bird's economy of words. This juxtaposition could enhance the perceived difference between the inhabitants of the two different planets. In his speech, or indeed in the whole picturebook, the alien never introduces himself by name, although he knows who Monkey and Bird are when he greets them ('Hello Monkey! Hello Bird!). I never felt there was a need to name the alien. This did not make him less important, but it made me think of him as 'other', 'different', 'unknown' and added to the ambiguity of him originating in a dream or in another planet.

In this spread the alien's character is revealed mainly through his words and actions. His actions are intentional and reflect his motivations. Monkey and Bird's characterisation on the other hand relied on their response to the alien's actions and to the extraordinary situation they find themselves in. As Monkey and Bird do not talk much in this spread,

their responses could be revealed in the pictures, specifically in the sequence on the verso. I based both Monkey and Bird's behaviour on my observations of young children's reactions to meeting someone new for the first time, usually characterised by initial hesitation or fear (**Figure 204**). I then intentionally tried to differentiate each character's actions on the following picture. Bird was pictured as more cautious and shy, (perhaps because of his smaller size), hiding behind his friend (**Figure 204**). Interestingly, I had drawn such a reaction in a little girl in my picturebook development work (**Figure 205**). Monkey, by contrast, was depicted as more daring, extending his hand without being scared. His gesture was based on my son's excitement at meeting someone new.

Another small contribution to characterisation in this spread was the protagonists' response to the alien's speech. Any initial fear or hesitation had vanished and had been replaced by excitement and enthusiasm (**Figure 202**). Their ease at being convinced was inspired by my understanding of their innocent, childlike nature. I refrained from adding more visual characterisation elements so as not to overburden this double spread, which already contained a lot of information.

6.7.2 Countdown structure

Before I continue the reflection on the development of individual spreads I will outline the process of finalising the countdown sequence that takes place during the rhyme's countdown: '5-4-3-2-1-Blast off!' Through the consecutive storyboards and dummy

books, this sequence became gradually more structured. At first, each of the five countdown numbers was allocated a single page (**Figure 206**) but in later dummies this changed to a double page spread (**Figure 207**). This expansion in page numbers gave more weight to this part of the story. Full bleed spreads allowed the reader enough time to take in the activities and, on a story level, enough time for the protagonists to enjoy these activities. I wanted the pace of this section to imply leisure and enjoyment. Furthermore, this structure allowed synchronisation between the rhyme's countdown and the act of reading the book, allowing for a pause between the numbers while the page is being turned.

A counting game was also developed alongside this structure, with the number on the spread corresponding to the same number of objects shown in the illustration. This decision was primarily based on the rhyme's text but I think that the previous work on a counting book (discussed in Chapter 5) was also influential (**Figure 208**). It was in this much earlier storyboard that I first used the same colour for the number and the corresponding objects, and this idea emerged again when I was working on the *Zoom* countdown sequence (**Figure 209**). The use of strong colours against a black and white background was inspired by photographs of the NASA Apollo missions on the moon where the only colourful objects were those brought from Earth (**Figure 210**). As one of the astronauts said when seeing the moon from orbit for the first time: 'the moon is essentially grey… there is no colour' (*Man on the Moon*, 2009).

Although the counting game invites the reader to connect words and pictures, thus making the reading experience more interactive, the words do not describe the events

or the character's actions shown by the pictures. The verbal and visual modes describe progression towards the climax, but they do this in parallel trajectories. The only connection between words and pictures is the link between numbers and highlighted objects. Then, when the rocket blasts off, words and pictures come together again and communicate the same information.

Nearly all the progress in resolving the basic plot of this sequence was achieved through the creation of images. Early attempts also included added text that described the events on the moon. For example, in **Figure 211** the text reads 'Two ladders leading up a spaceship', with the addition of speech bubbles for Monkey: 'one for me!' and Bird: 'and one for me!' This added text was particularly useful in my understanding of what was happening in the specific picture, and why two ladders were needed. Although useful in developing the plot, such added text was unnecessary for the final version of the picturebook because it was duplicating the information shown by the pictures. Moreover, it spoiled the counting game (there is no point in looking for the two ladders if they are already mentioned in the text) and interfered with the rhyme's rhythm.

6.7.3 Five! (dummy book pages 15 and 16)

The spread corresponding to number 'Five!' served as an introduction to the moon environment because the previous spread was taken up by the alien's words and did not leave enough space for it. I looked for inspiration at the NASA online archives and

at documentaries that have recorded the behaviour of the Apollo mission astronauts when on (or in orbit around) the moon. Their first descriptions would be about this new place: 'A vast, lonely, forbidding place… an expanse of nothing' (Apollo 8 mission astronaut, *Man on the Moon*, 2009). Some of the astronauts who landed on the moon (*For All Mankind*, 1989) described how, once there, they looked up to the sky to find earth. Imagining myself there, my first reaction would be to somehow establish my position within this vastness. This is why in the first dummies and storyboards, Monkey and Bird were drawn using flags to find their way around the moon (**Figure 212**). On reflection I realised that this action made them seem possessive. This was a negative trait that did not fit with my understanding of the characters and consequently the action was discarded. In every step of the book development I would repeat this check between character and plot, to ensure that they worked well together.

I started to think of pictures that could communicate this sense of vastness. As I had to stay true to my characters, their actions would also be based on my son's reaction when faced with a new environment: he would pause for a few brief moments to take everything in and acclimatise himself before confidently going off to explore. Through a series of rough drawings (**Figure 213** and **Figure 214**), I tried to merge the experiences of the astronauts and those of my son. The text next to some of these drawings reads 'wow!' capturing the amazement I imagined in my characters' reaction. The final version of the 'Five!' spread gives a panoramic view of the moon surface, with the three characters appearing quite small so as to give the reader a sense of the expanse and emptiness of the place (**Figure 215**). The ground formation was inspired by

an Apollo 15 mission photograph (**Figure 216**). It was important that this place although strange is not forbidding or frightening. If there was any concern about any of the two protagonists being scared, the alien is there to hold their hand and make them feel safe in his home. The Earth is not shown in the skies so as not to imply a longing for going back home. Instead they look at five colourful passing satellites. Their shapes were inspired by the satellite *Sputnik 1* (**Figure 217**).

6.7.4 Four! (dummy book pages 17 and 18)

Following the establishing long shot of the moon, I wanted the following spread to show the two protagonists getting over their initial awe, settling in their new environment, and increasingly enjoying themselves (**Figure 218**). A medium shot framing was used to convey the increasing intimacy and friendship between them and the alien and to also give the reader a chance to observe and get to know the alien. In this picture (and indeed throughout the picturebook) the reader's point of view is at eye level, and this according to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) is a point of view of equality. In the creative practice I often thought of myself reading the picturebook, placed as if taking part in the depicted actions or events – in this particular picture, joining in the playing. The bird, helped by the alien, plays with the moon-sand and the monkey, who is over excited, enjoys the effect of the moon's gravity (**Figure 219**). This activity was again inspired by my son's favorite pastime at the playground (playing in the sandpit) and by what astronauts do on the moon (collecting samples).

6.7.5 Three! (dummy book pages 19 and 20)

This spread shows the three characters riding a moon buggy with Monkey driving and controlling its three claws. This picture appeared in all the versions of storyboards and dummies (**Figure 220** and **Figure 221**). The activity was inspired by footage and photographs of astronauts on the moon (**Figure 222**) and was chosen because I felt that a bumpy ride over a hilly formation was something that my two characters would love to do. It would also be an exciting thing to draw.

This ride allowed me to move the plot further away from Monkey and Bird's landing point and closer to the rocket. Apart from increasing the distance between the protagonists and their landing site, this picture intentionally expressed a gradual change in the protagonists' feelings. They were becoming more confident; driving rather than following. Their successful ride could result in an increasing trust towards the alien. This building of confidence, trust, and friendship was necessary in order to give credibility to their action of entering the rocket on the following spread.

6.7.6 Two! (dummy book pages 21 and 22)

 The spread corresponding to number 'Two!' linked the activities on the moon surface (looking, playing, exploring,) with what happens inside the rocket (the pressing of the button). Number two corresponded to two ladders leading Monkey and Bird up into rocket (**Figure 223**). This spread offers a full external view of the rocket, which, at this point in the story is an unknown object with an unknown destination. I wanted its design to

reflect this uncertainty and possibly inspire doubt or hesitation in the reader – although the protagonists would be unaffected by it. In **Figure 224** and **Figure 225** the rocket looks like a creature with its door resembling an open mouth. The publisher expressed concern over this design and whether it might alarm a young reader. I consequently tried to soften the design for the picturebook maquette, but further changes might be needed before the book is published.

An important consideration in the moon sequence was the geography of the empty lunar surface and how the pictures could depict movement on that surface without confusing the reader. At first, I included the specific locales (ground formations and props, such as the moon buggy and rocket) in the first landing picture so that the reader has an overview of the scenery where the action will take place (**Figure 226**). This picture gave away the rocket thus diminishing any surprise the reader might get from seeing the rocket on a later spread, and was discarded.

To solve the issue of geographical positioning I first choreographed the characters' movement in this sequence as having a constant direction from left to right (**Figure 227**). It is widely acknowledged that in picturebooks pictures are read from left to right (Nodelman, 1988; Lewis, 2001; Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001) and I used this understanding throughout the book and in particular in the moon pictures, to make the direction of the movement clear. In each countdown spread Monkey and Bird move from left to right. On the left edge of the picture there is sometimes a 'known' pictorial location or object from the previous spread (in this spread it is the moon buggy). On the far right there is a depiction of something 'unknown', something that

they will reach on the following spread. For this particular spread, the unknown object is the rocket. This clear division of the pictures into past-present-future, helped both with spatial clarity and continuity. In fact I understood the moon sequence to be part of a larger choreography which dictates the whole book, and consists of the continuous movement of Monkey and Bird from home to the moon and then back home again, as this is shown on **Figure 228.**

6.7.7 One! (pages 23 and 24)

This spread needed an image depicting a moment leading to or just before the rocket's take off. My idea was to show the three characters inside the rocket, as they are just about to press a big red ignition button that corresponds to number one (**Figure 229**). I tried different compositions (**Figure 229** to **Figure 232**) exploring the potential of a close-up. I wanted the characters to be relatively still in this picture so as to emphasise the anticipation towards the action that would cause the big explosion. The rocket's round window was moved from the background (**Figure 229**) to the foreground (**Figure 232**) where it framed the whole scene. This point of view placed the reader outside the rocket just behind the window, spying in and sharing the big moment. The repetition of the circular shapes in the final version (rocket, window, alien, helmets, button) centers the attention to the anticipated action.

I considered the possibility of using this spread to depict some of the rocket's interior in **Figure 230** and **Figure 231**. This idea was inspired by depictions of rocket/spaceship interiors in the TinTin adventures *Destination Moon* (Herge, 1953) and *Explorers on the Moon*

(Herge, 1953), and the film *Alien* (Scott, 1979). Although a detailed depiction could give an insight into the alien's world I felt that this insight was not needed and would distract from the expectation of the big event. I needed to show only the necessary information: the spaceship, the button, and the reactions of the three characters including their facial expressions. As with most of the pictures in the book, I had to choose the version that fulfilled its function in the plot with most clarity and simplicity.

Another idea was that this spread, depicting the interior of a built structure, might give me the chance to experiment with the depiction of three dimensional space and volumes. Knowing the limitations of screenprinting meant that I worked on my roughs as images that can be made out of overlaying flat layers, without the use of gradient shading. Using perspective techniques such as different sizes corresponding to relative distance from the viewer, or a close figure obscuring the one behind it, meant that I could give some illusion of a three dimensional space on a flat two dimensional surface. As the words were also integrated in the picture (and not in speech bubbles as in the initial dummies) I felt that the relatively shallow pictorial depth implied in my pictures might work well with the 'depthless space occupied by words' (Nodelman 1988, p.57)

In terms of characterisation, during the countdown Monkey was shown as always more enthusiastic than Bird, leading the way when it came to driving the moon buggy or climbing up the stairs. Inside the spaceship, I chose to show Bird calmer and more decisive in pressing the button, whereas Monkey hesitates – this, I felt, was consistent with the fact that Bird also led the initial flight from Earth. The alien is shown

encouraging them to go ahead. I worked on Monkey and Bird's actions and reactions so as to change the initial dummies where they were both shown in a state of constant excitement throughout this moon sequence. In the final version, activity and pause alternate according to events and my understanding of the characters, and create a convincing build up towards the climax.

6.7.8 Blast Off! (dummy book pages 25 and 26)

Coming up with an ending to the countdown was fundamental in resolving the moon sequence and in understanding how the protagonists could (in a credible way) get back home. After some initial unsuccessful attempts I made two small thumbnail drawings of a double spread showing a blast off (**Figure 233**) in which the two characters leave the moon in a rocket and are safely delivered back home. This solution was dictated by the text and although it might appear obvious it did not occur to me from the very beginning. On the page words and pictures repeat the same information: a rocket blasting off into space. The blast off picture felt like a convincing climax, a 'culminating and turning point' (Nikolajeva 2002: 167), not only for the countdown sequence, but also for the entire picturebook plot. It gave the moon sequence a specific direction and offered a return home. I found that this climax matched my understanding of the two characters and their motivations. Their love of adventure and playing meant that taking off in a rocket would be one of the most exciting things that would ever happen to them. It was a credible motive for an adventure on another planet. It could also be the theme of a dream.

Originally the picture showing the rocket (and the three characters) took up the verso of a double spread (**Figure 234**). Following a discussion with the publisher I realised that this moment, the climax of the whole book, needed more visual weight. I experimented with different compositions, including a fold out (**Figure 235**) and I let the text take over the spread. The large size of the type expressed the high sound volume and the energy of the explosion. In the final version the picture was placed across two facing pages (**Figure 236**). The text is designed in a diagonal and leads the eye to the rocket on the top right corner – which in turn creates a visual link to the following spread.

6.8 The ending

This section discusses the end of the picturebook, which consists of the two last picturebook spreads: the fold out spread that depicts Monkey and Bird's return home, and the final spread that acts as the conclusion of the picturebook. The discussion on the last spread includes a reflection on the role of the alien character.

6.8.1 Returning home (dummy book pages 27 and 28)

Initially the return voyage was not depicted but implied: the pictures showed the blast off (before the journey) and then Monkey and Bird's arrival (when the journey was completed) (**Figure 237**). With the expansion of the 'blast off!' page to a full spread, there was no space left for the picture depicting Monkey and Bird's return home. The

solution was to design the blast off as a fold out which opened up to a four-page wide image that shows, in 'continuous narrative' (Doonan 1993, p.83), the rocket's return journey to earth (**Figure 239**). The three characters in the rocket were shown in four different places within the same long image.

Despite the fact that this image was new and introduced for practical reasons (I had to create space within the 32 page format), once it was drawn on paper I realised its importance for the characters and the plot. It enabled me to show Monkey and Bird achieving what was not possible before (sleep) and to imply the time involved in the slow and gradual process of falling asleep (**Figure 240**). The depiction of this process and the clear mapping of the journey provided a 'falling action' (Nikolajeva, 2002) following the blast off climax, and created a believable transition towards the conclusion of the story.

6.8.2 Happy end (dummy book pages 29 and 30)

The earliest *Zoom* dummy book ended with a picture showing both Monkey and Bird peacefully asleep on their tree branch (**Figure 241**). Throughout the picturebook development process this image (a visual equivalent to the phrase 'they lived happily ever after') remained virtually unchanged because I was convinced that, whatever happens during their moon adventure, the two protagonists should end up happily back at home. In his seminal 1947 essay *On Fairy Stories,* Tolkien (1989, p.62) refers to what he calls the 'Consolation of the Happy Ending' and asserts that 'all complete fairy-stories must have it'. What follows is a discussion on how I tried to achieve this

happy ending for the characters and for the reader.

The first step in resolving the ending plot was to bridge the gap between the last moment depicted in the flight spread and the happy conclusion. When I introduced the fold-out depicting Monkey and Bird falling asleep, the initial picture showing them jumping out of the rocket and landing on their tree (**Figure 242**) created a discrepancy in the story's causality. There was no obvious cause-and-effect connection between the sequence of events: falling asleep, jumping out of a rocket, then instantaneously going back to sleep again. Moreover the jumping action interrupted the gradual slowing down of the book's pace towards sleep. The solution was to make the alien (the only character still awake) responsible for Monkey and Bird's transportation and, through drawing, I looked for plausible means of achieving this. I never considered the rocket coming too close to the trees, as this might have woken up the other sleeping animals. It was important for me that there would be no witnesses to this scene. One idea (inspired by *Star Trek* pseudo-technology) was to transport Monkey and Bird from the spaceship using a beam (**Figure 243**). This was discarded following a conversation with my supervisors, as it was agreed that very young readers would not necessarily understand this concept. Additionally, my developing understanding of the alien character made me feel that such a 'drop off' would be too detached and impersonal for a kind-hearted alien.

The inspiration for the solution came from my own childhood memories of falling asleep in my parents' car. I remembered the warm feeling of safety when carried in my parents' arms from the car to my bed without fully waking up. This memory was

translated into two images showing the alien hanging from his hovering spaceship with a rope and safely depositing first Monkey and then Bird on to their branch (**Figure 244**).

The incomplete action depicted in these two sequential images creates anticipation of the expected conclusion. The moment I chose to anticipate was dictated by my priorities: I was more interested in Monkey and Bird's feelings than in the alien's. In other words, Monkey and Bird were the 'focalized' characters (Nikolajeva 2002, p.61). Therefore I chose to anticipate the moment that was most important for them: when they can first feel they are safely placed in bed. If I was focusing on the alien's feelings I might have pictured his difficulty in balancing and getting them safe out of the rocket, or his relief as he is set to leave for home. Despite my focus in the two protagonists, the alien's character is also revealed through this action as someone who is prepared to undertake a hazardous maneuver in order to see his friends safely back at home.

The absence of a background in these two sequential images (**Figure 244**) contributes to the clear depiction of the characters' actions. The only elements from the environment that can be seen are the rocket and the tree branch, showing the necessary spatial information of where the action starts and where it ends. The white space leaves room for placing the words near the alien who is the only one awake in this sequence. This clarifies that it is him who utters the words as he leaves his friends comfortably asleep: 'Goodnight Monkey!' and then 'Goodnight Bird!'. These two phrases link the two small sequential images directly to the larger image which is accompanied by the text 'Goodnight everybody!'

The large image in the final spread shows the conclusion of the picturebook. Monkey and Bird have returned home, and have been transformed from sleepless creatures, to happily sleeping ones (**Figure 245**). They are depicted from a close distance, thus allowing the reader a detailed observation and therefore a clear understanding of their feelings (as these are understood by their relaxed body language and smiling facial expressions). The picture also communicates the relationship with their environment, showing how they now harmoniously fit in. This ending contains both 'a structural closure (a satisfactory round-up of the plot) and psychological closure, bringing the protagonist's personal conflicts into balance' (Nikolajeva 2002, p.168).

A happy ending is also suggested for the alien, who, having put his friends to bed, is now returning home in his spaceship. His words echo over the jungle wishing a good night to every creature. My intention was that these last words would be addressed to the reader, creating a direct connection with the alien and implying that the reader too can visit the alien when he or she cannot sleep.

Understanding the alien*'s role*

When the transition towards the picturebook conclusion was finalised, as discussed

above, I was finally able to fully comprehend who the alien is and how his role could

be defined. I realised that all his actions (guiding Monkey and Bird on the moon, engineering their return home) were driven by a will to help Monkey and Bird fall asleep.

I understood the alien to be indispensable: without him the story could not have reached its ending. He is what Nikolajeva calls a catalyst: 'a character that sets the plot in motion' (2002, p.112). And although the two protagonists give a clear direction to the plot by leaving home, once they are on the moon it is the alien who drives the plot forward and moves it towards its conclusion.

While developing the three characters I was concerned with their consciousness and how they, in the picturebook imaginary world, understand what is happening to them. I thought that the alien might be fully aware of his role as a trickster or he may not, and that this did not matter in the story – he just had to be there. I understood that Monkey and Bird comprehend the story on a literal level, as a fun adventure consisting of a

series of events that they go along with. But as already discussed, the story can also be understood at a symbolic or metaphorical level, as a dream taking place wholly in their inner worlds (Nikolajeva 2010, p.37). This level focuses on the anxiety caused by their inability to sleep and on the effort needed to overcome it. My understanding was that neither the alien is aware of his existence in someone's dream, nor do Monkey and Bird understand the construction of this dreamscape in their own imagination.

As a further clarification of the alien's role it needs to be highlighted that he does not fit the role of the Deus ex Machina. This term describes a character who sets things right. Nikolajeva argues that in children's fiction such a character is often an adult,

who 'usually disempowers the child protagonists, since whatever problems they might encounter, the adult figure will take care of them' (Nikolajeva 2002, p.124). The alien does not solve the problems instantly neither does he disempower Monkey and Bird. Instead he encourages them to take part in a sequence of events that lead towards the final conclusion, with the two protagonists having an active role within that sequence.

6.9 Endpapers, tile page and cover

In *How Picturebooks Work*, Nikolajeva and Scott (2001, p.241-257) dedicate one chapter to picturebook paratexts: titles, covers, endpapers, and title pages. They have based their discussion on Genette's (1997, p.1) definition: 'The paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and more generally to the public.' According to Genette, these elements of production surround and extend the text (in the case of picturebooks, multimodal text) 'in order to *present* it in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its reception and consumption in the form (nowadays, at least) of a book' (1997, p.1, emphasis in original). I will briefly discuss here what Genette calls 'The Publishers Peritexts' (1997, p.16-33): Title and cover, format, typesetting, paper, printing and will offer a more detailed reflection on the construction of the endpapers.

Throughout the studio practice I have thought of these production elements as 'book design' issues. I understood that the choice of title and the cover design would have

to be developed with the publisher at a later stage because of their importance in the book's commercial success. I therefore did not develop these fully, and some rough cover designs (for presentation purposes) using the title *Zoom Zoom Zoom* are seen in **Figure 246** and **Figure 247**. The format of my dummy books kept changing as I was trying out different sizes and proportions: I wanted to find the optimal format that would allow a detailed display and enjoyment of my pictures without the book being too big for children to handle. The publisher has suggested a size of 25cm by 25cm. The choice of typeface and the exact way that text will be integrated with the pictures will again be discussed with the publisher at a later stage. The choice of paper and printing quality are crucial for reproducing the colours and shapes of the screenprints and will be decided at the production stage.

My intention for the endpapers, the sheets of paper attaching the pages of the bound picturebook to its hard cover (Shulevitz, 1985), was to use them for pictures that would be integral to the picturebook's design and could extend its introduction and ending. My first attempts at designing the endpapers resulted in patterns made of the sleeping protagonists or other animals (**Figure 248**). These were discarded because they contradicted the first picturebook spread that showed Monkey and Bird awake. I then considered a panoramic view of the jungle that would give the reader the chance to see this environment from an angle that was not shown in the book. It took a few attempts to find the right distance from the jungle that wouldn't be either too far (like **Figure 249** that was designed as a title page) so that the reader can still distinguish the animals, or too close (as in **Figure 250**) so that the endpaper picture would not be

confused with the first spread. The final version (**Figure 251**) includes Monkey and Bird and shows their exact position within the jungle. In the front endpaper they are shown awake, and in the back endpaper they are happily asleep (**Figure 252**), confirming the change that took place in the picturebook.

I will now discuss the use of photographic reference in designing the secondary jungle world in the endpapers as well as in the rest of the picturebook. In choosing the reference material, I was influenced by a friend's comment about the liberties taken by picturebook illustrators who make pictures showing animals from all over the world living in the same habitat – something that could not happen in real life, except in a zoo. Although I do not entirely agree with this argument (I have always admired Dave McKee's imaginary jungle in *Elmer* **Figure 253**), I realised that a restriction of visual reference to a particular region might move the practice to a new direction: it would encourage me to draw forms I had never drawn before. I decided that the region I would refer to would be South America where monkeys and birds can be found living on trees. I used photographic reference from *Trees* (2005) and *Animal* (2001), both by DK publishing. This does not mean that I intended or attempted a realistic representation of a specific ecosystem. For example, some of the trees drawn in the picturebook jungle (**Figure 254**) were based on trees that originate in different parts of South America and thrive under very different conditions (**Figure 255**). Essentially, I 'borrowed' the visual forms of animals and trees to achieve a composition of interesting shapes and colours. My method of picking and mixing elements of reality and fantasy can also be seen in the depiction of all jungle animals as asleep when the moon is out: in reality, a large number of animals

are active in such an environment during the night.

I finish the discussion on the endpapers' design by discussing how the illustrator can visualise the picturebook as a play or film. The framing of the pictures and spreads in *Zoom* was often imagined as a continuous camera shot. The endpapers were designed as part of such a move: the picturebook begins with a panoramic view at the front endpaper, then the reader is offered a glance at the moon for the title and copyright page (**Figure 256**) and then the 'camera' gradually moves closer to Monkey and Bird in the first spread, and then even closer in the emotional picture of the second spread. At the end of the picturebook, a reverse camera move was imagined, a continuous zoom-out from the last spread to the back endpaper implying an increasing 'distance' between the picturebook world and the reader.

Nodelman (1988) has discussed the use of film techniques in picturebooks but found that very few picturebooks use a wide variety of viewing angles and distances. Most depict a long or medium shot at eye-level, showing full figures in a background. Although this argument could be challenged by more recent, postmodern picturebooks, it is still the case that a large number of picturebooks are

> '...more like theater in their storytelling conventions than they are like films, for picture-book artists most often place us as viewers where we must necessarily be in a seat in a theater: always at the same distance and angle from the actors and seeing always their complete bodies instead of just sometimes their faces, sometimes their torsos, and so on.' (1988, p.231).

This is exactly how Edward Ardizzone (Wintle and Fisher 1974, p.42) created his

images on a picturebook page:

> 'I like drawing small figures in a setting, so you have the whole figure, very often; I
>
> like to think of an illustration as a scene on stage, with me sitting in the front row, and
>
> there they all are, far away from me.'

While working on *Zoom* I also imagined the story unfolding in front of me, as if on a

stage where everything is clearly visible. At the same time I planned the book as if I

was filming that stage, zooming in and out from a fixed point of view.

6.9 Conclusions

This section offers a post-practice reflection on the construction of the picturebook

maquette. Monkey and Bird's characterisation is discussed with reference to character

'transparency' and change. I then refer to the interdependence of character and plot

and evaluate the modality, or 'truth value' of characters and plot. Finally, this section

outlines the main considerations of practice and addresses the five objectives that

were initially set for this stage of the work.

6.9.1 Characterisation

The construction of an inner life for my picturebook characters has been one of the

concerns of the illustration practice. I will now look at how characters are revealed

through their speech, actions and by the narration. In *Zoom*, speech is in the form

of direct dialogue between the characters but rarely reveals their feelings or thoughts

directly. Its primary function is to provide a rhythm and carry the plot forward. The

characters' actions are described mainly by images and occasionally referred to by words. The narration is also based more on the pictures than on the words: it is an external, descriptive narration. Overall, the pictures are not explicit, in the way that words could be in clearly defining the characters' thoughts, feelings and traits. This means that Monkey, Bird and the alien are not 'transparent' (Nikolajeva 2002, p. 241) characters. When reading the picturebook, the reader is free to form his or her own interpretation and understanding of the characters.

My intention throughout the creative process was to create animal characters whose inner lives resembled those of real people. The restriction of space (32 pages) and the fundamental need for simplicity and clarity in the plot meant that my ambition was not fully realised – in that it was not possible to simulate real, complex personalities. Within these limitations, I consciously tried to avoid stereotypes; especially animal, and as far as possible, gender stereotypes (despite the fact that I had an all male cast of characters). I also tried to avoid the creation of characters that would be distinguished by one particular trait. This hesitation to define characters by a single trait, might have made my characters less recognisable, or the book significantly less character-led; it was based on my previous understanding of the use of animal stereotypes in picturebooks and my own reluctance to characterise young children by any kind of adjective or specific trait.

The scope for character change within such a picturebook was very slight. Still, my two protagonists have a 'dynamic orientation' (Golden, 1990; Nikolajeva, 2002), exhibiting some change during the story. This 'evolution' involved Monkey and Bird's feelings,

not their character traits, and was a fundamental component of the plot construction. As the story progresses, they change from unsettled, to excited, and then to calm and content. I never intended to portray a permanent change; the picturebook does not imply that from now on Monkey and Bird will always be able to fall asleep. On the contrary, I understood that this emotional change would be reversed the following evening, and that the characters (and possibly the reader) would have to go through this change again and again. The alien is a static character, who does not undergo any changes.

In order to evaluate the 'modality' of the picturebook, that is, whether my images 'represent people, places and things as though they are real, as though they actually exist in this way, or as though they do not' (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996, p.161), I will briefly refer to characters, plot, and environments. At one level, my characters were completely fantastical, as monkeys and birds who talk or go to the moon do not exist. However, their behaviour and feelings were intentionally based on my understanding of real children, formed by personal experience, memories, as well as sketchbook observational and imaginative drawings. The characters' appearance resembled that of animals – but it was removed from the realism of the earlier work (wallpaper installation discussed in Chapter 3) into an imaginary realm. They look more animal-like than animal. Colour, texture, body poses, and facial expressions were an idiosyncratic mix of different influences: previous illustration work, photographic reference, and observational drawings.

The visual contrast between jungle and moon worlds was developed through

photographic reference and the needs of plot and characterisation. Both environments can be understood literally (jungle, moon) or as a metaphor (homeworld, dreamscape). The plot, while far removed from the reality of a child's life, was developed so that it could operate in two levels. On a literal level, it could be understood as an adventure. On a symbolic level it could be understood as a metaphor for real life situations and feelings. The process of constructing the picturebook dummies involved an interdependence of realism and fantasy in creating a story and a cast of characters that could feel both 'real' and 'magical' at the same time.

Even though the main focus of my research was animal characterisation, my picturebook is plot oriented, with actions and events carrying the story. Still, in practice, there was an interdependence of character and plot. While the plot was worked and reworked, it was always done with the two characters, Monkey and Bird, in mind. It was my understanding of Monkey and Bird as confident (in themselves and in their friendship), fun loving, and inquisitive, which made an adventure on the moon possible in the first place. I probably would not match a timid character with such an adventure; even if I did, this trait/event combination would result in a different story.

My understanding of the two protagonists influenced every step I took towards resolving the plot and in creating the alien. This was not a conscious, detached understanding; it never took the form of a formal or complete character description, for example in the form of a list of traits. It was an intuitive and empathetic knowing, inspired by my understanding of my son, and as the book progressed it evolved into an emotional attachment to the two characters, a genuine caring for Monkey and Bird

and what happens to them. I can see Nikolajeva's point that characters in narratives should not be discussed as or compared to real people, as they are constructed for a specific purpose: 'Like everything else in a narrative, character is part of the overall design' (2002, p.158). Nevertheless, I found that, while making the picturebook, I was perceiving the characters as real beings and that this perception and attachment was the driving force behind the creative practice.

6.9.2 Plot

The work that shaped the picturebook plot was based on decisions that were mostly instinctive and embedded in practice and not consciously guided by the study of theory. When the picturebook maquette was finalised, the written reflection on the practice was informed by relevant literature, which enabled me to gain a new understanding of how I was dealing with the plot. It was then that I realised that I had created what Nikolajeva (2002, p.160) calls a 'basic' or 'master' plot that originates in traditional oral stories and has been widely adapted by children's fiction. It follows the pattern: 'home – departure from home – adventure – home coming' (2002, p.160). The plot also falls into Booker's (2004) 'Voyage and Return' category, which can be briefly described as: 'the hero or heroine being abruptly transported out of the 'normal' world into an abnormal world, and eventually back to where they begun' (2004, p.105). Booker discusses childhood stories such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (traditional), *Peter Rabbit* (Potter, 1902) and especially plots where the journey leads the protagonists to an imaginary realm such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1865). Although

in most such stories, there is an element of danger or alarm in the other world, this is not the case in my picturebook where such an element has been replaced by a build up of enthusiasm.

6.9.3 Reflection on Practice

The picturebook maquette met the objectives that were set out at the beginning of this chapter. First of all, I believe that I created two appealing animal characters, Monkey and Bird, who were the protagonists of a picturebook. It has also been shown throughout this chapter that the characterisation and the picturebook plot were influenced by the previous development work (Chapters 3, 4, and 5) and my developing understanding of how picturebooks work (as this was shaped by the study of critical writing and published picturebooks, and through my own practice), thus the second aim was met as well. The third objective was met by using a simple nursery rhyme as a text, with some of my own additions, and by allowing the pictures to carry the narrative weight. Fourthly, design and content were compatible with a specific audience, and this was mainly ensured by my supervisors' and publisher's feedback. Finally, the fact that this picturebook is publishable was confirmed when in June 2011 I was offered a contract for *Zoom* by Macmillan Children's Books.

The construction of the picturebook was a complex design process. This process had to address the objectives above while taking into consideration the need for simplicity, clarity, credibility, and consistency. Moreover I had to create characters and a picturebook that would be understandable, interesting, and enjoyable. All this had to

be achieved by bringing together pictures and words, and by the creation of sequential images that influenced and balanced each other within a defined number of pages. It could be argued that I found the task so complex because I was going through the process of creating a picturebook for the first time, thus learning through making. While this is in part true, other more experienced practitioners have also expressed a similar understanding.

In her practice-based research project on picturebook illustration, McConnell often refers to the 'many layers of consideration' (2010, p.5) that overlap and reflect each other when creating a picturebook. Quentin Blake, in addressing the role of the illustrator as a commercial artist, describes the numerous considerations involved in creating a children's book as a 'complex twist of strands' (2002, p.9). I end the discussion on the process of picturebook construction with Maurice Sendak's highly illuminating statement. The fact that this demanding process is not reflected by or represented in the final artefact (the picturebook), could be the reason why its complexity is often not understood or appreciated fully:

> 'A picturebook is not only what most people think it is – an easy thing, with a lot of pictures in it, to read to small children. For me it is a damned difficult thing to do, like working in a complicated and challenging poetic form. It demands so much that you have to be on top of the situation all the time, finally to achieve something so simple and so put together – so seamless – that it looks as if you knocked it off in no time. One stitch showing and you've lost the game'. (Sendak 1988, p.186)

Chapter 7
Final artwork

This chapter focuses on the final artwork (two double spreads and supporting character designs) that was part of the picturebook proposal. The discussion that follows does not offer an aesthetic analysis of the final screenprints. Rather, it reflects on the practice that led to their production, with specific focus on characterisation. First, the development of the character designs will be discussed, followed by reflection on artwork that was not used as part of the proposal. The chapter ends with a discussion on the production of the two finished double spreads.

7.1 Character designs

I had three objectives when finalising the character designs for Monkey and Bird. First of all, I wanted the designs to be able to express some of the characters' traits and feelings. This visual contribution to the characterisation would be consistent with the picturebook plot and would be based on the sketchbook development work on fur texture, colour, and clothes (Chapter 4). As I intended to depict the characters' feelings through the use of human facial expressions and body language, their designs needed to allow a clear visual equivalence to human faces and bodies.

The second aim was to produce two designs that are clearly distinctive for each character. The visual contrast between Monkey and Bird would work alongside the differences revealed through their actions and speech, and would thus contribute towards a 'contrastive characterisation' (Nikolajeva 2002, p.277). The visual distinction refers to their different species (monkey/bird), colour (red/blue), size (larger/smaller), and texture (hairy/smooth).

Finally, the third objective was to create designs that are both instantly recognisable (so that the characters can be identified when the reader turns the page) and simple. Simplicity was fundamental in keeping the designs consistent throughout the picturebook: in different perspectives, sizes, body poses, and against various backgrounds. I also had to ensure that these designs would not look similar to other already existing characters.

Throughout the development of the dummy books and the occasional sketchbook drawing of Monkey and Bird (**Figure 257** to **Figure 259**), their designs were constantly changing. The production of screenprinted artwork for a specific picturebook page helped to finalise the designs. This page would be the verso of the third spread, as it showed the two characters in three different poses (**Figure 260**). The first attempt was not very successful for technical reasons as the designs were too small and, despite the Photoshop planning (**Figure 261**), I had difficulties in the printing stage (**Figure 262**). By reworking the characters on a larger scale I was able to draw them in more detail, use more colours, and create an overall more sophisticated design (**Figure 264**). The characters' limbs were printed in a different hue to their bodies so that, in the absence of a contour line, overlaps could be pictured clearly (for example a character's arm being in front of their body in **Figure 265**). Bird's design in these prints (**Figure 264** to **Figure 266**) was simple and effective, and I decided not to change it further. Although this decision felt like an instinctive reaction during the studio practice (expressed in the words 'it works'), on reflection I can see that Bird's design fulfills all three objectives.

On the contrary, I could sense that Monkey's design was problematic, without being

able to put my finger on what was not working. I identified the problem when the publisher suggested that Monkey's head should be 'more like a monkey and less like a little boy'. Quite often during the making of the picturebook, feedback or comments have clarified thoughts or instincts that I had not been able to articulate myself. The issue here was that Monkey's head looked very different to his body as if it belonged to different species (see **Figure 264** to **Figure 266**). This feedback helped me to realise that however extraordinary a character is, his or her design should always communicate clearly and unambiguously what the character is. If my point was to design a creature with a head different to its body, then this difference should be clarified further to become a distinctive feature. In Monkey's case I had to leave this half-hearted visual pastiche of monkey and child behind, and decide on which of the two my character was going to be. I decided that he was going to look like a monkey but behave like a little boy.

Monkey's face was divided by a distinctive monkey 'heart' shape into two different colour areas (**Figure 267** and **Figure 268**). The head's volume was also changed from a sphere to a more elongated ape-like scull (**Figure 269** and **Figure 270**). These changes were influenced by the drawing practice that lead to the wallpaper prints (Chapter 3), earlier screenprints (Chapter 4), and by my knowledge of other monkey characters such as *Curious George* (Rey, 1941). Monkey's eyes were enlarged and simplified. The new design was 'tested' in different colour combinations (red, orange, magenta, brown), poses, facial expressions, and viewing angles (**Figure 271** to **Figure 278**). Although the colour was rendered flat, the designs were based on rough drawings built from

three-dimensional forms (**Figure 270** and **Figure 275**). I drew the hair around the body, the foreshortening of the turning face, and the overlapping of limbs in a way that gives the illusion of a partially three-dimensional character. Two of these prints (**Figure 276** and **Figure 277**) were considered the final designs, together with Bird's isolated poses from the earlier prints (**Figure 279**), and a large print featuring all three characters (**Figure 280**). These designs met the three objectives for expressing the characters inner life, providing visual contrast, and being distinctive.

Monkey's design was also printed against a jungle background for the first time (**Figure 278**) in an attempt to achieve a colour balance that would make the character distinct from his surroundings. Through the process of making this print, I realised that Monkey's detailed hair shapes at the edge of his body created technical problems with colour registration. The use of hair as a distinctive part of the character's design was, when it came to the practice of making final artwork, proving to be an obstacle. This issue was brought up in a supervisory meeting and the feedback was to create an empty or simplified background in the area directly surrounding the character.

It is worth mentioning here two character design elements that were discussed with the publisher: Monkey's teeth and his colour. First of all, it was thought that Monkey's teeth might make him come across as aggressive (**Figure 273**). The inclusion of teeth in the final design was influenced by real apes who (in photographs and documentaries) showed their teeth often – and not only to show aggression. Indeed, in real life, when animals or people open their mouth, their teeth are visible. Shouldn't then animal teeth be seen in a picturebook? Through making these prints and through this feedback I realised

that what matters in pictorial representation is not the reference source (in my case monkey photographs) but the communication context in which this representation is going to be understood (the picturebook). The majority of animals in the picturebooks I studied, are indeed depicted without teeth. Animal teeth seem to be a stereotypical character design element, a distinctive visual feature associated with specific animal species. Sharp pointy teeth are part of the design of foxes, wolves, crocodiles or sharks. Round (and less numerous) teeth are found on animals such as rabbits or horses.

Monkey's colour was also an issue, as it could be perceived differently in various countries around the world, due to different cultural associations of red. It was felt that such a colour could be associated with a little devil rather than a friendly animal. As co-editions are important for the commercial success of a picturebook, it was agreed that a more orangey red would be used for the final artwork.

The alien's design has been extensively discussed in Chapter 6. Here I will briefly refer to the possibilities for further changes. When the proposal and the designs for the three characters were finalised, I considered the alien to look too similar to existing alien or monster characters (for example, Mike Wazowski in Pixar's 2001 animated film *Monsters Inc*) and to lack a strong visual impact – probably because of his colour being identical to that of his environment. In 2011, when working on the written component of my thesis, I revisited the early sketchbook work and the feedback I was given on the alien's role. This inspired new rough drawings on the alien's design that expressed the idea of the alien as a substitute parent (**Figure 281** to **Figure 283**). He is asleep in his pyjamas

when Monkey and Bird arrive on the moon. When he wakes up, his hair is messy – a direct reference to drawings of myself in the sketchbook (**Figure 284**). He then goes on to put the 'children' in bed and comes back to the moon to continue his sleep. My notes next to one rough read: 'The alien loves sleep' (**Figure 281**). The publisher's reaction to these changes was positive. Although I am not sure that they will appear in the published book, I have included the roughs here to show how the thinking and writing about the practice resulted in a possible change in the characterisation.

7.2 Prints that were not part of the final proposal: Getting ready (dummy book page 9) **and Flying** (dummy book pages 11 and 12) **spreads.**

One print that was not completed but produced as an 'experiment' was the background element of the third spread verso (**Figure 285**). The pattern of trees and sleeping animals was based on photographic reference of South American flora and fauna (**Figure 286**). While drawing these sleeping animals, organised in family groups, I would invent stories or situations for them. For example, a group of rats lying on large leaves and digesting a big feast, was inspired by rats seen in our building's parking space.

The process of choosing colours for the pattern started with digital previews of the whole spread in Photoshop (**Figure 288**). It was important that the colour balance would work across the spread and in relation to the spreads before and after. The blue and black versions made the pattern appear artificial and overly decorative. On the contrary, the green version was more 'realistic', followed the colour system of the book (Chapter 6), and created a visual link with the previous two spreads (where the

jungle is also green). The separation of the pattern into two colours was inspired by an older print that I had produced a few years before (**Figure 289**). During the screen-printing process, various combinations of greens in different opacities were tried, with the addition of a dark purple to help the association with nighttime (**Figure 291**). I tried to use colours that would be dark enough to imply nighttime, but would not be so dark as to affect the mood of the scene.

I think that the *Henri Rousseau: Jungles in Paris* exhibition at Tate Modern (2005-2006), which I saw a year before the practice on the picturebook started, influenced my depiction of the jungle. During the making of the final artwork I would often look at the exhibition information leaflet (Tate, 2005) – not to copy the work, but to generate a feeling of enthusiasm and excitement about the imaginary jungle (**Figure 290**) and its inhabitants. This deliberate 'looking' at other artists' work (in particular artists who had depicted similar environments or situations as the ones I was trying to create) differentiates this part of the practice to that of developing the dummy books. Apart from fueling enthusiasm and developing an understanding of how to produce illustrations, another reason for this inquiry, especially in picturebook representations of the moon, was to make sure that I did not create something that already existed (notwithstanding the argument around originality in Chapter 5).

Another screenprint was produced for the flying spread (dummy book pages 11 and 12) as an attempt to establish how I could depict both characters against a background and in direct contact with each other (holding hands) (**Figure 292**). The registration problems were minimal here because the opaque black layer was printed

last, on top of all other colours.

Another reason for making this screenprint was to find a way of creating images of space. In my opinion, my most striking depiction of space so far was in an early dummy spread, as an expanse of black flat colour surrounding the characters (**Figure 293**). In published picturebooks such as Colin McNoughton's *The* Alien*s are Coming* (1995) (**Figure 294**) and Sarah Fanelli's *Dreamtime* (1999) (**Figure 295**) the blackness of space is broken by patterns of colours and shapes. These depictions made me wonder if a black sky surrounding Monkey and Bird would, in a picturebook context, be perceived as oppressive or ominous. Consequently I attempted a similar, more colourful effect (**Figure 292**). The result was that the cheerful background elements distracted the attention from the two characters and failed to communicate the dreaminess I wanted to achieve. Another idea (which was not screenprinted, but previewed digitally) was to create a diagonal colour gradient from Earth's blue sky to deep black space, symbolising the transition from home to the moon and from wakefulness to dreaming (**Figure 296**).

7.3 Final Artwork: Introduction spread (dummy book pages 5 and 6)

I chose to produce the first spread as final artwork because it introduces the characters as well as the jungle secondary world. To finalise the design of this spread I made rough drawings mapping the geography of the tree and the branches that are Monkey and Bird's 'bedrooms'. My aim was to ensure that the depiction of these branches (on the first, second, and last picturebook spreads) would be consistent and easily recognisable (**Figure 298**). To achieve this consistency I needed to know what the whole

tree structure looked like – even though the pictures would show only a part of the tree (**Figure 299**). The branches' shapes and the space between them had to accommodate all the characters' movements and interactions: Monkey hanging upside down, the two characters sitting next to each other, and the alien being able to bring them down from the spaceship. I imagined these two tree 'bedrooms' located quite high up on the tree, so that Monkey and Bird could easily reach the top and take off (**Figure 300**). The tree should also be able to accommodate many other sleeping animals.

These rough drawings, like the majority of the work that has already been discussed in Chapter 6, demonstrate my attempts to create a convincing, credible, and consistent secondary world. I was trying to be what Tolkien (1989, pp. 36-37) calls a 'sub-creator':

> 'What really happens is that the storymaker proves a successful 'sub-creator'. He
> makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is
> 'true': it accords with the laws of the world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as
> it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather
> art, has failed'.

I felt that a discrepancy in the georgraphy of this world could break the spell as easily as unconvincing characterisation or an inconsistent plot.

The colours I chose for the night jungle scene were inspired by the cinematographic effect 'Day for Night' when a night scene is shot during daytime but the film is underexposed or special lenses are used to simulate nighttime. Often the result is a scene with a bluish hue, where, unlike what we experience in real life, shapes and figures are clearly visible and distinguishable in sharp outlines. In the picturebook

Goodnight Moon (Wise Brown and Hurd, 1947) a similar effect has been used to show how the room is getting darker. Sequential drawings have been overprinted with an increasingly darker transparent layer of black colour (**Figure 301**). The night scenes in *Alfavitario* (**Figure 302**) and the Tintin adventure *The Broken Ear* (1945) (**Figure 303**) inspired me to investigate similar colour combinations before producing a final print (**Figure 304**). Creating colour roughs for the main picture (in acrylics) made me realise that the use of white colour could diminish the moon's brightness (**Figure 305**) and as a result white was used very minimally in the final print of the main picture (**Figure 307**).

The artwork was created separately for the large picture and the three small sequential pictures. I used a brush and black acrylic paint and the drawings were scanned in the computer, where the planning, organisation, and colour separation for the screenprinting were done in Photoshop. This ensured a relatively accurate registration while printing. The area of black colour around Monkey in the main picture (**Figure 306**) was initially designed to make the registration of his hair easier. It also made the character stand out and look slightly isolated from his environment. The three prints for the vertical sequence are shown in **Figure 308** to **Figure 310.**

7.4 Final Artwork : 'Three!' spread (dummy book pages 19 and 20)

Although I had never set foot in a jungle, I could still rely on personal experiences of forests, countryside, and nighttime in order to produce an illustration of that environment.

But when creating a picture of the moon, I had to rely solely on photographic reference and on how other artists might have depicted the moon.

The depiction of the moon had to primarily fulfill its function in the picturebook plot as an 'other' place, very different to the jungle world. The moon world was developed as an empty, black and white world devoid of all colours (with the exception of the countdown numbers and objects) in contrast with the colourful jungle which is full of life. The moon's horizon would be created by a sharp contrast between the black of the sky and the white or grey of the ground and there would be long and crisp black shadows (there are none in the jungle). The ground formations would be visible, whereas in the jungle we never see the ground – only the tree canopy. The moon buggy and rocket would be three dimensional structures in an expanse of white or grey. On the contrary, the jungle gives the impression of a flat, pattern-like world. I had thus established, in the form of rough dummy spreads, the elements that would create this contrast between the two worlds. The question then was how to make artwork that can communicate these differences and also includes the three characters.

 It was while I was wondering about how to achieve such a visual representation that I visited the *Rothko* exhibition at Tate Modern (2008-2009). Although Rothko's abstract canvases were not related to what I was trying to achieve, the *Brown and Grey* works on paper had an immediate effect in envisaging a possible depiction of the moon world. *Untitled* (1969) is a painting composed out of two rectangles of equal size (**Figure 311**). The top rectangle is rendered in a flat and dense black colour (reminding me of the moon sky in the NASA photographs) whereas the rectangle underneath is made

out of transparent layers of grey, white, blue, and brown and gives the impression of an illuminated surface. Although this was not necessarily Rothko's intention, I was stepping through this painting into a lunar landscape. Sometimes, inspiration or visual solutions can be found in different contexts.

The next step I took was to look at other picturebook artists' pictures of the moon. As the picturebook plot was finalised by this time, it was also very useful to be informed about other picturebooks whose plot takes place on the moon. Simon Bartram's highly successful picturebook *The Man on the Moon* (2002) recounts the daily work routine on the moon of an astronaut named Bob. The book is based on the interplay between the visual and verbal narrative. The written text describes Bob's day and reassures the reader that there are no aliens on the moon whereas the pictures show otherwise. Bartram has depicted the moon as a warm yellow planet – probably a direct reference to the phrase 'the moon is made out of cheese' (**Figure 312**). The rendering of the planet is very similar to that of Bob's homeworld. This similarity works very successfully with the plot in which the moon is not a strange, faraway planet, but just a workplace where Bob commutes to everyday.

Eliza and the Moonchild (2007) by Emma Chichester Clark tells the story of Moonchild who lives with his mum on the colourless moon. Moonchild gets bored there and visits Earth where he makes a new friend, Eliza. Chichester Clark has based her story on the visual contrast between a place devoid of colours and the colourful earth and has created a stunning city rooftop garden where Moonchild, through Eliza's painting, discovers all the different colours. The real moon's harsh outlines and flat grayness

have been transformed by applying transparent yellow washes and rendering the sky a vibrant dark blue colour (**Figure 313**). Although the moon is verbally described as colourless, the pictures show otherwise.

The Sea of Tranquility (Haddon and Birmingham, 1996) is a picturebook about a little boy's fascination with the moon. The story describes how he watched, on television, the first steps of Armstrong and Aldrin on the moon and ends with the boy's dream that he joined them there. Birmingham's pastels give an aerie, dream-like quality to the images, implying that these scenes were imagined, dreamt, or are simply the childhood memories of a now older man (as it is indeed revealed at the end of the book). The lunar surface, although giving the impression of an overall grey colour, seems to have been made of layers of blue, yellow, and white. The sky is a hazy blue and the shadows are soft and grey (**Figure 314**).

In the above three picturebooks the depiction of the moon was dictated by its function in the plot (an every day work place, a boring place, a dreamscape). The three illustrators had avoided using a monochrome grey background in a picturebook context and this made me realise that such a depiction might indeed prove to be a challenge. The publisher's suggestion was that a flat, transparent colour could be applied over the surface so as to make the moon more attractive. The exact final design of the moon is, at the time of writing, still under discussion.

In my screenprint (**Figure 315**) the moon buggy and the alien were rendered with the same texture as the background. I used a range of greys in different degrees of transparency

(**Figure 316**) aiming for more transparent, soft greys for the ground (which could imply softness or a dusty or sandy texture) and more opaque ones for the buggy (to imply a solid, three dimensional form). Conceptually, I liked the idea that the alien, the buggy and the moon were made of the same substance but the visual expression of that concept made the image slightly confusing. A buggy constructed out of flat colours seemed to stand out from the environment more clearly (**Figure 317**). Details such as the way the buggy touches he ground, the placement of its shadow, and the moonsand pushed away by the wheels, are aimed at giving the impression of a bumpy ride.

7.5 Conclusions

This section contains a brief evaluation of the final artwork and the process that led to its production. Then I will bring into the discussion the voices of other practitioners on the subject of translating rough drawings into finished illustrations.

My view was that the final screenprinted spreads were successful as illustrations for the picturebook maquette. The use of colours, composition, and characterisation seem to work harmoniously on the page. The two screenprinted double page spreads contribute to the characterisation by clearly and directly showing what the characters look like, what they do, where they are, and how they interact. The pictures work well with the text in creating the two secondary worlds and carrying the story forward. Moreover, these illustrations have been successful in fulfilling the motivation of this project in bringing together the two sides of my image making practice: the narrative side and the character design practice.

I found that in the producing of these final illustrations there was a different level of focus during the creative practice. This was a more intense focus in trying to distill the understanding of characters and plot through the making of a picture. Whereas all the previous work consisted of explorations, plans, or roughs about what the picturebook *would* or *might be*, these illustrations were thought of as *being* part of the final picturebook.

At the same time, these screenprints were some of the most complicated and technically challenging that I have ever produced. One of the hardest aspects of producing the artwork was the transition from rough drawings to screenprints. Although the final illustrations had to be precise in terms of plot and characterisation, they should do that without being sanitised or overly formal. The translation of rough, expressive drawings into finished illustrations is a concern for most illustrators. Shirley Hughes (1996, p.73) refers below to the build up of watercolour washes:

> 'These first drawings, not surprisingly, have a freedom and economy of gesture which is quite hard to reproduce all over again when it comes to the finished colour work. Making these first roughs, drawing very rapidly in a state of excitement, I am very unselfconscious. Tapping into this freedom and translating it successfully is perhaps one of the great tests of professionalism.'

This understanding is echoed by Vernon Lord (2005, p.33) who, in discussing his drawing and illustration practice, has claimed that 'so often it is the rough that has the real energy whereas the finished illustration seems to be a sanitised version of that rough.'

Shulevitz also writes that 'keeping the final illustration fresh' (1985, p.196) has been of great concern to him and he has tried to explain the process and why it takes place. He explains that initially his practice focuses on capturing the essence, the subject matter of the story. On subsequent stages the focus shifts and he becomes preoccupied with questions of style and audience:

'That is when I gradually begin to lose sight of the primary goal – *what* I'm illustrating, the picture and its requirements, how it will best relate to the words – and shift my attention to an imaginary audience, and *how* the picture will look and be accepted. The emphasis shifts from the purpose of the picture to its outward appearance or surface look' (Shulevitz 1985, p.196, emphasis in original)

Shulevitz's insight can explain why my prints have lost some of the roughs' initial vitality. An example is the artwork for the 'Three!' spread: In order to give this print the illusion of a third dimension (moon buggy and ground formations) and to also include several colours, the positives had to be separated into a large number of layers (**Figure 318**). Each of these layers corresponded to a different colour that would be screenprinted individually. Consequently, a technical and time-consuming process separated the first pencil drawing and the final artwork. Its complexity meant that often my concern shifted from what the illustration communicated to how I would be able to produce such an illustration. What I need to develop further is what Hughes (1996, p.73) alludes to with the term 'professionalism'. In my practice, I understand this term as a mastery and fluency of the printmaking method at a level where the technical issues do not interfere with the communication. In terms of the artist's experience, this

means that the work is created without consciously thinking about how it is created. Although I have called these prints 'final artwork' for this project, I understand them as parts of an ongoing learning curve towards a more advanced practice of making picturebook illustrations.

Conclusion

In my thesis I have researched the development of animal characters in picturebook illustration through the practical process of creating a picturebook featuring animal characters. The visual record of the creative practice, the written contextualisation and interpretation of the practice, and the artefact (the picturebook maquette) itself, all contribute to an understanding of how animal characters were constructed in my own individual practice.

The research contributes to the understanding of picturebooks and how they are created by bringing into the foreground the practitioner's perspective. Overall, this research has shown that an engagement with the identity and personality of my characters on a narrative level and the practice involved in their construction were interlinked and evolved in tandem. The development process was not necessarily linear or predetermined. It was shaped by previous illustration practice and influences, critical reading on picturebooks, personal experiences, drawing practice, technical abilities, and, at the later stages, by the needs of the picturebook plot. Reflections on the characterisation practice showed that in parts it was a conscious process and in parts an intuitive one. For the latter I have tried to provide explanations and a record that illuminates rather than mystifies the practice.

An issue that comes up often in the exegesis and in the visual record is the number of paths of practice that were at some stage abandoned or discarded as unsuccessful. These attempts are not directly or obviously part of the final artefact. My research has shown that the majority of such avenues still played a role in the character development, the picturebook construction, and my own comprehension of the illustration process.

The wallpaper installation (Chapter 3) had the effect of focusing the practice on the characters' inner life rather than their appearance. Sketchbook drawings (Chapter 4) explored ideas related to childhood and characterisation, which then re-emerged in the final picturebook. The number of simple ideas explored through the rough books also indirectly contributed to the construction of the final picturebook and allowed the emergence of the *Zoom* idea (Chapter 5). In Chapter 6, it was through the successive and, eventually, discarded dummy books that the characterisation and plot were developed. Finally, the number of screenprints produced during this project, that were not considered 'successful' or 'final', enabled me to improve my technical abilities and finalise what the characters and their world look like, as discussed in Chapter 7. I understood all these various paths as invaluable stepping stones that affected the direction of the practice and eventually the characterisation. In the written exegesis I have tried to provide a connection between all these paths. I would like to suggest that a clearer and more detailed understanding of illustration practice can be gained by recording unsuccessful as well as successful paths of that practice.

This project has advanced my own illustration practice by bringing together two aspects of it that in the past worked separately: character design and artists' books. In my opinion the originality of the artefact lies in the marriage of these two aspects of my work, in the re-telling of a popular nursery song, *Zoom*, as an adventure about the anxiety of falling asleep, and in the creation of my characters Monkey, Bird, and the alien. Technically, I have achieved my most accomplished project in terms of characterisation, storytelling, and the production of complicated screenprints. In

addressing the early stages of creating a picturebook I have focused on illustration as a practice deeply involved in the generation of ideas, concepts, characters, and stories. This focus and the fact that the picturebook will be published has generated a shift in the perception of my practice as simultaneously authorial and commercial. Finally, this research project has had the effect of enabling a more conscious understanding of my own picturebook character development practice thus giving me a platform to develop this practice even further artistically and commercially.

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