

A Multimodal Approach to Challenging Gender Stereotypes in Children's Picture Books

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1 Picture Books, Gender and Multimodality

An Introduction

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1 Picture Books, Gender and Multimodality

An Introduction

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Scope and Aims of the Book

A Multimodal Approach to Challenging Gender Stereotypes in Children's Picture Books is a collection of research papers in the fields of multimodality and picture books.¹ The chapters broaden the previous analyses of this genre, carried out from content, psychological, literary and didactic points of view. Most of the analyses of picture books come from literary studies (Moebius 1986; Nodelman 1988; Nikolajeva and Scott 2001), narrative theory (Genette 1980), didactic perspectives (Kümmerling-Meibauer et al. 2015) and content approaches (Cohen et al. 2007; Sunderland 2012). The results of these analyses are extremely revealing and predominantly focus on content issues: on the number of male and female characters that appear in the stories, the frequency in which these characters carry out a leading or secondary role, the garments they wear, aspect of distance and proximity, the narrative structure of the stories, the stories' didactic possibilities for introducing children to literature, etc. Although these earlier studies are relevant, they are largely qualitative, and are often based more on descriptive than on linguistic analyses. On other occasions, the text-image interface has been approached using classifications that were excessively anchored to established lexical-grammatical, cohesive (Martinec and Salway 2005), rhetorical (Bateman 2008) or transitivity structure models that do not adapt easily to the visual mode (Bateman 2014). So, it seems that, as McGlashan indicates in Chapter 11, there is still a gap in the literature for approaching verbal, visual and multimodal trends/tendencies in visual narratives.

Certainly, there are also some researchers who have taken a multimodal perspective in their analyses of specific children's picture books, for example Lewis (2006), Unsworth (2008), Painter (2007), Martin (2008) and Moya-Guijarro (2014), among others. Yet there are still too few multimodal studies that focus on how a common theme and communicative purpose are captured in a unified manner in a selected sample of children's picture books; in our case, in stories that challenge gender stereotypes and the concept of the traditional family. The research

presented here addresses this gap by focusing on a sample of children's picture books that in some way question and challenge stereotypes concerning gender or the concept of a traditional family, or which promote the social inclusion of same-sex parent families.

Starting from this premise, the contributing authors of this volume aim to explore the choices afforded to the writer/illustrator in transmitting representational, interpersonal and textual meanings in both the verbal and non-verbal components in a selection of children's picture books. More specifically, the main aims of the book are to identify the verbal and visual strategies that are available to authors and illustrators for (i) generating representational meaning and construing gender (representational metafunction), (ii) establishing an interaction between the characters of the story and also between the protagonists and the young readers (interpersonal metafunction) and, finally, (iii) creating informatively coherent multimodal texts (textual/compositional metafunction) in a sample of children's picture books written in or translated into English (Halliday 2004; O'Halloran 2004; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Moya-Guijarro 2014). Finally (iv), the aim of the volume is also to examine the complementarity or synergy that is created between the text and illustrations to transmit meaning in multimodal children's narratives (Painter, Martin and Unsworth 2013). Summarising, the chapters in the volume reveal how verbal and visual semiotic modes interrelate in order to promote gender equality and social inclusion in children's visual narratives.

Picture Books, Multimodality and Gender

In the final decades of the twentieth century, Nodelman (1988: ix) pointed out that "most discussions of children's picture books have either ignored their visual elements altogether or else treated the pictures as objects of a traditional sort of art appreciation rather than narrative elements". Nowadays, however, scholars of Children's Literature, writers, illustrators and teachers recognise that good picture books are complex visual narratives in which both words and images play an important role in the construction of the stories. The function of images is not just to make the picture books more appealing and accessible to young and inexperienced readers; quite the opposite, they play a key part in creating and raising ideas that are beyond the meanings that the verbal or visual modes can each convey on their own (Nodelman 1988; Arizpe and Styles 2003; Painter and Martin 2011; Moya-Guijarro 2019a and b). In line with this thought, in this book all the chapters start from the premise that picture books can only be understood and approached as complex multimodal products, in which images and words complement each other in different ways to create meaning. Indeed, this variation across modalities is, as Painter and Martin (2011) point out, a common literary and pedagogic strategy used in visual narratives intended for young children.

Another characteristic of children's picture books is their potentiality for dealing with diverse and controversial topics such as death, depression, violence, wars and discrimination (Colomer, Kümmerling-Meibauer and Silva-Díaz 2010; Evans 2015). Some researchers on children's literature assume that picture books should provide children with the necessary tools to face controversial problems that they may encounter in their lives (Evans 2015; Nodelman 2015). Adopting a similar point of view, Nikolajeva (2014: 125) considers that the absence of controversial topics in children's books deprives them from the opportunity to develop their basic emotions and, more importantly, to raise their empathy to others involved in situations of distress, fear or anger different from their own.

Among the different topics that are approached in picture books are also those related to gender issues, as shown by the studies carried out by Knowles and Malmkjaer (1996), Wharton (2005) and, especially, Sunderland (2012). Sunderland (2012: 143), for example, has carried out a study on the content of a sample of picture books that feature boys and girls who do not conform to gender stereotypes. Her research, which is essentially anchored in Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1995, 2003; Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard 1996) and content analysis (Cohen et al. 2007), proves that characters in children's stories have been traditionally constructed through a language based on established and predetermined stereotypes. Thus, the male characters take on more active roles and their actions affect other actants. The female characters, however, appear to be more focused on pleasing or liking the other participants that surround them. Male characters outnumber females in these children's narratives, both in the linguistic mode and in the illustrations, an aspect that has implications for the gender image that is constructed by the child. Women are usually ignored or not sufficiently considered in books intended for this audience consisting of children. Today, although the ratio of male to female characters in stories is similar, at least in quantitative terms, and since the 1980s feminist stories have been published that extol the role of the female figure (Prince Cinders (1987) or Princess Smarty Pants (1986) by Babette Cole are examples of this), the male figure continues to prevail over the female one in picture books; or, at least, linguistic resources are used that still impoverish the representation of the female characters in children's narratives (Sunderland 2012: 19, 36).

Moreover, the concept of genre in picture books has not only been approached at the individual level of the character, but also at the family level, a unit which has undergone substantial changes, considering the new family formats that are emerging in today's society. We refer, in particular, to same-sex parent families. This change has had direct repercussions in social, political and also literary areas. In fact, in the most recent decades picture books have been published that address this issue, probably aiming at presenting the child with a reality that, whether we agree with it or not, is part of the twenty-first-century society

(Sunderland 2012: 143). As with the emergence of non-sexist stories after the 1970s and 1980s, associated with feminist liberation movements, the arrival of stories illustrating same-sex parent families came in the 1980s after the gay liberation movement.

The first book with this topic was published in 1983, *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*, written by Susanne Bösche and illustrated by Adreas Hansen. However, between 1983 and 1987, due to the spread of AIDS and the responsibility attributed to homosexual couples in the development of the disease, some negative attitudes towards homosexuality emerged (Sunderland and McGlashan 2013, 2015). Since then, although, unfortunately, not always successful, attempts have been made to introduce picture books that portray children living in same-sex parent households into schools, basically in order to promote the acceptance of all types of families existing in our society. Sunderland (2012: 143 and ff), in collaboration with McGlashan, carried out a study on the content of picture books that feature same-sex-parent families and promote the acceptance of gay couples with biological or adopted children. Among other aspects, they analyse the realistic or fantastic nature of the stories, their images (specifically, the number of times characters establish physical or emotional contact), their linguistic component (the types of verbs that are used to express affection) and, above all, the narrative strategies used by authors to promote the acceptance of same-sex parents and create a positive image of the gay identity.

Although the research carried out on picture books portraying same-sex-parent families from a content and linguistic perspective is certainly conclusive, it is also true that despite the multimodal nature of picture books, more attention needs to be paid to the meaning that comes from the interaction of images and text in these literary works. In this sense, Sunderland (2012: 52) highlights the need to adopt multimodal approaches that complement those traditional narrative theories which have focused mainly on the study of literary and content issues when analysing contemporary picture books. For this reason, in this book, special attention is given to the analyses of the meaning that is created from the word-image interaction in a large sample of stories that feature children who either live in sex-same family households or who do not necessarily conform to the macho or female stereotypes typically associated with their gender in traditional narratives. These multimodal analyses reveal how the verbal and visual modalities contribute to each other's meaning and make evident the potential of combining words and images in picture books.

Theoretical Frameworks

The chapters included in this book take the most relevant literary theories and multimodal social-semiotic and discourse frameworks a step further from previous studies and apply them to the genre of children's visual

narratives that challenge gender stereotypes. The theoretical approaches adopted for carrying out the multimodal and discourse analysis in this collection of chapters are predominantly Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday 1978, 2004), Appraisal theory (Martin and White 2005), Multimodal Social Semiotics (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Painter, Martin and Unsworth 2013) and Systemic-Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (O'Halloran 2004). Other chapters have adopted cognitive approaches (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Coat 2019), cultural and feminist theories (Langton and Bowers 1993; Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Butler 1999, etc.), and Corpus-driven Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Abbott and Forceville 2011). The application of these multimodal (and cultural / cognitive / social-semiotic) discourse approaches can yield results of interest, not only for researchers in the field of discourse and multimodality, but for writers, illustrators and teaching professionals as well. These approaches provide us with tools to describe the meaning-making resources of verbal and visual language in multimodal texts, which are conceptualised as choices from semiotic systems that are beyond language itself.

Although SFL focuses essentially on verbal language, Halliday (1978, 2004) assumes that language is just one of the many semiotic systems, along with images, sound, music, etc., that can be used to express meaning. Besides, Halliday asserts that all texts, whether verbal or visual, independently or in combination with other semiotic modalities, simultaneously entail representational, interpersonal and textual/compositional meanings. This idea has led Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) to develop a grammar of visual design to describe the meaning-making resources of images in a specific social context. They propose that images are capable of simultaneously realising three types of meaning: representational, which is related to Halliday's ideational metafunction, interactive, which corresponds to Halliday's interpersonal metafunction, and finally, compositional meaning, which is associated with Halliday's textual metafunction. Both SFL and Visual Social Semiotics view language as a social semiotic system where the options available to its users to achieve their communicative goals and make meanings are determined by the social context or the culture in which language is used (Halliday 1978, 2004; O'Halloran 2004; Moya-Guijarro 2014). In addition to being functional, contextual and social theories, SFL and Visual Social Semiotics are also systemic theories. This means they use systems, combined into networks (transitivity, mood, theme, etc.) that operate at a number of levels and model paradigmatic relations. The systems formalise the paradigmatic choices or abstract features which are available to the speaker of a language to make meaning and are basically defined by their opposition to each other.

In the last few decades, the analysis of text-image interaction has indeed gained momentum both in literature and linguistic research, as proved by the numerous studies of Moebius (1986), Nodelman (1988), Nikolajeva and Scott (2001), Lewis (2006), Unsworth (2008, 2011),

Unsworth and Ortigas (2008), Serafini (2010) or Moya-Guijarro (2019a and b). Nonetheless, the taxonomies proposed for defining a text-image interface tend to put forward a continuum amongst the relationships of equivalence, expansion, complementarity or divergence between the visual and the textual modes. However, sometimes the frontiers between different categories are too fuzzy or not clearly defined. The key issue is, according to Painter et al. (2013: 6) that most of the proposed taxonomies for analysing image and text synergy only allow for establishing one type of relationship between text and image in a visual composition or even only one interrelation type throughout a multimodal assembly. For this reason, Painter et al. (2013: 3) consider that, although Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar is a productive analytic framework for the study of images (Unsworth and Ortigas 2008), their account is not sufficiently developed to study some aspects of picture books, essentially those concerning intermodal relations. Aware of this fact, they extend Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar and develop further systems at representational, interpersonal and textual/compositional levels of analysis to deal with image realisations in picture books. The model they propose for analysing the verbal and visual intersemiosis in picture books is based on the concepts of commitment and coupling (Painter et al. 2013: 134, 143) and is adopted in some of the chapters in this book. Commitment refers to the particular selections taken up and actualised from the whole meaning potential of a system to convey meaning in a specific text. Coupling involves the repeated co-patterning combinations of meaning within a text of realisations within two or more systems or metafunctions. The application of these two notions to the sample texts will lead some of the contributors of this volume to determine if there are co-patterns of realisations from the verbal and visual systems at representational, interpersonal and textual/compositional levels in the picture books selected for analysis.

Today, more and more, there seems to be general agreement on the need to adopt interdisciplinary approaches (Kümmerling-Meibauer 2018) that consider not only the literary, feminist post-structural, queer and narrative theories, but also multimodal, discursive and cognitive approaches, in order to address the communicative potential that arises from the interaction of words and images in multimodal texts. Following these new multimodal and interdisciplinary approaches, the authors in the volume analyse a sample of children's visual narratives that question gender stereotypes and the concept of traditional family. The tools offered by Halliday's SFL (1978, 2004), O'Halloran (2004), Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) and Painter et al.'s (2013) Multimodal Social Semiotics, combined with approaches of a more literary, content, cultural and cognitive nature (Nodelman 1988; Arizpe and Styles 2003; Wharton 2005; Lewis 2006; Sunderland 2012; Forceville 2009; Kelly 2012, etc.) are used in the chapters that follow, in order to explore the verbal and

visual strategies that authors and illustrators of picture books have used to generate progressive messages.

The picture books that comprise the sample texts analysed in this volume share a scathing review of gender stereotypes and family models. Indeed, the selected picture books portray either children who do not necessarily conform to the male and/or female stereotypes typically associated with their gender in traditional narratives, or children living in same-sex parent families. The intended target audience of most of these stories is children aged approximately between three and nine. With these addressees in mind, all the visual narratives are original stories that stand out for their literary quality, an opinion that has been shared by critics (McCabe et al., 2011; Sunderland, 2012), and specialised journals such as *Children's Literature in Education*, *Sex Roles* and *Gender and Society*, inter alia). A further important aspect that primarily determined their selection was that all the stories defend freedom and social acceptance, independently of people's preferences. Sometimes, as for example in Chapters 3, 5 and 9, the authors have chosen the same picture books among their sample texts for analysis. Far from leading to repetition, this has actually allowed for different aspects offered by the stories' themes to be highlighted, depending on the different tools chosen for analysis, which we believe brings about an additional dimension of interest to the book we present.

Structure of the Book

The book comprises a total of 13 chapters, arranged in three main parts after this introduction. The introductory Chapter 1 outlines the scope of the volume, its overall motivation and its structure. Chapters 2 to 5 form the first part of the book with a focus on male characters that do not conform to masculine gender stereotypes, and they illustrate how what is told and what is shown complement and enhance each other. These four chapters analyse picture books whose protagonists are boys who challenge male gender stereotypes and whose behaviour reveals a desire to promote social acceptance. The second part includes the next four chapters, Chapters 6 to 9, which feature non-traditional princesses and girls whose behaviour deconstructs patriarchal views of gender. Finally, the third part, comprising Chapters 10 to 13, explores both the traditional gendered representation of family life in children's picture books, and the verbal and visual strategies used by writers and illustrators to promote the acceptance of same-sex parent households, most of which are composed of either biological or adopted sons or daughters and their parents. Thus, together the contributors of these chapters invite reflexion on existing family models and analyse the verbal and visual strategies used by the writers and illustrators to challenge the concept of traditional family and promote inclusion and respect for diversity.

Part I: Stories Portraying Boys Who Challenge Gender Stereotypes

Chapter 2 by Kachorsky and Perez, **Julián Is a Mermaid. Challenging Gender Stereotypes: A Qualitative Multimodal Content Analysis**, begins the first part of the book, where the focus is on the analysis of picture books that portray boys who challenge traditional gender stereotypes. Kachorsky and Perez aim to study how Love, the writer and illustrator of the Stonewall Book Award-winning picture book, *Julián Is a Mermaid*, uses both individual modes and modes in combination to “normalise” Julián’s love of mermaids, his desire to be a mermaid, and his grandmother’s acceptance of his transformation into a mermaid. The authors start from the premise that images play a role in producing, reproducing and contributing to the dominance of hegemonic ideologies that uphold the interests of those with power and status in society (Sturken and Cartwright 2001).

To analyse *Julián Is a Mermaid*, Kachorsky and Perez use a Multimodal Content Analysis instrument adapted from the work of Serafini and Reid (2019). They also draw upon Social Semiotics (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Painter et al. 2013) and gender/queer theory. With these tools, the authors examine the multimodal structures within the visual images and the verbal elements of the story, as well as the intermodal relationships present in the selected picture book. These aspects of the analytical tools help Kachorsky and Perez explore the meaning potentials created in the visual narrative, and how those meaning potentials are influenced by social factors. The analysis also demonstrates that, although there are inconsistent representations of gender identity and expression across the modes, the combination of verbal and visual elements promotes a message of gender acceptance in the story.

In Chapter 3, **Ideational Construal of Male Challenging Gender Identities in Children’s Picture Books**, Elorza analyses how gender identities are challenged in three picture books whose protagonists are boys, *Ballerino Nate* by Bradley and Alley (2006), *Oliver Button Is a Sissy* by dePaola (1979) and *Tough Boris* by Fox and Brown (2009). In the three picture books, the gender identities of protagonist boys clash in some way with the characters who represent stereotypical gender behaviour. The stories present boys who do things that are either not expected of them or that other boys do not like to do, and thus the traditional acceptability of binary social gender roles is challenged, mainly in terms of agency, desire and behaviour. Drawing upon SFL (Halliday 1978, 2004) and Visual Social Semiotics (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001, 2006; Moya-Guijarro 2014; Painter et al. 2013), Elorza explores the lexico-grammatical and semiotic visual resources that are deployed to construe gender identities as ideational meaning and showcases the rich potential and flexibility that bimodality (visual-verbal) allows for this.

Contrary to the literature on identity and attribution, which traditionally has been concerned with how language is used from an interpersonal

perspective, including aspects related to appraisal and polarity, Elorza focuses on ideational meaning in her description of the range of linguistic and semiotic resources available to construe challenging gender identities. The ideational analysis carried out allows the author to conclude that the depiction of the protagonist's gender identity is crucially based on the relationship established in the narration between the protagonist and the group representing the gender stereotype. This can be portrayed not only as a contrastive relation (the case of *Ballerino Nate* and *Oliver Button Is a Sissy*) but also as a relation of comparison (*Tough Boris*). Findings also reveal the logical causal chains underlying the construal of stereotypical gender behaviour in the three visual narratives, which pivot around the concept of 'sissy'. Elorza shows how those logical causal chains are challenged by the protagonists, which she connects with the educational potential of 'gender inclusive' picture books for contributing to critical literacy.

In Chapter 4, **At the Heart of It: Once There Was a Boy**, Collins-Gearing discusses how the children's picture book *Once There Was a Boy* by the Aboriginal Australian writer Dub Leffler (2011) challenges the dominant ideas of culture and stereotyped gender binaries through the metaphor of a beating heart. The picture book tells the story of a boy who lives alone on an island. One day a girl visits and breaks his heart, which is kept hidden outside of his body in a box under his bed, leaving the boy devastated for she had not followed his request to respect his privacy. Drawing on Langton and Bower's (1993) theory of intersubjectivity, Country et al's (2016) work on "co-becoming", and Feng and O'Halloran's (2013) work on feeling and emotion, the author explores the representations of "boyiness", trauma and healing through sharing and reconciliation.

By examining both the written and visual elements of the picture book, Collins-Gearing invites readers to disrupt dominant ideas of gender binaries and dig into the way characters relate with their environment. Through the embodied encounters of the characters with the active and vibrant places where they grow up, and through the synergy of images and words, Leffler shifts traditional Western ideas of the construction of "boyiness", showing that boys have feelings and can be just as vulnerable as their female counterparts. In addition, Collins-Gearing's findings reveal that the combination of verbal and visual modalities creates an intersubjective dialogue between the verbal and visual elements of the story and the readers, generating a space that favours feelings and sharing, as well as male/female interconnections and connectivity, rather than separateness and objectification.

In Chapter 5, **Gender Assumptions in Picture Books about Boys in Dresses**, Nodelman puts the finishing touch to the first section of the book by exploring picture books about boys who like to wear dresses and other female-identified clothing. Some of the contemporary picture books included in his analysis are: *10,000 Dresses* by Ewert (2008), *My Princess*

Boy by Kilodavis (2010), *Morris Micklethwaite and the Tangerine Dress* by Baldacchino (2014), *I am Jazz* by Herthel and Jennings (2014), *Jacob's New Dress* by Hoffman, Hoffman and Chase (2014), *Big Bob, Little Bob* by Howe (2016), *One of a Kind, Like Me* by Mayeno and Liu-Trujillo (2016), *The Boy and the Bindi* by Shraya and Perrera (2016), *Sparkle Boy* by Newman and Mola (2017) or *Julian Is a Mermaid* by Love (2018), among others. In his analytical approach, Nodelman draws not only on semiotic theoreticians like Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), but also on the cognitive approaches developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Coats (2019).

Nodelman's study shows that initially the existence of these books about boys in dresses shows an intention to promote, if not transgender acceptance specifically, gender equality and social inclusion more generally. But a closer look reveals ways in which the books undermine that intention. His analysis of visual images reveals ways in which their creators unconsciously reference visual conceptual metaphors along with other signs that contradict their more obvious intentions. Nodelman explores how that happens in picture books about boys wearing female-identified clothing in relation to a series of interrelated ideological assumptions. First of all, the male characters mostly consider dresses as signs of femininity, and by wearing them defend their choice of ignoring ongoing conventions. Furthermore, although claimed to be relating to sex- and gender issues by reviewers and advertising, most of the texts in the stories do not connect dress-wearing with possibilities of being gay or transgender, but rather function as a sign of individuality and the right to be different. Moreover, in depicting boys in fancy, brightly coloured, glittery dresses, in bleak, empty, dark-toned landscapes, the picture books tend to imply both the virtues of being attractive and the idea that attractiveness is inherently and essentially feminine. As a result, these images evoke another unfortunate cliché: while men ideally produce wealth, women (and effeminate boys) characteristically consume as much as they are consumed by the gaze.

Part II: Picture Books Featuring Princesses and Girls Who Do Not Conform to Female Gender Stereotypes

The second part begins with Chapter 6 by Thomas and Moya-Guijarro, **Queering the Princess: On Feminine Subjectivities and Becoming Girl in Contemporary Picture Books**. The authors aim to explore the representation of non-traditional "princesses" in two picture books, *Pirate Princess* by Bardhan-Quallan and McElmurry (2012) and *The Princess Knight* by Funke and Meyer (2004) and to examine the relationship that is created between the text and image to communicate meanings that are complex, subtle and not necessarily in line with the purported claim of challenging gender stereotypes. Drawing on feminist post-structural theories (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Butler 1999), Visual Social Semiotics (Painter, Martin

and Unsworth 2013) and Appraisal Theory (Martin and White 2005), Thomas and Moya-Guijarro identify the ways in which diverse feminine subjectivities are constructed in each visual narrative and interrogate each text for how effectively it represents the complexities of girlhood in relation to the multiplicities of ways of being and becoming girl.

In line with Nodelman's findings in Chapter 5, Thomas and Moya-Guijarro conclude that while traditional roles of femininity are contested in these two texts, the messages they offer to young girls are mixed and somewhat problematic, as evidenced through the detailed intersemiotic analysis. In both instances, the texts construct a difficult path for choices other than normative female. Moving beyond traditional binary roles is fraught with difficulties for each female protagonist, while the roles of a knight or a pirate are simply presented as natural for a male. The two contemporary picture books that are the subject of this chapter also contest traditional gender roles, but their starting point is still with a normative feminine role, and the process of becoming different is a process marked by physical and psychological difficulty and the subject of much humour. This raises the question about the effectiveness of the stories to *actually* contest traditional ideas of the feminine.

In Chapter 7, **A Clever Paper Bag Princess, a Fearless Worst Princess and an Empowered Little Red: A Critical Multimodal Analysis**, Constanty and Heberle aim at verifying how lexico-grammatical and visual resources are used in three children's picture books to (de)construct the representation of young ladies as powerless and fragile (Bittner and Arnold 2019). The stories selected are: *The Paper Bag Princess* (Munsch and Martchenko 1980), *The Worst Princess* (Kemp and Ogilvie 2012) and *Little Red* (Woollvin 2016). To do that, they carry out an analysis concerning the verbal and visual meanings created in the three visual narratives to characterise the protagonists and the actions performed by them, as well as the types of evaluations that encompass the stories. The theoretical approaches adopted to carry out this study are SFL, Painter, Martin and Unsworth's (2013) Visual Social Semiotics and feminist literary perspectives.

In line with Elorza's conclusions in Chapter 3, Constanty and Heberle's results show how lexico-grammatical features in SFL, such as transitivity choices in verbal processes, furnish some of the particular characteristics of the main characters in the stories. Similarly, images serve to emphasise the role of body position in establishing the interpersonal exchange of information between characters. The study also reveals the features used to deconstruct the patriarchal and binary views of gender shown in traditional fairy tales, which embed cultural messages closely related to patriarchal values (Crew 2002; Parsons 2004). In short, this chapter contributes to the discussion of new forms of discourse and cultural norms in new versions or "re-visions" (Parsons, 2004) of picture books, and gives space for discussion on gender equality and women's empowerment in our twenty-first century society.

Chapter 8 by Carmen Santamaría-García, **A Semiotic and Multimodal Analysis of Interactive Relations in Picture Books That Challenge Female Gender Stereotypes**, shows a semiotic and multimodal analysis of the interactive relations in three picture books that tell stories of female characters who do not conform to traditional gender stereotypes. The stories, *Princess Smartypants* by Cole (1996), *Arthur and Clementine* by Turin and Bosnia (1976) and *Tutus Are Not My Style* by Skeers and Wilsdorf (2010), combine verbal and visual modalities to actively engage readers with the characters. Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) and Painter et al.'s (2013) social-semiotic approaches are used in combination with Halliday's (2004) Systemic-Functional model to explore the visual resources used in the construction of interactive meanings that build an interpersonal relationship among the characters, and between them and the readers. The text-image synergy resulting from the interaction of both words and pictures and their relationship of interdependence is also analysed from the perspectives of commitment and coupling (Painter et al. 2013).

Santamaría's analysis of affiliation draws on focalisation resources for eye contact and type of gaze, pathos (engaging or alienating drawing styles), social distance and attitude, which produce different relationships of power and involvement. Her analysis reveals how the female characters portrayed in the stories relate to each other, both within and outside of their family environments. The results of the analysis throw light on the meaning potential of the systems of affiliation and attitude to depict female characters who are released from the pressure of traditional gender roles and find a voice of their own.

Chapter 9, **Communicative Functions of Part-Whole Representations of Characters in Picture Books that Challenge Gender Stereotypes**, by Moya-Guijarro, explores how visual metonymies contribute to the challenging of gender stereotypes in a sample of 20 picture books. Ten of the picture books feature boys who do not necessarily conform to macho stereotypes. The other ten tales portray girls who promote social inclusion and equality. Multimodal social semiotic (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Painter et al. 2013), and cognitive approaches (Forceville 2009; Pinar 2015) have been adopted to carry out this research. The integration of both cognitive and social-semiotic approaches to study multimodal artefacts has already been proposed by other researchers such as Feng and O'Halloran (2013, 2014), who have demonstrated how the integration of Social Semiotics and Cognitive approaches to metaphor and metonymy is significant for the exploration of multimodal discourses.

Adopting these Social Semiotic and Cognitive approaches, the current study expands the research already developed by Moya-Guijarro (2011, 2013, 2019a and b) on the communicative functions of part-whole depictions in picture books, a genre which has been practically unexplored within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics. The results of the study show that metonymic representations are essentially used in the

picture books featuring girls to ascribe negative qualities to chauvinistic and careless characters and to highlight that women can do all types of jobs. Furthermore, part-whole depictions are used in the stories portraying boys to highlight the idea that children should always be proud of who they are, independently of their vital preferences and orientations.

Part III: Visual Narratives Portraying and Challenging the Concept of Traditional Family

In Chapter 10, **Gender Stereotypes in Children's Picture Books: A Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis**, Zhai, O'Halloran, Way and Tan examine how text and images interplay to construct gender roles in children's picture books that portray family life and day-to-day activities. The four picture books that form the sample texts are Richard Scarry's *Mother Cat's Busy Day* (1997) and *Father Cat's Busy Day* (1997), and Laura Numeroff's and Lynn Munsinger's *What Daddies Do Best* (2001) and *What Mommies Do Best* (1998). Drawing on SF-MDA (O'Halloran 2008; O'Halloran and Lim 2014; Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran 2016), Halliday's (2014) metafunctional framework and Social Semiotics (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Painter, Martin and Unsworth 2013), the authors investigate how writers and illustrators use different multimodal strategies at representational, interpersonal and textual levels of analysis to represent and construct gender relations in picture books. Thus, the semantic content of picture book representation is theorised as interrelated systems of participants, processes and circumstances, and logical systems which articulate the imposed connections between actors and their actions (Painter et al. 2013). Interpersonal relationships are theorised into the systems of Shot Distance, Perspective, Gaze and Modality. Finally, textual/compositional meaning, which is about packing meaning coherently, is theorised into the systems of Layout and Framing (Painter, Martin and Unsworth 2013).

The analysis of the text and images shows that distinct sets of semantic features are selected in multimodal constructions of husbands and wives, forming a consistent pattern across different picture books. The gender-biased semantic choices make experiential content of family life unevenly distributed, where husband/wife roles are limited to restricted settings and social activities, resulting in the perpetuation of gender stereotypes as certain semantic features tend to be fossilised into gender specific ones. By identifying this gender-biased pattern in semantic choices in picture book representation, this study challenges traditional gender stereotypes and invites reflection on existing role distinctions in the real world.

Chapter 11 by McGlashan, **Linguistic and Visual Trends in the Representation of Two-Mum and Two-Dad Couples in Children's Picture Books**, explores the ways in which the fathers and mothers in families with same-sex parents are represented in children's picture books. By examining a complete corpus of more than 52 picture books published

in English, featuring families with two mums or two dads, the chapter provides a comprehensive account of trends in the naming and visual representations of parents and focuses on how representational strategies have changed over time. The analysis also focuses on quantitative co-occurrence between the visual and verbal elements of picture books through collustration (collocation and illustration, McEnery and Hardie 2012: 240). Drawing principally on Corpus-assisted Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, the study detailed in this chapter examines and critically interprets changing representations of same-sex parents in the picture book corpus selected for analysis.

Findings appear to suggest that, although changes in representation are largely to do with being favourable to lesbian women and gay men in equal measure, representation of lesbian and gay parents still reaffirms some dominant social norms and some gender, family and parenting stereotypes. This is probably in an attempt to characterise gay male and female parents as being capable of fulfilling ‘normal’ social and family activities such as marriage and caregiving duties, fields of action from which LGBTQ+ people have traditionally been excluded. As such, trends are changing and for the first time McGlashan’s chapter outlines changing representational patterns in children’s picture books featuring same-sex parents.

In Chapter 12, **The Depiction of Family and Self in Children’s Picture Books: A Corpus-Driven Exploration**, Calvo-Maturana and Forceville investigate how families are represented in picture books in terms of gender and other aspects of diversity that partake in portraying the self. They do so through a thorough multimodal analysis taking the visual mode (including the use of typography) as a starting point (Lewis 2006; Painter et al. 2013; Moya-Guijarro 2014) and approaching the visual narratives from a corpus-driven perspective (Abott and Forceville 2011). They analyse 30 picture books that are targeted at children aged 4–8 in which the story is framed through the integration of visual and textual modes: (1) books from the AMULIT corpus compiled by the editors of this volume; (2) a random selection of prize-winning books retrieved via the search engine of the International Youth Library online catalogue; and (3) a random selection from the same catalogue of either non-prize-winning books or books awarded with prizes other than those selected for (2).

The authors chart the following dimensions in their analysis of the representation of (plural) identities of parents and children: (i) the roles and activities of (grand)parents, children, (pet) animals, and other (non) family members as well as visualisations of events in/outside the house or in public spaces; (ii) the identification of helpers and adversaries vis-à-vis the child’s problems; (iii) the degree to which art and sports are represented in the child’s environment, and the degree to which imagination is promoted; (iv) the extent to which physical intimacy, in both its potentially positive and negative dimensions, is depicted; and (v) the

representation of sexual, gender, colour and age diversity in and around the household. Their analysis involves both a quantitative and qualitative approach to the data. The results shed light on how diversity is depicted and re-addressed through the integration of the visual and textual affordances specific to the genre of picture books, and chart whether there are differences and similarities in representing the family in the three sub-corpora studied. Moreover, the chapter draws a map of relevant areas to explore various visual and multimodal strategies in future research and suggests visual density (Carter and Nash 1990) as a powerful cognitive tool to re-evaluate issues pertaining to representing the family and the self.

Finally, in Chapter 13, **The Moomin Family: An Elastic Permeable Multi-Dimensional Construct in Semiotic and Social Space**, Matthiessen adopts Malinowski's (1945) foundational insights on anthropology and a Systemic-Functional approach to explore how Tove Jansson, a Finnish author, enacts and construes the *Moomin family* (also making reference to the work by her brother Lars Jansson) verbally and pictorially. Considering Malinowski's foundational insights, Matthiessen interprets families and other institutions as (1) semiotic constructs – systems of meaning, (2) social constructs – systems of behaviour, and (3) biological constructs – as manifested within biological populations. When he explores “the family” along these lines, he finds, not surprisingly, that descriptively it is a permeable region somewhere midway between potential and instance – one that is in the first instance semiotic and then social, but also biological.

These different orders of manifestation may be “aligned” but they are shifting. In fact, a key reason for Matthiessen's choice of the *Moomin Family* stories is that Jansson provides us with a very enlightened view of the family – a family that is caring and inclusive, a family that challenges traditional stereotypical conceptions of the family; a family whose members are secure enough to form unusual friendships and to transform fear into understanding (Karjalainen 2013). Matthiessen focuses on the task of exploring how Jansson created the (world of the) *Moomin Family*, enacting and construing it as a resource for her readers, a resource that will in fact help them transcend limiting conceptions of the family, and of the world in general. The author of this chapter thinks about this situation metafunctionally, noting that folk tales simultaneously construe world view and enact protocols for interactive behaviour.

To summarise the overall value of the chapters in this volume, we can say that they are a considerable step towards an enhanced understanding of the message that picture books transmit to young children through the combination of text and illustrations. We live in an eminently technological and visual society, where meaning is not created exclusively through the written text, but through the combination of different semiotic modes. No doubt, the visual mode is one of them. Visual narratives

may contribute to the development of young readers' visual literacy and have become essential both to understand the multimodal manifestations of the media-oriented world in which we live today, and to comprehend discourses which promote social inclusion and equality. As models of shared cultural values and meanings, children's picture books may influence their readers' attitudes and beliefs and boost the acceptance of the non-traditional gender models or family formats that are progressively emerging in today's society. We, co-operating for the second time on a volume on Multisemiotics, hope that authors, illustrators, and readers of picture books as well as students, teachers, reviewers and researchers of children's literature, linguistics and Multisemiotics find the content of these chapters interesting and that the chapters serve as inspiration for discussions on the meaning potential of picture books that deal with gender issues. Gender equality and inclusion are concepts to be addressed from childhood in school and family settings. Certainly, picture books are, without a doubt, essential resources to familiarise young children with these aspects and, in turn, develop their visual literacy.

Note

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