Picture Books, Mimesis and the Competing Aesthetics of Kinesis and Stasis

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*In the beginning only the
negative spaces caught
my eye.*
Ken Taylor, 'Postcards on the Way'

It has been a long-standing presupposition in Western art that a subject's inner self is made visible by physical movement. As an index of both self-expression and self-control, represented movement is understood as not only expressing what a character feels, but also revealing that character's ethical or moral state. This presupposition has dominated picture book art since its inception, so that conventional significances attributed to bodily postures and gestures, in the context of the particular narrative roles assigned to characters, readily convey an illusion of mimetic realism and — perhaps more importantly — orient audiences attitudinally and ideologically towards the represented material. To take a simple example, an upright stance expresses a range of positive meanings ranging from physical to moral well-being, whereas a character inclined to stoop or slouch expresses negative attributes, ranging from dejection to anti-social attitudes. The latter is very apparent in, for example, the posture of Dave in Shirley Hughes's *Dogger* (1977), where, after the loss of his favourite toy, he is a dejected figure walking through the School Summer Fair (see Figure 1). The bowed head, stooped shoulders and hands in pockets signify his dejection, and the darkness of mood is perhaps underlined by the shadow at his feet. But as Thomas Pavel points out with reference to fiction, 'while it is right to see mimesis as essential for understanding what fiction is, it is nevertheless wrong to see mimesis as adequate for understanding what fiction does' (2000, p.521). The posture here might rather connote pensiveness, except that the accompanying verbal text details Dave's dislike of the pleasure his sister is finding in the day and his consequent decision to go off on his own, and it is this that prompts an audience to interpret the posture and the shadow as I have done. Text and picture interaction thus overdetermine meaning here.[1]

(With one exception, also involving Dave and appearing on the facing page, shadows cast by figures elsewhere in the book do not seem to invite such interpretation.) Further, the complex combination of empathy and impatience an audience is likely to develop toward Dave points to a capacity of fiction to convey a character's subjective experience that involves more than simple mimesis. Such textual glossing of visual mimesis is also evident in, for example, Paul Galdone's *Hansel and Gretel* (1982) where a stooped posture marks both the children's mother and the witch as evil figures (as distinct from the father, who also stoops, but his facial expression denotes sorrow as the cause). In John Prater's *The Perfect Day* (1986), the story of a family outing to the beach, Kevin, the child who malcontentedly finds fault with everything, is seldom depicted with upright posture, but rather with hunched shoulders and drooped head. Again, Kevin's posture and the speech bubbles that register his complaints interactively illuminate one another and together instantiate an ironic contrast with the simple narrative text that records what a 'perfect' day it is for everyone else.

Figure 1. Dejected posture, redrawn from
Hughes' *Dogger*

Part of the function of mimetic representations within text-picture interactions does nevertheless depend on audience ability to read the surface representation and infer something which remains unstated both visually and verbally. The process is an aspect of a text's mimetic functions, whereby an audience recognizes a connection between representation and human behaviour. In a visual mode such as a picture book, kinesis has a central function in expressing narrative events and character motivations and responses, and even in the relatively low modality of picture book art it asserts that the body language of char-

acters imitates familiar postures, gestures, expressions, and so on. Kinesis has therefore become privileged because it is regarded as natural, an expression of the always already there, and its privileged position thence determines the kind of value judgments that are made about picture books, and the ideological basis of those judgments. The connection between kinesis and signification enables meaning to be made, but it is apt to limit the range of possible meanings to what is tangible and socially determined.

In contrast, books which deploy stasis as a representational strategy dismantle the assumption that the world can be reconstituted and ordered as an unproblematic visual equivalent. This is an important move, because represented actions and gestures owe their significance to the codes and practices that give them meaning far more than is the case with human actions in the actual world, so there is much more likelihood that representations will determine the meaning of behaviour in the world than the other way round. Pictorial stasis shares with kinesis a capacity to induce a heightened awareness of what is there through the evocation of what is absent, but if the offered image is less readily interpretable, because gesture is present only as a trace, a vestige, or even an absence, or, simpler still, animate creatures are excluded from scene, the suggestion of a radical incompleteness has the potential to induce awareness of concepts and feelings lying deeper than can be read off the surface of human behaviour.

In a picture book in the Western tradition, a human or animal figure, or an interaction of such figures, usually functions as the central axis on which a pictorial opening pivots. Enhanced by those conventions of kinesis whereby figures are depicted in potential or suspended motion, such representations are perceived as a convincing resemblance of 'reality', and their kinetic elements largely determine how and what they signify. Picture books sometimes include scenes devoid of animate creatures, but these characteristically function to establish setting, or as moments of transition within a sequenced series of pictures, or as signs of the temporary absence of the expected animate figures — as when, for example, scene is so constructed that character and viewing audience are presumed to share a common visual point of view.

Coincidence of participant and viewer perspective is exploited by Allen Say in *Grandfather's Journey* to foreground a challenge to the conventions of mimesis. One of the many experiences encountered by the principal character is described in the words, 'He marvelled at the towering mountains and rivers as clear as the sky' (p.11). The illustration that matches this utterance borders on non-representational art, and uses pictorial codes more reminiscent of Japanese or Chinese painting than of the Western tradition of pictorial mimesis. One might think of the Chinese convention of 'flat distance' *(p'ing-yuan)* landscape, in which 'from a nearby position, the onlooker's gaze extends to infinity with complete freedom' (Cheng 1994, p.95), or Eastern perspectival conventions — so unlike the Western single-point perspective implicitly repudiated here — in which a scene is laid out as a receding series of flat planes. Even more apposite is the landscape tradition, both Chinese and Japanese, known as 'pictures of mountains and rivers' *(sansuiga)*. Gary Hickey (2001) explains that in hanging scrolls representing such topographies the 'spatial formula of *jõen kakin* (lower-near-upper-distant) was used in conjunction with
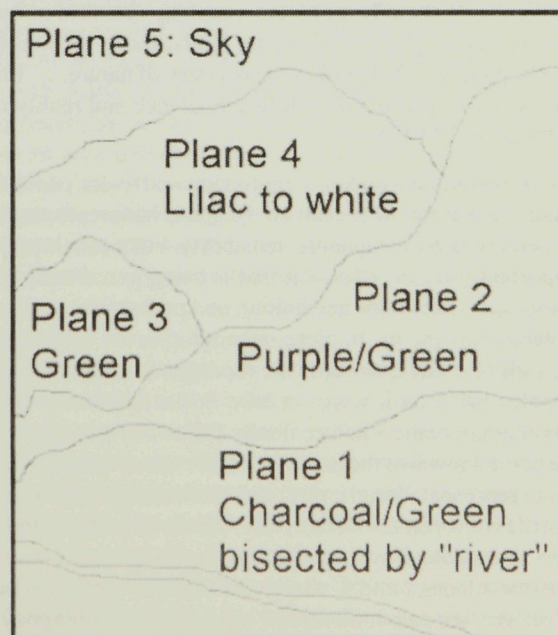

Figure 2. Allen Say's 'Mountains and River'

a zigzagging planar recession' (p.181), a principle which seems to have inspired Say's picture, as can be seen from the schematic drawing in Figure 2. This particular spatial organization was later taken over by Utagawa Hiroshige and extended to other kinds of landscape: see, especially, one of his best-known works, *Sudden Shower over Ohashi Bridge and Atake 1857*, in which the zigzagging planar recession divides the scene into three wedges of different colours. Say emphasizes such effects by a dramatic use of the palette, whereby each plane has a distinct colour and the whole is sequenced as a movement from dark to light, so that the weight of the picture moves from lower-near to upper-distant, that is, away from the viewer.

Strikingly unlike most of the pictures that appear in picture books, this almost abstract landscape offers no content to be narrativised — no figures in the landscape, no objects. There is a river, but it is no more than a wavy white line of variable thickness. What is it, then, that the onlooker is implicitly invited to contemplate? In discussing *South Wind, Clear Skies* (popularly known as *Red Fuji*), the most abstract of Katsushika Hokusai's *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, Hickey makes some suggestions that seem particularly applicable to the effect of Say's painting: 'Devoid of human presence, *Red Fuji* is a pure landscape, a seemingly empty picture...that evokes the mystery of nature. ... For the Japanese, profound truth lies in silence and reality in nothingness' (p.178).

A simple comment on Say's 'mountains and rivers' painting might be that the American landscape is here represented as perceived by a Japanese sensibility, but a much more important issue is, what is it that is being perceived? We could start with shape and colour, and perhaps the tension generated by the incomplete zigzagging as the eye resists the pull of plane 2 towards the top right-hand corner and doubles back, as it were, to take in the smaller (green) mountain in plane 3 before finally following the vector of the plane 4 towards the top right-hand corner. We can think about representational codes, and our willingness to agree that the white line is indeed a river. We can consider infinity. And as indicated by the hidden valley extending plane 3 between planes 2 and 4, whose presence we can grasp but never see, we can contemplate absence and nothingness. Here taking the form of blankness or emptiness, absence has been manipulated to suggest the presence of some-

thing not visible in the scene, and hence it invites a strong imaginative response that, while having relationships with the sublime,[2] nevertheless remains inarticulable. Finally, it asks us to contemplate stillness, and because the only things that move are the eyes of the beholder, it invokes the relationship between stillness and subjectivity.

Working in the ways it does, Say's picture repudiates the conventions that have dominated English-language picture book art since its inception. In Chapter 6 of *Words About Pictures*, Perry Nodelman remarks that in picture books, 'the evocation of action is of the essence' (1988, p.160). This judgment conforms with what seems to be a broad concurrence amongst picture book illustrators and picture book critics in privileging what I will refer to as an 'aesthetics of kinesis (or motion)'. Picture books such as those produced by Allen Say, especially the 'glossy' books of the 1990s inaugurated with *Tree of Cranes*, may thus be dismissed on the grounds that their illustrations are 'static'. Nodelman subsequently discusses a handful of books which seem to be exceptions, books which use colour, pattern and texture to 'draw attention away from the actions they depict', but suggests that the only successful books of this type 'combine effects that stop motion with depictions of activity' (pp.168-171). Others he tends to dismiss as examples of the 'sumptuous tradition'. In this paper I propose to question the intellectual and ideological basis behind such assumptions, and begin to say something about the alternative to that aesthetics of kinesis which has ruled picture books since the time of Randolph Caldecott.

Must picture books be judged primarily by their adherence to representations of mimetic action, or is it possible not just to move attention to the relationships between observable kinesis and the unstated norms and values that inform it, but to appreciate the potentialities of stasis? There are a couple of obvious places to look for examples of the latter: first, postmodern and metafictive picture books, which, if not overtly anti-mimetic, at least tend to interrogate the assumptions of the mimetic tradition; and second, picture books from outside the Western tradition, such as Japanese picture books in which a verbal narrative is counterpointed by illustrations that do not represent objects expressive of a mimetic link with that narrative – drops of water on old, yellowed pages, for example, which invoke the aesthetics of imperfection and insufficiency (see Saito, 1997). Can

an aesthetics which allows more space to stasis, stillness, interiority be used to escape the tyranny of mimesis?

In *Iconology*, W.T.J. Mitchell comments that, 'the category of realistic, illusionistic, or naturalistic images has become the focus of a modern, secular idolatry linked with the ideology of Western science and rationalism .... The real miracle has been the successful resistance of pictorial arts to this idolatry, their insistence on continuing to show us more than meets the eye' (1986, pp.39-40). Although it has not become a universal tenet, by any means, this 'secular idolatry', spurred by the characteristic focus of children's literature on narrativity, subjectivity and social issues, arguably dominates picture book aesthetics. Because picture books tell stories, so that verbal and pictorial texts are both components of a narrative process and sequence, it seems natural that they should be predisposed towards the traditions of mimesis and hence be grounded in representations which, though rarely photo-realistic, commonly allude to a verisimilitudinous representation of bodies and objects. To draw attention to this is really only a matter of drawing attention to the embeddedness of cultural objects in cultural traditions that make them recognizable and intelligible. Nodelman remarks that 'a quick glance through any group of typical picture books might suggest that the entire population of the known universe spends most of its time with one foot in the air' (1986, p.160). This representational practice is already assumed more than a century ago in the work of Randolph Caldecott.

Visuality emerged and gained authority in modern culture from around the middle of the nineteenth century, with the children's picture book emerging at about the same time as photography. Photography seemed to promise the most direct access to reproducing the real that human cultures had ever experienced, since it was easy to assume that the real was now reproducible without mediation or interpretation: simply, to see was to know the things themselves. In time, as photographic technology advanced and the unposed snapshot became a possibility,[3] reportage photography could present a particular moment in time and space which was not fictive but an immediately derived image of the focus object(s). At the same time, however, the product moves towards the condition of a painting because it has an expressive function and may be interpreted narratively. This concurrence of forms must tend continually to reinforce the mimetic realism of picture book narrative, even

though the normal modality of picture books is considerably lower than photographic realism (and even in the case of illustrators who don't follow the practice of working from a series of photographs). A further key analogy is that picture books generally aspire to the illusion of presence which is asserted by a photograph.

What I am here calling mimetic realism is grounded in several key assumptions: that the artwork reproduces a putative 'original'; that viewers accept the illusion of directness without mediation; that what is being evoked is 'the real'; that figures and objects depicted are particular and distinctive. If this is a reasonable inference, it might then seem an odd cultural phenomenon that picture books were not during the twentieth century subjected to critique in the same terms as was nineteenth-century realist fiction (though one might hasten to add that children's fiction has also evaded this fate).

The key to mimetic representation, according to Thomas Huhn (1996), is the relationship between subject and object. If mimesis occurs only as imitation, portrayal, or representation, it is no more than a repetitive gesture which is both false and *falsifying*. There is of course always a gap in the process of representation, since the aspirations of mimesis to (re-)produce actual or imagined forms of being-in-the-world can result only in the production of *likenesses*, which are not identical to what they aspire to reproduce. This is a sufficiently obvious point. An informative attempt to communicate to children some of the implications of this can be seen in Robert Ingpen's *The Afternoon Treehouse* (1996), a brilliant metafictive/allegorical picture book about the relationship of audience to art-work.[4] Here Ingpen reminds readers that objects themselves are not necessarily transparently meaningful, and so any image is always already an interpretation. Where the complication arises is with the aspiration of mimesis to portray subjectivity in the process of becoming, because the gap between the thing and its likeness entails that the product must always be an after-image of the thwarted movement toward subjectivity. This is not to argue that mimesis doesn't present subjects: rather, subjects are not reproduced but constructed. This might not look like much of a problem, but where, arguably, it does become a problem is with the apprehension of being and subjectivity by the viewer. These are not elicited from the what that is represented, but are predicated on the interaction of text and viewer.

In this respect picture books function in the same way as other forms of literary creation in what Pavel (2000, p.530) terms a propensity 'to represent human beings not only as physical objects but also as creatures that obey (or disobey) norms and pursue (or reject) values.' Although, as Pavel goes on to argue, norms and values cannot be represented by 'straightforward imitation' because they do not have the same ontological status as factual realities, representations of kinesis in picture books are commonly taken as an embodied mimicry of intersubjective relationships in the actual world. The viewer's recognition of gestures and movements so mimicked becomes a moment of interpellation, an alignment of viewing subject with represented object. This effect can be exacerbated by coincidence of the subject position constructed for the viewer with that of the narrating voice of the verbal text. The implications of this process become quite weighty once we recognise that, for example, many elements of represented kinesis are heavily gendered.

It remains the illustrator's task to displace objects with images and situate subjects in relation to the chain of those displacements. The issue is how this is to be done in relation to the particular forms of the mimetic tradition which constitute the main stream of picture book production, of which kinesis is the backbone. The principal devices of kinesis privileged in picture books are as follows:[5]

- assumed simultaneity of object and image
- visual form of figure implying energy: 'movement within a figure'
- vectors and visual weight
- action lines and their visual equivalent
- distortion of bodies and objects
- continuous narrative (one character portrayed in more than one place in a continuous picture plane)
- variations in observer angle of view, distance
- left to right movement on the page
- frame breaking (when kinetic energy seems no longer containable by a frame, or a figure depicted in motion bursts into the viewer's space)
- temporal relation of picture to verbal text (text time anterior or posterior to picture time)
- sequenced page openings

As remarked earlier, all this is already evident by the time of Caldecott. The first line drawing of *Hey Diddle Diddle* (1882), for example, depicts four children arrayed in pairs and ready to dance once the cat starts playing the fiddle. None of the children is shown with two feet firmly and four-square on the floor — rather, lifted heels and an outward pointed toe imbue each with a sense of expectancy, as they wait for the cat to complete his formal bow and begin playing. The relative size of the figures also produces a strong left-to-right motion. Movement is not just an attribute of the dancers, however. In the subsequent, coloured illustration (Figure 3), which shows children in various dancing postures, kinesis, as a sort of repressed movement, is attributed to a maid positioned behind a table replete with party fare: while she stands (appropriately) still, her body and head take part in a perceptible curved line which echoes the curved body of the dancer closest to her, who also happens to be the most vigorous of the dancers. There is a powerful flowing curve from top to bottom of the picture. Look at the maid, and at the differences between how girls and boys dance, and you see a very obvious example of how kinesis reflects ideologies of class and gender.

I suspect illustrators have been drawn more towards photographic realism than mimesis because of the illusion of transparency and a sense that although looking at pictures

Figure 3. Randolph Caldecott, *Hey Diddle Diddle*

is a deductive process, the postures, gestures and implied movements that can be attributed to bodies are readily interpretable in terms of available schemata for representing joy, fear, envy, enthusiasm, and so on. Hence the visual scene can be read as a situating of social phenomena within a meaningful order. Schemata, however, may evoke stereotypical images which detain observer attention on the surface, so an artist must pursue a strategy for defamiliarising the schema. In John Burningham's *Aldo*, for example, the illustration of the incident 'when they were horrid to me the other day' shows the female narrator being bullied by two other girls in a toilet block. This familiar schema is defamiliarised in two ways. First, it is contextualised within the wider narrative of the desperately unhappy narrator's withdrawal into the comfort zone of the imaginary friend, and so situated in a sequence in which the illustrations on either side depict her in Aldo's friendly embrace. Second, the codes of bodily movement and gesture are exaggerated: the victim's arms and legs are sharply angular as she is poised ready to fall, following her hand which is already thrust outside the pentagon formed by the three figures, and this is accentuated by the acute backwards lean of the girl pushing her and the right-angle formed by the conjunction of a vector formed by that girl's body and a vector formed by the victim's flushed face, snatched bag and spilled book. The other tormenter, with one hand pulling the victim's hair and the other (presumably) poised to slap is given visual weight by elevation to the top of the pentagon (and both feet are somehow off the ground). The interrelation of gestures within the visual field, emphasised by the tangle of feet, draws attention to the schema and deftly positions the observer to empathise with the victim.

A second kind of example is afforded by an example from Anne Spudvilas's *Jenny Angel*. The image of a girl with hands raised, eyes closed, and head tilted upward is not so overtly readable. What is this child doing? The picture corresponds to a verbal sequence in which Jenny describes her imagined experiences of flight, and it strives to represent visually a double perspective: Jenny's imagining of flight, and an observer's viewpoint of the child in the process of imagining, whereby she images herself in flight. Her coat billows out behind her upthrust arms and suggests the kinesis of flight, but the line of the front of her body indicates an upright stance. The soft focus and scribbled lines blur the distortion of the body necessary

to produce the double image. The book is about the gap between the child's stubborn belief that her pretence can keep death at bay and the material reality that her brother will die. The irony of this gap depends on the erasure of the representational gap between object and image — that is, viewers formulate a notion of what is 'really' happening by concluding that the picture *alludes* to flying but denotes an act of imagining.

These examples from *Aldo* and *Jenny Angel* demonstrate how illustrators can exploit the codes of movement while nevertheless remaining firmly within them. There is no questioning of the illusion of representation here, however. By contrast, Allen Say's more self-reflexive use of visual codes interrogates the illusionist tradition. Say does this in *Grandfather's Journey* by means of three different types of picture. First, pictures of the type I began this paper with, in which illustration works from a gap generated between visual and verbal formulations of information, refusing a definitive reading by emphasising the conventionality of representation. Second, various pictures use paintings (by Norman Rockwell, Homer Winslow, Alfred Jacob Miller and David Hockney, especially) as pre-texts, so that Say's own paintings allude to these precursors by means of isomorphic layout, form, palette, or some details of content. The imitation of already existing works foregrounds issues of imagination and creativity, a principle which Say was subsequently (1996) to place at the core of *Emma's Rug* (see Stephens 2000). Third, Say's major strategy for problematising representation in *Grandfather's Journey* is the repeated paradox posed by paintings which simultaneously claim to be photographs and disclose that they are actually paintings. There are ten or eleven of these in the book (the boundaries blur): they are, variously, portraits, travel photos, and family snapshots. They function to interrogate illusionist mimesis by showing that the purported object is at two stages of removal from the visual image. There is no question here of the artwork being merely a naïve reflection of the real: rather, it emphasises how the image displaces the real and in the displacement reveals the indeterminacy of the real. In other words, it lays bare the process whereby mimetic realism reduces subjects to objects (a bully, a victim), and then finds semiotic surrogates to depict those objects.

In *Grandfather's Journey* Say exploits the paradox that photographic images are direct analogues of the represented

object and yet also may be narrativised and become fictions. Thus pictures which assert their genre as 'photograph' nevertheless through incorporating painterly elements and evoking specific genres — such as the wedding photo — intimate a narrative event and a connection with other events in a temporal and/or causal sequence. For example, in a sequence referring to the daughter's adult life (pages 22-23), the verbal text introduces the narrator's birth as the culmination of five steps linked as a mostly implicit causal sequence:

> But the village was not a place for a daughter from San Francisco. So my Grandfather bought a house in a large city nearby. (p.22) [As a result] There, the young woman fell in love, [so she] married, and [as a result] sometime later I was born. (p.23)

Now it might be objected that this is mostly a temporal sequence, but in the high modality language of picture books — where representation is privileged over abstraction, event over significance — the causal markers I have supplied for page 23 will follow readily from the explicit causal connectedness of the sentences on p.22.[6] The pictures enable a more complex narrative because of the contrasts between traditional Japanese settings and clothing and the daughter's Western dress on p.22, the only non-traditional object on the page. There is no overt illusion of motion in these pictures, though because on p.22 the daughter is depicted at middle social distance, which excludes her feet, the picture suppresses the main indicator of whether she is posed in front of the house or walking away from it. If the picture is considered more thematically and figuratively, both possibilities are realised, though the sequence of pictures (p.23 depicts her in traditional Japanese clothing for the wedding photo) then suggests that such figurative walking away is not possible. This, of course, is the book's guiding theme. Again, the theme is foregrounded here at least in part because the processes of representation are foregrounded.

I will conclude by sketching some elements of representation which are apt to privilege stasis. These are not necessarily anti-mimetic, but can function that way when they serve to foreground processes of representation. I will illustrate some of these elements with reference to two examples

Figure 4. Allen Say, *Grandfather's Journey*

from Ingpen's *The Afternoon Treehouse*. This picture book includes on its acknowledgements page a picture of two children climbing a tree to construct a treehouse, but the rest of the book thematizes human absence, and focuses on the mysterious significations of the traces a human being leaves of himself in the world. The use of the masculine pronoun is deliberate here, since the artefacts left behind by the absent occupant of the treehouse are metonymic of boyhood. One possible interpretation, in accord with the book's epigraph, is that they are evocative traces of the creative artist's childhood fascination with the *haecceitas (thisness)* of things.

Strategies which privilege stasis and hence a non-mimetic aesthetic

• **Framing**

A framed picture seems detached, contained, expressive of a fixed moment, poised at rest. **Frame-breaking**, and other self-reflexive, anti-mimetic strategies which foreground the process whereby objects
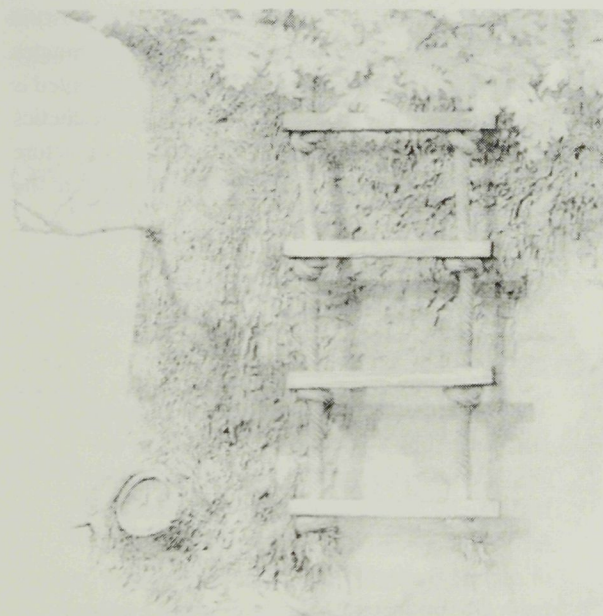
Figure 5. Robert Ingpen, *The Afternoon Treehouse*, pp.4-5

Figure 6. Robert Ingpen, *The Afternoon Treehouse*, pp.18-19

are displaced by images (where the effect is to transgress the ontological order implied by mimesis)

• **Shape and colour**

Colour gives objects a sense of solidity, and implies absence of movement.

An emphasis on shape, as opposed to line, implies stillness.

• **Texture**

Emphasis on texture and surface imparts a sense of solidity and weight to objects, and hence implies stasis. In Figure 5 the left-hand side of the tree is carefully textured — the bark, twigs, leaves and the detail of the scar where a branch has been removed convey a strong effect of *haecceitas*, the very treeness of the tree; in contrast, the right-hand side employs the principle of 'incompleteness' (see below). This combination of textured detail and incompleteness evokes mystery and inexpressibility, in an effect quite unlike the instantiation of an already existing schema which is the principle of mimesis.
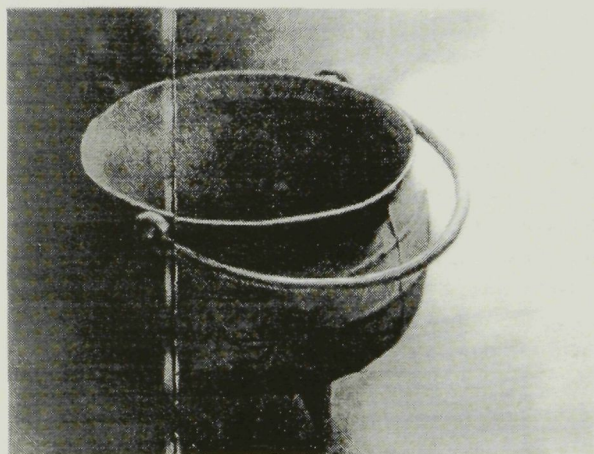
• **Light and shade; and chiaroscuro**

Stillness and solidity can be implied through visual evocation of an intense light source, and hence strong light and dark contrasts. Deep shading also gives solidity. The 'big iron crock' depicted in Figure 6 illustrates how chiaroscuro, the use of light and dark to imply three-dimensionality, implies solidity and depth. The strong contrast between dark and light forces the imagination to engage with the *haecceitas* of the object, and the gleam of light on the rim and handle of the crock emphasizes the containing space inside it, and (again) contrasts with the sense of incompleteness as the bottom left-hand section disappears into the surrounding blackness.

The way in which both illustrations employ the left to right principle of picture book illustrations is particularly significant for the contrast between kinesis and stasis. In moving, respectively, from fullness to emptiness and from darkness to light, they take viewers to the brink of the unknown (and perhaps never quite knowable), to the numinous, the frontier of perception.

• **'Still Life' genre:** selection of content and form
• **Incompleteness, emptiness, absence.**

Absence can be manipulated to suggest the presence of something not overt or included in the scene. It takes the form of blankness, shadows, emptiness or darkness, and elicits a powerful response from the beholder by invoking the imagination. In Figure 5 the emptiness of the 'unfinished' bottom right-hand corner is partly filled by the ladder and enables the ladder to be doubled by the shadow cast on the tree-trunk. Figure 6 demonstrates how absence can be mimetic of reality: since we make use of containers because they are hollow or empty, the imagination here engages strongly with the potentiality of empty space. At the same time, we are acutely aware that this is a represented object as the chiaroscuro foregrounds the illusion of three-dimensionality.

The *Afternoon Treehouse* alludes to, or is analogous with, the principle in Chinese art of the interrelationship of fullness and emptiness, as on p.12: 'It was bigger than I expected. By some trick of design, or by another kind of magic, the owner had managed to fill the small, square room with space and promise.' The illustration on pp.12-13 beautifully expresses this concept by using the one-point perspective of Western art, and then placing emptiness (the doorway as a blaze of white light) at the centre of convergence. In this picture the walls, which we later learn are 'covered with handwritten notes, drawings, charts and cuttings from old newspapers and magazines', look as if they are panelled with irregular shapes, here communicating only through texture and warm colour (the palette used is restricted to a spectrum from yellow to dark brown). This scene invites a contrast with the exploded plan of the treehouse that concludes the book. Once again, detail has been erased from the wall hangings, which have been emptied out and now, in so far as they signify at all, they signify their own ineluctability.

The privileging of kinesis, as I think Nodelman's discussion discloses by treating it as natural and, because picture books are a narrative mode, as necessary, determines the kind of value judgments that are made about picture books, and the ideological basis of those judgments. What I hope this paper begins to suggest is that dominant mode of representation, powerfully expressive as it is, is also a narrowing of representational options. There is no question that picture book art (especially in the West) is linked mimetically to the phenomenal world and imitates what is observed there. But what is thereby represented is always an analogy modelled on what exists. An aesthetics (and praxis) of stasis reminds us of the capacity in picture book art to focus viewer attention on the unstated, to the invisible, and to the ineluctable.

NOTES

1. The capacity of verbal text to shape meaning is enhanced by the tendency (as in these examples) for verbal text in picture books normally to be higher in modality than pictures (see Stephens 2000). Because the language of picture books is often pared back grammatically to 'factual' utterances about events, actions, processes or states, verbal texts often seem more matter of fact and informational than they actually are.

2. Compare, for example, Turner's *Mountain Landscape with Lake* (c. 1799-1800; Tate Gallery).

3. The watershed here was George Eastman's introduction of day-light loading roll-film in 1889.

4. The book's epigraph makes it clear that Ingpen is using the treehouse symbolically: he describes himself as 'one who no longer remembers his first treehouse, nor a time when he didn't have one under construction.'

5. The list is derived principally from Nodelman (1988) and Cavallius (1977). I am indebted to Sirke Happonen for the latter reference.

6. Say's subsequent volume in the fictive family history, *Tea with Milk*, endows this young woman with a stronger desire for agency and a will to strive for it.

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