

Postmodern Experimentation in Anthony Browne's Picturebooks: The Reinvention of a Canon in Children's Literature / *Experimentação pós-moderna nos livros-álbum de Anthony Browne: a reinvenção de um cânone da Literatura Infantil e Juvenil*

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ABSTRACT

This article¹ intends to highlight the characteristics of the postmodern Picturebook, specifically, the work of Anthony Browne, a British creator of recognized value in the conformation of this segment of the contemporary children's edition, whose narrativization results from the triadic text-image-support. Revisiting Browne's whole work, from a necessarily restricted and representative corpus, we propose to highlight the aesthetic-literary and formative potentialities of a significative production, recognizing his contribution to the consolidation of a new paradigm in Children's Literature. Starting from previous investigations around Picturebooks, with emphasis on theorizations related to the concepts of intertextuality and metafictionality – founding strategies of the “writing” of the appreciated author –, formal, rhetorical-stylistic and ideothematic procedures are observed in a dialogical reading of the verbal and visual components, concluding about its demands at the level of reception, as well as its impact on the literary, critical and reflective education of its main readers.

KEYWORDS: Picturebook; Post Modernity; Intertextuality; Metafictionality; Anthony Browne

RESUMO

Este artigo pretende evidenciar as características do livro-álbum pós-moderno, concretamente, na obra de Anthony Browne, criador britânico de reconhecido valor na conformação deste segmento privilegiado da edição infantojuvenil contemporânea, cuja narrativização resulta da relação triádica texto-imagem-suporte. A revisitação do conjunto da sua obra, a partir de um corpus necessariamente restrito e mais representativo, propõe evidenciar as potencialidades estético-literárias e formativas de uma produção sui generis, reconhecendo o seu contributo na consolidação de um novo

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¹ This work was financially supported by Portuguese national funds through the FCT (Foundation for Science and Technology) within the framework of the CIEC (Research Center for Child Studies of the University of Minho) projects under the references UIDB/00317/2020 and UIDP/00317/2020.

paradigma da literatura para a infância. Partindo de anteriores investigações em torno das recentes tendências do livro-álbum, com destaque para teorizações relativas aos conceitos de intertextualidade e metaficcionalidade – estratégias fundadoras da “escrita” do autor apreciado –, observam-se procedimentos formais, retórico-estilísticos e ideotemáticos numa leitura dialógica das componentes verbal e visual, concluindo-se acerca das suas exigências ao nível da receção, bem como do seu impacto na educação literária, crítica e reflexiva dos seus destinatários preferenciais, embora não exclusivos. PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Livro-álbum; Pós-modernidade; Intertextualidade; Metaficção; Anthony Browne

Introduction: Prolegomena on the Postmodern Picturebook

If the picturebook, as a hybrid modality characterized by the symbiotic combination of text, images and support (Van Der Linden, 2013), currently constitutes one of the privileged and certainly most innovative segments of publishing for children, due to this nature, it offers itself as a creative space open to the most daring artistic and literary experiments.

Configuring a specific language that is not limited to verbal and visual components, but rather requires the understanding, in a global/articulated reading, of all its constituents, the picturebook is usually defined by a hybrid set of material/paratextual elements which ensure the aesthetic and semantic unity of the publication. As an example, the hard cover, the different size and format, the quality/weight of the paper and the type of four-color printing stand out, in addition to the reduced number of pages, associated with an abbreviated verbal stain (which may even not appear), with large and/or variable characters, and profuse illustrations, often arranged on a double page and/or extended beyond their margins (Ramos, 2021). But it is in the conjugation or intertwining of these two discursive instances that the main specificity of the genre lies. Sometimes complementing each other, sometimes contradicting each other, text and images together create an enhanced form of narration, requiring the reader to grasp a secondary modeling system, with its own grammar (Hornberg, 2004), and, therefore, a new way of reading/interpreting. This is also why it is, in its purest form, designed by a single author/illustrator, simultaneously responsible for the verbal text and/or graphic design, or resulting from the complicit partnership between a writer and an illustrator (if not even the designer himself).

In addition to their relevant implications in the reading process and reader/literary training, strategies such as polyphony, dialogism, intertextuality, self-referentiality, parody and irony, narrative discontinuity, metafictionality and the not rare interpellation of the reader, among other trends typical of postmodernism, highlight the experimental and daring nature of this type of publication. It is not surprising that such artefacts, with an omnivorous profile and permeable to the most diverse genres, discourses and arts (*e.g.*, painting, cinema, photography), adapt to a “dual audience,” establishing a place in which is commonly known as crossover fiction (Beckett, 2012).

And if, for many years, a few people took the risk of creating it, the truth is that the picturebook has increasingly growing attention, becoming one of the dominant trends in the current international publishing landscape. Its timid entry, with the impulse of graphic arts, at the dawn of the 60s of the 20th century, in the European context and in the United States, elevating the names of Maurice Sendak, Bruno Munari, Eric Carle, Leo Lionni to the *status* of classics, Mercer Mayer or Tomi Ungerer, among several others, in fact, did not inhibit the subsequent delivery of a notable group of contemporary authors (with emphasis on David Wiesner, Emily Gravett or Oliver Jeffers, just to name a few examples), responsible for the accelerated flourishing of the edition and, we truly believe, the consolidation of a new children’s canon.

It is precisely in this context that the books of Anthony Browne are inserted, a British creator of recognized value in shaping this publishing segment and one of the most acclaimed by critics and research, and that’s why they deserve our attention in this study. Dedicated, above all, to the systematic and unifying survey of his most unique features, the revisiting of his work, as a whole, supported by the appreciation of a necessarily restricted and more representative corpus, thus proposes to highlight the aesthetic-literary and formative potential of a *sui generis* production, with a clear post-modern approach, validating its claim in the most noble collection of Children’s Literature (CL) – and the picturebook, in particular. Building on previous investigations into recent picturebook trends (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001; Silva-Díaz Ortega, 2005; Sipe & Pantaleo, 2008; Van Der Linden, 2013; Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2015; 2018; among others), with emphasis on

the theories related to the concepts of *Dialogism* (Bakhtin, 1984),² *Intertextuality* (Kristeva, 1974; Genette, 1982; 1987; Samoyault, 2001) and *Metafictionality* (Bakhtin, 1984; Waugh, 1984; Hutcheon, 1988; Genette, 2004) – founding strategies of the appreciated author’s “writing” –, technical-discursive and narrative-stylistic procedures stand out, which result from the intersemiotic reading of the verbal and visual components, concluding about their requirements in terms of reception, as well as well its impact on the literary, critical and reflective education of its preferred recipients: children.

1 Anthony Browne’s Picturebooks: Path(s) and Configurations

Author and illustrator of a vast and notable set of children’s books, Anthony (Edward Tudor) Browne is, in our opinion, an unavoidable face of Children’s and Young Adult Literature (CYAL) of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Born in Sheffield, United Kingdom, on September 11, 1946, Anthony Browne had pencils, brushes, and paper as playmates from an early age.

With an academic career that began at Leeds College of Art, where he graduated in 1967 in Graphic Design, the artist quickly confirms that painting is where he finds his comfort zone. To his first works, carried out in the area of biomedical illustration – in which he benefited from the artistic influence of the figurative painter Francis Bacon (Browne, 2011), enhancing his mastery of techniques such as drawing and watercolor, which would later come to fruition. Configuring his visual signature – other productions followed, more or less scattered, in the areas of advertising and birthday card graphics. Still in the 70s, attracted by surrealism and the strangeness of the fictional scenarios experienced, he began his career writing and illustration for younger people. With his debut book, *Through the Magic Mirror* (1976, Ed. Hamish Hamilton Children’s Books), he soon recognized the relevance of working simultaneously on text and images, always attentive to their interactions (Browne, 2011). The encouragement of the editor and his friend Julia McRae, responsible for the children’s sector at Hamish Hamilton, served as

² BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. 8th printing. Translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

a springboard, the following year, for her second publication, *A Walk in the Park* (1977), a kind of sketch of the famous and complex, brought to light decades later, *Voices in the Park* (1998).

Internationally recognized for his unique style, materialized in detailed textures and captivating colors, Anthony Browne has made those who leaf through each of his masterpiece's dream. With more than half a hundred published works, translated into 26 languages, and illustrations exhibited in the most varied corners of the world (*e.g.*, United States of America, Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, France, South Korea, Italy, Germany, Netherlands, Japan and the Republic of China), the prestige obtained goes far beyond the simple appreciation of books, either by adults or children, and his recognition was validated, among others, in the year 2000, by the award, for his entire work, Hans Christian Andersen Prize – the most prestigious international award within the CL.

Among other distinctions won throughout his career are the Kate Greenaway Medal (in 1983, with *Gorilla*; in 1992, with *Zoo*; and in 2016, with *Willy's Stories*), the Kurt Maschler award (in 1983, 1988 and 1998) and the Children's Laureate in which he was appointed, between 2009 and 2011, Ambassador and Promoter of CL in the United Kingdom.

Described by Perrot, jury of his highest distinction, as “an artist of unusual talent, exceptional technical skills, and unrivaled imagination, who has taken picture-books illustration into new dimensions” (Perrot, 2000, p. 1),³ the “Children's Literature Nobel Prize” has an unmistakable type of illustration, marked by a (sur)realistic and detailed register, particularly in its volumes in picturebook format, a multimodal genre that he adopted, *par excellence*. Through mixed and/or exclusively visual narratives (as in the case, for example, of the combination suggested in *Me and You*, 2010) and very diverse proposals, even in terms of pictorial styles and formats – including, in the latter case, editions potentially aimed by pre-readers (*A Beary Tale*, 1989; *How do You feel?*, 2011; *One gorilla*, 2012) and, also, a pop-up volume (*Animal Fair*, 2002) –, Anthony Browne reveals us a colossal collection of works of art, a vast and demanding field of experimentation, perceivable upon careful reading of its finest details.

³ PERROT, Jean. Winner of the 2000 Andersen Illustrated Award Anthony Browne: An English Promenade. *Bookbird, a Journal of International Children's Literature*: Special issues - the Hans Christian Andersen Awards 2000, n. 3. IBBY, 2000. pp. 11-16.

And if, at first glance, this type of book, due to its large format and generous illustrations, seems to be aimed by children, in reality the literary ambition of Anthony Browne's verbal-iconic texts is ageless. Read by both children and adults (an aspect that precisely characterizes great literary books), his works also boast, like other recurring characteristics and semanticizing instances, the hard cover, visually and graphically articulated with the back cover, decorated endpapers, illustrations profuse, detailed and colorful, a reduced text, with typography of variable sizes and shapes, and, above all, a cohesive relationship between these two languages, enhancing, as we will see, plural readings.

Like a dance in pairs, texts that are apparently simple, yet complex in the diversity of their meanings and interpretative possibilities, are guided by an amalgam of visual details, capable of instigating the most attentive readers. The literariness present in his work is an invitation to multiple meanings, polysemy and interpretative ambiguity. Indeed, in the form of stylistic resources, usually metaphors or metonymies (Moya Guijarro, 2019), and/or various intertextual/interartistic references, cleverly disguised clues to the reader in the construction of a highly dialogue and stimulating universe of little predictability (aspects, in fact, that define the literary semiotic system).

In *Hansel and Gretel* (1981), for example, a title that allows Anthony Browne to assert a personal style (Browne, 2011), it would easily escape the less attentive and/or experienced reader, as, in fact, Dodds (2018) and Silva (2019), also noted, some of the important details embedded in the austere scenario and family despair that describes one of the illustrations.

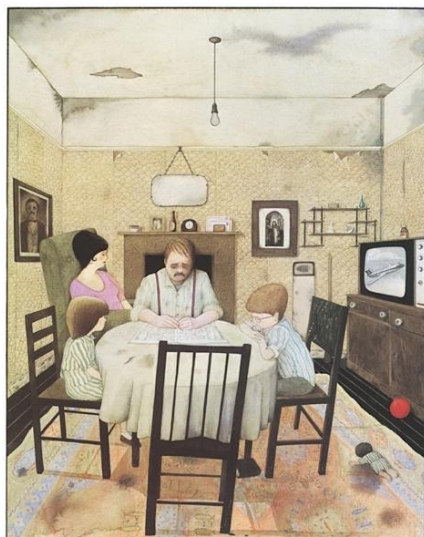


Image 1 – Illustration taken from the book *Hansel and Gretel* (BROWNE, 1981, p. 2)

The sad and distant posture of the characters, combined with the deteriorated/messy appearance of the dining room in which they are gathered, propose, beforehand, a reading of the difficult circumstances and dysfunctional relationships that characterize this family. However, it is in the improved details of the image and the antithetical representation of new visual themes that new perspectives open up to the reader: subtle clues, such as the stripes printed on the children's clothes and the doll lying on the floor, or even, not casually, on the chair, stepmother's unoccupied space, symbolizing the oppressive and imprisoning state of space, seem to be combined with other elements of hope – such as an airplane playing on television, a bird-shaped stain on the ceiling, a red ball thrown into a corner of the floor, or, even, the reproduction of Holman Hunt's allegorical painting, *The Light of the World* (1854) functioning as a metaphor for the binomial freedom/prison and constituting indispensable keys to the many readings that the picturebook in question proposes.

With a variety of intentions, these visual clues can sometimes match with decorative elements that are easy to recognize and play an important role in reinforcing the meaning of the story – as attested, among many other examples, by the doll's hair that stands on end when Gorilla appears in front of it, of Hannah, in *Gorilla* (1983); or the banana itself that, in the final scene of the book, the father carries in his pocket as a symbol of his new “personality”; or, even, the wallpaper combined with the small and innocent details of the Piggott family house that are suddenly transformed into pig heads (*Piggybook*, 1986). In other cases, they may result from veiled allusions or, to borrow Garralón's words (s.d., s.p.),

Bakhtiniana, São Paulo, 19 (3): e64072e, July/Sept. 2024

discreet objects in the background that seem to be there as proof of the author's crazy fantasy, but that are repeated from one picturebook to another, forming a corpus of references and an interrelationship between all his books that allows the reader to familiarize themselves in advance with a work of some complexity. Tunnels, brick walls or scenes where shadows also seem to have meaning accustom the reader to a new visual code whose interpretation depends on their imagination.⁴

It is then up to the reader, in an unfolded work, to gather these clues and explore, with each turn of the page, the meanings of words, images and silences themselves (Prades, 2016) that, so significantly, in the creator's work, are offered in the discourse and operate, together/symbiotically, in the construction of the message and narrativization.

Valuing the games of perspectives and contrasts, their narratives are sometimes governed by a linear structure, sometimes authorizing the segmentation of discourse, in one or another verbal and visual instance, based on apparently accessible resources that the *mise-en-page* itself highlights: his illustrations, arranged on a full/double page and/or bleed, or framed in a semantically fertile size and space, without ever graphically joining the text, dialogue with it through the combination of realistic and dreamlike forms, where everyday life acquires a renewed dimension – fantastic, illogical, if not disturbing. Thus, with incomparable mastery, the illustrator draws, with an almost photographic realism, fascinating stories that make the reader rethink their own sensations and their relationships with others and their surroundings.

Supported by a vast interdiscursive web, where the tradition of several classic tales and the contemporaneity of an “innovative discourse” (Silva, 2014, p. 96), sometimes critical and even ironic, in the face of perplexities of current life/society, the treatment of *topoi* subordinated to the different figurations of childhood not only highlights the complexity of emotions and human relationships but also offers proposals for reflection

⁴ Our translation, from the original, in Spanish, “objetos discretos en un segundo plano que parecen estar ahí como prueba de la loca fantasía del autor, pero que se repiten de uno a otro álbum formando un corpus de referencias y una interrelación entre todos sus libros que permite al lector estar familiarizado de antemano con una obra de cierta complejidad. Los túneles, los muros de ladrillos, o las escenas donde las sombras también parecen tener significado acostumbran al lector a un nuevo código visual cuya interpretación depende de su imaginación.”

on emotionally fracturing and dichotomous themes, based on situations experienced by the protagonists. Under the child's gaze, and even more assiduously in their own voice, the thematization of timeless topics, ductilely in tune with the preferred readers – such as children's fears (*Silly Billy*, 2006; *Hide and Seek*, 2017); walks through the park (e.g., *A Walk in the Park*, 1977; *Voices in the Park*, 1998), the zoo (*Zoo*, 1992), the amusement park (*Animal Fair*, 2002) or the beach (*A Boy, his Dog and the Sea*, 2023); family values (e.g., *My Dad*, 2000; *My Mum*, 2005) and/or their (dis)unity (e.g., *Hansel and Gretel*, 1981; *Gorila*, 1983; *Piggybook*, 1986); the (often antagonistic) fraternal relationships (*The Tunnel*, 1989; *My Brother*, 2007) and friendship (e.g., *Look What I've Got!*, 1980; *Willy and Hugh*, 1991, *Ernest the Elephant*, 2021); imagination and hope (*Little Frida*, 2019); kinship models (*The Big Baby*, 1993)⁵; or, even, inattention and/or parental withdrawal/abandonment (e.g., *Into the Forest*, 2004; *Me and You*, 2010), among others – highlights in Anthony Browne's books a constant feeling of escaping loneliness and unwanted family/parental and friendly relationships. Despite the domestic scenarios in which they are often fictionalized, these topics are, therefore, the target of a treatment that distances them from “domesticity” and the welcoming family relationships that are most commonly presented in books with a preferential reception for children (Dodds, 2018). Through the description, although subtle, of “uncomfortable spaces, tinged with unhappiness and the threat of menace to come,” they rather highlight “[The] undercurrent of darkness and Browne's deftness to deal with complex and difficult themes” (Dodds, 2018, s.p.), capable of permeating his art and contributing to the unstoppable success of his books.

Children – human or simian – are also, this time, the ones who inaugurate the majority of the creator's books, when not alone, accompanied by a reduced number of characters (children, adults and/or animals), suggesting, based on a treatment sensitive and serious (sometimes even with hints of a dark humor), a potential for escape or friendship through dreams and imagination. The animal figuration itself, so frequently inspired by the image of the gorilla, serves as a metaphor for the recreation of situations and feelings common to children (e.g., volumes of the “Willy” series).

⁵ On this topic, read the recent article by SHI (2022).



Image 2 – Illustration taken from the book *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998, p. 31)

Through one and another representation, as summarized by Silva, Anthony Browne “lets escape in his verbal-iconic discourse a special irony that seems to derive from a bitter experience and a disenchanted (realistic?) observation of contemporary society and, in this specific case, from childhood itself, lived differently and conditioned by marked social and family inequalities” (Silva, 2014, p. 100).⁶ However, even if “may be trapped in their socioeconomic conditions or emotionally broken, but they are able to be empowered and create a reality that speaks to their hopes, a reality that is largely their own” (Moussa, 2023, p. 55).

Mostly primitive from a psychological point of view, their characters allow the reader (not always childish) to construct their own vision of the world and establish a high degree of identification with the evolutionary “heroic path,” insofar as “the order of evidence what the heroes go through is not arbitrary” (Godinho, 1989, p. 67).⁷ As, in fact, the author himself states “the characters in my books are metaphors. If I use animals that

⁶ Our translation from the original, in Portuguese, “deixa escapar no seu discurso verbo-icónico uma ironia especial que parece decorrer de uma vivência amarga e de uma observação desencantada (realista?) da sociedade contemporânea e, neste caso concreto, da própria infância, vivida diferentemente e condicionada por acentuadas desigualdades sociais e familiares.”

⁷ Our translation of the original, in Portuguese, “a ordem de provas por que passam os heróis não é arbitrária.”

I make speak to play human beings, it's simply because children identify more easily with animals" (Browne, 2011, p. 217).⁸

It is also, as alluded to and intended to be demonstrated below, under metafictional practice and the dichotomous structuring between reality and fiction that Anthony Browne's universe of characters is constructed. Moving in environments that oscillate between everyday reality and the wonderful, their actions are outlined, as we will see, sometimes in the physical space of family/inhabited universes, interpersonal relationships and childhood experiences, while dysphoric places, sometimes in its interior space, a place of dreams and conducive to an initiation rite, where the park and the forest play a prominent role.

2 Dialogism and Intertextuality in the Work of Anthony Browne: Possible Worlds in A(I)llusion

From Bakhtin's perspective, Discourse is understood as "language in its concrete living totality, and not language as the specific object of linguistics, something arrived at through a completely legitimate and necessary abstraction from various aspects of the concrete life of the word" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 181).⁹ Now, it is the conception of language as discourse that the Bakhtin Circle focuses on when talking about dialogism, dialogical relations and ideology, to the extent that it is not abstracted from social relations, subjects and axiologies.

From the point of view of discourse analysis, sender and receiver carry out "the process of meaning at the same time and are not separated in a watertight way. (...) It is not just about transmitting information, it is processes of identifying the subject, argumentation, subjectification, construction of reality (...). Discourse is made up of meanings between speakers" (Orlandi, 2015, pp. 19-20).¹⁰ Starting from the idea of

⁸ Our translation of the original, in French, "les personnages de mes livres sont des métaphores. Si j'utilise des animaux que je fais parler pour interpréter des êtres humains, c'est simplement que les enfants s'identifient plus facilement aux animaux."

⁹ See footnote 2.

¹⁰ Our translation from the original, in Portuguese, "ao mesmo tempo processo de significação e não estão separados de forma estanque. (...) Não se trata de transmissão de informação apenas, são processos de identificação do sujeito, de argumentação, de subjetificação, de construção da realidade (...). O discurso é feito de sentidos entre locutores."

Discourse as a relationship between subjects and meanings, all statements, according to Bakhtin (1984), arising within social interactions, are in a dialogical relationship; or as Silveira, Rohling and Rodrigues still refer, “they are born from other statements already said and seek the active reaction-response of others” (Silveira, Rohling and Rodrigues, 2012, p. 22).¹¹

In this sense, interpreting a text is, from the perspective of discourse analysis, assuming a subject position in the search for meanings, insofar as reading/understanding requires finding ties, choosing guiding threads of invisible webs that lead, from word to word, from idea to idea, in search of meaning(s). However, the reading process “is a path in which there are assumptions that condition textual understanding, such as prior knowledge” (Pinto, 2022, p. 46).¹² This means that each text constitutes a proposal of meaning that is not entirely constructed (Walby, 2005), leaving each reader the complex task of completing it (or not) based on their knowledge of the world and their personal library. “Personal Library” is understood here as a “personal mental repository,” where all the Texts and Speeches – heard, read or produced – of our lives are archived, which, if they exist, can be revisited at any time/ moment, and where new speeches/works can be integrated, as we consolidate our repertoire of readings. This personal library will therefore function as prior knowledge, essential in the act of reading/interpreting, as “the understanding of a text can be determined by the ability of a reader to activate and select all their knowledge schemes that relate to a given text” (Pinto, 2010, p. 11).¹³

The intertextual phenomenon, defined by Aguiar e Silva as “the semiotic interaction of a text with other text(s)” (Aguiar e Silva, 1999, p. 625),¹⁴ is also included in CL “within the scope of innovation and of changing codes” (Silva, 2011, p. 100)¹⁵ demanding, on the part of children and young readers, the activation of the same diverse and demanding framework of referents. As we summarized in another context

¹¹Our translation from the original, in Portuguese, “nascem de outros enunciados já ditos e buscam a reação-resposta ativa dos outros.”

¹² Our translation from the original, in Portuguese, “é um caminho no qual existem pressupostos que condicionam a compreensão textual, de que é exemplo o conhecimento prévio.”

¹³ Our translation from the original, in Portuguese, “a compreensão de um texto pode ser determinada pela capacidade de um leitor ativar e seleccionar todos os seus esquemas de conhecimento que se relacionem com um dado texto.”

¹⁴ Our translation from the original, in Portuguese, “a interação semiótica de um texto com outro(s) texto(s).”

¹⁵Our translation from the original, in Portuguese, “no âmbito da inovação e da alteração dos códigos.”

(Rodrigues, 2013), the summoning of other works/voices from the canonical, artistic and literary repertoires, or even the (re)valuation of works or visual fragments of one's own authorship (within the scope of intratextuality) are some of the facets that intertextual practice allows, in this same literary universe, to question, enhancing different dialogues between texts that gain "autonomization and a renewed reappearance" (Silva, 2011, p. 104).¹⁶

Anthony Browne's work, being no exception, is also established as a space for discursive exchange (Silva, 1990), in which other voices intersect and transmute – a space of assumed intertextuality and not just considered as a "mosaic of quotations," by the sole "absorption and transformation of another text" (Kristeva, 1974, p. 64),¹⁷ and before extended to other artistic and cultural/ideological domains. In fact, this *modus operandi*, the artist's distinctive trait, is a clear example of a work guided by infinite intertextual possibilities (with strong resonances of painting, literature or cinema, for example), allowing constant dialogue at the turn of the page, illustration after illustration, between diverse hypotexts and hypertexts: homoauthoral, heteroauthoral and interartistic.

Worthy of note is, therefore, precisely the referential framework and the dialogical universe under which this creator's work is constructed, enhancing a reading and questioning of intertextuality – or transtextuality, following Genettian thesis (1982) – in its most diverse prisms. By reconfiguring "common diegetic structures" and bringing together "'old' and new narratives, using strategies of intersection and filmic influence, for example [...]" (Silva, 2014, p. 93),¹⁸ the Anthony Browne's picturebook is structured in an incessant dialogism (Bakhtin, 1984),¹⁹ giving its youngest readers the opportunity to get closer to an endless number of references in Art, Literature and Popular Culture.

As we will try to illustrate below, in a hybrid layered construction, text and image open, on each page, windows of possibilities for intra and intertextual (often inter-artistic) interpretation, with their writing guided by an undeniable transversality with hints, sometimes, with a certain figuration with an autobiographical nature. More evident for

¹⁶ Our translation from Portuguese: "autonomização e um reaparecimento renovado."

¹⁷ Translation from the original, in Portuguese, "mosaico de citações," pela única "absorção e transformação de um outro texto," by Lúcia Helena França Ferraz.

¹⁸ Our translation from Portuguese: "estruturas diegéticas comuns;" "'velhas' e novas narrativas, recorrendo a estratégias de interseção e de influência filmica, por exemplo [...]."

¹⁹ See footnote 2.

the adult reader, perhaps more veiled for the child, requiring them to have a wealth of reading and receptive experiences capable of leading them to interact with the text, to recognize its echoes and its rewritings, these references not only support the description of scenarios and the characterization of characters, for example, how they authorize the creation of “possible and alternative worlds,” through the unexpected (not to say unusual), sometimes illusory and, in certain cases, humorous, association of figures, eras and genres (Rodrigues, 2013).



Image 3 – Illustration taken from the book *My Dad* (Browne, 2000, p. 5)

In this way, a frequent reader of Anthony Browne’s work, possessing a vast literary collection in his ‘personal reading library’, when he comes across, for example, *My Dad*, a picturebook created in 2000, will be more likely to establish connections with either other texts, from the author himself and others, or with other artistic forms, previously housed in his *schemata* (Rumelhart, 1980). On one of the pages of the mentioned volume, it is possible to see an illustration of a father trying to balance on a rope where colorful socks are hanging.

The so-called attentive reader, with a diverse library of previous readings, will easily identify in two of the mentioned pieces of clothing the pattern of the character “Elmer” from the homonymous book by David Mckee, author and illustrator who is a compatriot of Browne, who was also nominated for the Hans Christian Andersen Prize, in 2006.



Image 4 – Illustration taken from the book *Elmer* (Mckee, 1968, pp. 3-4)

In the same work, the illustration of a muscular and strong gorilla catapults the reader to other works by the author himself, in a homo-authoral intertextual dialogue with, among others, *Gorilla* (1983) or *Zoo* (1992).

It is interesting, in regard to these two titles (but not only), how their works mutually or successively influence each other, with an impact, if not on their own creation processes, on the promotion of these same pictorial reunions or intratextual dialogues. In fact, as Andricaín states

the fragmentary composition, both textual and graphic [is particularly expressive in Browne]: everything is never mentioned but suggested through allusive details; in a broader sense, fragmentation is also evident in the set of works, since there are very close links between them that can be studied as elements of a whole that encompasses them. (Andricaín, 1996, p. 38).²⁰

Configuring an infinite spiral of connections, other intersections of literary and filmic influence are also detected, precisely, in the book *My Dad* (2000), where the illustration that accompanies the text, “My father is as strong as a gorilla” (Browne, 2000, p. 12), takes the reader on a journey to the famous feature film *King Kong* – an echo equally audible in *Gorilla*, through an intriguing *mise en abyme*; or, even, *Little Beauty*

²⁰ Our translation from the original, in Spanish, “la composición fragmentaria tanto en lo textual como gráfico [es en Browne especialmente expresiva]: nunca se refiere todo, sino que se sugiere a sí misma a través de detalles alusivos; en un sentido más amplio, la fragmentación también se manifiesta en el conjunto de las obras, ya que existen vínculos muy estrechos entre ellas que pueden estudiarse como elementos de un todo que las engloba.”

(2008), whose gorilla, protagonist, plays opposite a little cat called “Beauty” who also immediately projects us to the story *Beauty and the Beast* (and to which, in fact, the repeated iconic representation of the rose – symbol of Belle’s desire).

It is also no coincidence that the “gorilla,” character appeared for the first time in the volume *Gorilla* (1983) and became a leitmotif in the author’s work, transports us to our origins, stimulating an intertextual dialogue with *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin (1859), whose matrix focuses on the genesis of the Human Being, from primates to the present day.

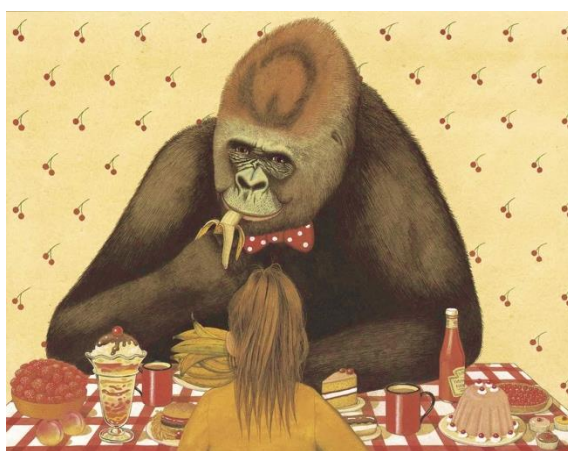


Image 5 – Illustration taken from the book *Gorilla* (Browne, 1983, p. 22)

Regarding gorillas, their systematic representation constitutes one of the “most epidemic(s) characteristics of Anthony Browne’s work and which has become the central element of identity for the general public” (Modesto, 2001, p. 6).²¹ A symbolic referent of power and physical strength (as can be seen represented in the previous image), in Browne’s work he is a figure constantly combined with tenderness, which mirrors, according to him (Browne, 2011), the image of his own father who was simultaneously a boxer and rugby player and cultivated a taste for poetry and drawing. The repeated reference to apes in the work of the creator of *Willy the Dreamer* (1997), in a discourse that tends to be autofictional, is commonly represented in an attentive and extreme way, contrary to what is socially associated with these primates.

²¹ Our translation from the original, in Portuguese, “mais epidémica(s) da obra de Anthony Browne e que se tornou no elemento central de identidade para o grande público.”

In another original and humorous book, *Willy's Pictures* (2000), Anthony Browne puts the narrator in the shoes of one of his most famous characters – Willy, the little chimpanzee who, in each adventure, is faced with a universe of gorillas – and decides to resume one of his first activities, recreating some of the most important masters of universal painting (Da Vinci, Botticelli, Van Gogh, Manet, etc.). Using parody and *pastiche*, the author also adds countless unexpected details to the various classic works that he revisits and caricatures, stimulating the interest of his preferred recipients in the history of Art, in a book that is both playful and didactic/informative. As a final appendix, this creative exhibition also ends with a small “glossary” of the original paintings, as an aid to the child reader and the adult mediator himself, this time, attracting more than just one readership, whether erudite or not, in the field of fine arts and painting.

Such homages, which, to a greater or lesser degree of evidence, make it possible, within the entirety of the work under consideration, to identify updated and/or parodically recreated pictorial references, which, in a subtle and apparently “accessory” way, such as the recurring allusions to the *Mona Lisa* or Van Gogh’s painting (and notice, for example, in *Gorilla* (1983), in the pictorial game established with *Arles and the Starry Night*, in a way, even, of intratextuality with the work of the Dutch painter), activating the “reading intertext” (Mendoza Fillola, 2001), in a type of reading that may not primarily address the child recipient, but rather its first recipient – the adult mediator.

In fact, throughout Anthony Browne’s work, the recognition of hypotexts will depend, significantly, as has been explained, on the reader’s receptive experiences, on his encyclopedic and/or literary references. An example of this are other connections with multiple artistic representations that can be established, still in *My Dad* (2000), with Rembrandt’s painting *The Return of Prodigal Son*, which, in turn, is already a hypertext of the biblical hypotext. The parable of the son prodigal (Luke: Chapter 15, v. 11-32) is, for many, the most classic and the most edifying story about the grandeur of a father’s love for his son, a recurring theme in the outstanding author’s work.



Images 6 and 7 – Illustration taken from the book *My Dad* (Browne, 2000, p. 21) / Photograph of the paint by Rembrandt in 1669, *The return of prodigal son* (Neuwon, 2005, cover)

Another dominant strategy of the creator is related, as previously mentioned, to the transversality of traditional tales in a large part of his publications. Subjected to a complex process of subversion or re-elaboration, the narratives that he strategically summons and chooses to turn inside out gain, in his books, new and unexpected contours, proposing a demystification of situations and characters that playfully approach the preferred recipient. Sometimes with a satirical intention, to achieve cathartic effects, sometimes out of simple playful necessity, fundamental poles of the burlesque topic of the world in reverse, as an essential exercise in fantasy (Díaz Armas, 2004), the set of picturebooks to which we allude instigates the reader, based on the adaptation/updating of the matrix texts, to reflect on the *status quo* and the contradictions of the world in which they live, stimulating their critical sense and freeing their thinking and imagination.

In *Into the Forest* (2004) – a work that could also be defined as a “game book,” where each page constitutes a challenge to the attention and perspicacity of the reader, especially the youngest one, Anthony Browne implicitly “reconverts” the classic story of *Little Red Riding Hood* in a picturebook about childhood fears (of parental absence and separation, the unknown, etc.) and family.



Image 8 – Illustration taken from the book *Into the Forest* (Browne, 2004, p. 16)

Recovering characters, spaces and motifs from the tale immortalized by Charles Perrault, the narrative revolves around a young boy worried about the unexpected absence of his father and whom his mother asks him to go visit his grandmother who is ill. Contrary to his mother's warnings and choosing to take the quickest route, to ensure that he would be home when his father returned, the boy, using metalepsis and hypertextuality, moves from the domestic space to the forest, moving on two intertextual levels (Silva, 2014), visually and graphically demarcated. Along the way, and after crossing paths with a succession of wonderful, mysterious characters (*e.g.*, Jack and the Beanstalk, Goldilocks, Hansel and Gretel), painted, not fortuitously, in black and white, the color of his fears and his loneliness, the young hero finds a red coat that will encourage him in his last and fearful run to his grandmother's house, in an ending in which, once again, the colors are inverted, as well as the narrator's expectations and the reader himself.

This time, the logic of the opposite, of constant exchange between high and low, between right and wrong, also gains materialization and becomes a regular *topos* in picturebooks we set out to highlight. Sustained by humor, humor and even, at times, irony, it is not uncommon for Anthony Browne to resort to inverting the world or the stereotype itself. Note, for example, the change of perspective and the reversal of roles between genders that, with a critical intention, characterizes the title *Piggybook* (1986).

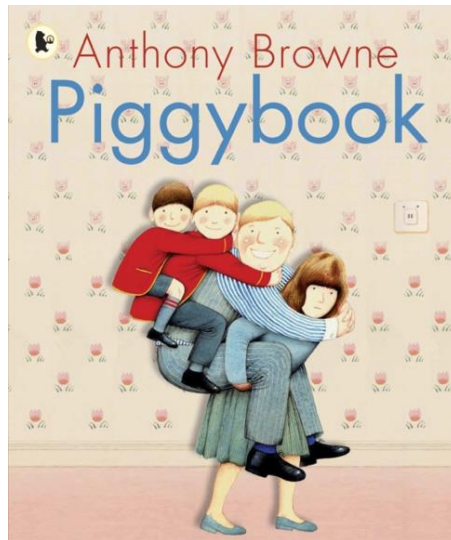


Image 9 – Cover of *Piggybook* (Browne, 1986, cover)

In a story about the family, Anthony Browne subverts and proposes, this time, an original version adapted to modern times of the famous tale *The Three Little Pigs*. As the illustration on the cover suggests, the organization of the house falls on the shoulders of Mrs. Piggott, who takes care of all the domestic tasks without her husband's, Mr. Piggott, help, nor her children, Simon and Patrick, having ever done it for her, proof of its lesser recognition. The ingratitude expressed by them leads the protagonist to abandon her home, leaving the three men to fend for themselves, who, helpless and unsuccessful in their domestic tasks – in a figuration with hints of irony and even a certain comical nature. The male characters quickly learn to recognize the value of the role of women/mothers/caregivers.

Alongside a simple and condensed text, the illustrations, widely colored and detailed, expand their meanings and explore a series of metaphors associated with the different situations and behaviors of the characters. In addition to the chromatic contrasts, which distinguish and place in opposition the different roles played by the father and mother, there are other small and important details, such as the different pictorial representations of the swine figure, interspersed in the pages (in fact, from the peritext) and the announce, in the form of winks to the reader, whether children or adults, the metamorphosis of the three male characters “into beings with progressive traits of

animality” (Fraga *et al.*, 2015, p. 124).²² Proposing different readings depending on its audience, this is a book that seeks, therefore, to break stereotypes and favor non-discriminatory social values, providing its readers with a broader view of reality and initiating them into an education based on equality, collaboration and in the disruptive concept of family.

In *Willy the Dreamer* (1997), Browne creates characters that are inspired by works that commonly inhabit the adult imagination (*e.g.*, Mary Poppins, Tarzan, The Wizard of Oz, Alice in Wonderland, the dwarves from Snow White, Magritte, etc.). Here, it is more difficult for a child reader to establish intertextual connections with these hypotexts: in these cases, “the implicit reader is not so much the child, but the adult who serves as mediator between both” (Sánchez-Fortún, 2005, p. 63).²³

3 Anthony Browne’s Metafictional Picturebooks: Metamorphoses and Other Illusions of (In)Fiction

Allied to intertextuality, metafictionality (Waugh, 1984; Genette, 2004; Kristeva, 2005), a type of fiction “which draws attention to its own construction and, therefore, to its condition as an artefact” (Silva-Díaz Ortega, 2005, p. 59),²⁴ is also, as can be inferred, another of the identity marks of Anthony Browne’s books.

In the CYAL universe, in fact, in line with its recent developments resulting from postmodern experimentation (Hutcheon, 1988; Silva-Díaz Ortega, 2005), metafiction has been the target of increasing appreciation, constituting one of its prominent trends. As Pantaleo (2014) describes, in line with McCallum (1996), “both postmodernism and metafiction include “narrative fragmentation and discontinuity, disorder and chaos, code mixing and absurdity, as well as openness, playfulness, and parody” (Mccallum, 1996, p. 400, referred by Pantaleo, 2014, p. 325). Given its experimental, playful and interactive character, as a result of an architecture based on the articulation of its verbal and visual components and, above all, graphic/material (Tabernero Sala, 2023), the picture book has

²² Our translation of the original, in Portuguese, “em seres com progressivos traços de animalidade.”

²³ Our translation of the original, in Spanish, “El lector implícito, no es tanto el niño como el adulto que sirve de mediador entre aquél y éste.”

²⁴ Our translation of the original, in Spanish, “que llama la atención sobre su propia construcción y portanto sobre su condición de artefacto.”

been especially receptive to the experience metafictional. Originating bold proposals, it breaks with canonical structures, revealing the fictional nature of the publications (Sipe & Pantaleo, 2008; Pantaleo, 2014).

In the case of the work under study, the author's metatextual practice will be mainly related to the way in which, through self-referentiality, his narratives promote in the reader a fictional self-reflection that raises awareness, both about the breaking of limits between reality and fiction, and about the complex relationship that, in the act of reading, is established with the author and the text. Based on the deconstruction of the illusion of reality, these books suggest a transgression of boundaries between the different fictional spaces and times, highlighting their fictional character to different degrees.²⁵ A paradigmatic example is the "The Little Bear" series, with a small square format and (apparently) aimed at younger readers, which brings, precisely, to the heart of the story the fictionalization and/or a proposal to invert its *status*. In *A Bear-y Tale* (1989), the emblematic eponymous little white bear, armed with his magic pencil, crosses paths through the forest with a succession of wonderful creatures (a wolf, an ogre, an evil witch and three bears) in which he frees himself thanks to his prodigious "weapon."

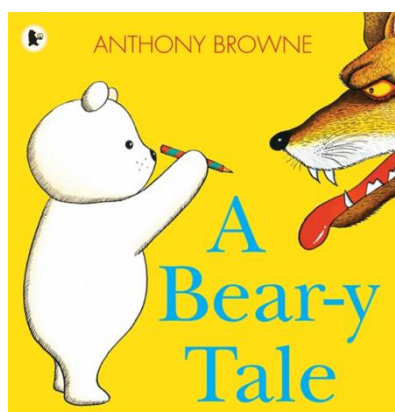


Image 10 – Cover of the book *A Bear-y Tale* (Browne, 1989, cover)

²⁵ Patricia Waugh (1984), following Linda Hutcheon (1980), distinguishes three degrees of metafictional work: the first concerns the fictionalization of fiction, where an artist-character (or pseudo-artist) is aware of his representation within the fictional reality; in the second degree, or in the center of the metafiction spectrum, the canonical elements of the narrations are altered, sometimes playing with structures, sometimes resorting to parody, but maintaining, in any case, the reference to the canonical narrative text; and in the last degree, regarding the most radical forms of metafiction, fictional experimentation takes place at the level of the sign, putting an end to the notion of everyday life.

Through this “pseudo-artist” (Waugh, 1984) aware of his representation within the fictional reality, Anthony Browne converts the “(...) process of creation into a kind of game or carnival entertainment,” in which the character “transmutes in a ‘real’ being, in a kind of co-author, from someone who expects the [narrativization] of their own adventures” (Rodrigues, 2013, p. 246).²⁶ Playing with the *status* of fiction and placing the creative act itself ‘upside down’, in a plot “where there is also, in a way, the victory of the weakest over the strongest” (Rodrigues, 2013, p. 246),²⁷ the fictional hero usurps the author’s (implicit) power and takes the reins of creation to (re)design the scenarios, reformulates his own story and solves his own conflicts.

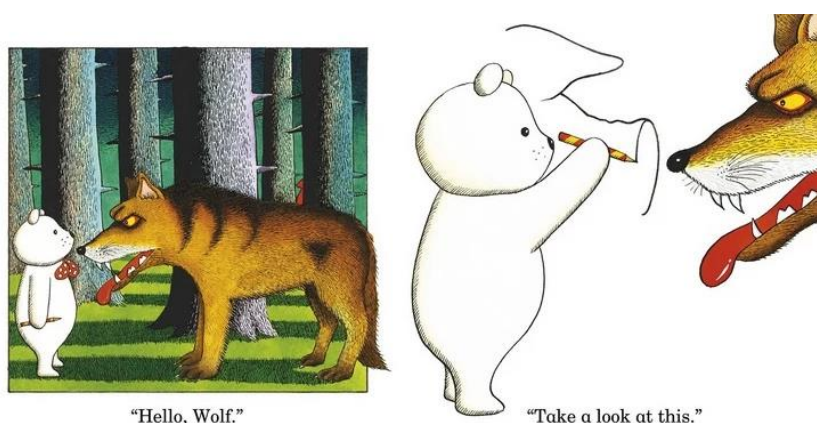


Image 11 – Spread of the book *A Bear-y Tale* (Browne, 1989, pp. 2-3)

Rescued from self-denouncing fictions (Rodrigues, 2022), the metaleptic resource through which the little hero figures (in a strategy, in fact, comparable to that which supports the figuration of the chimpanzee-protagonist, similar “character-artist,” from the work *Willy’s Pictures* (2000) not only dissolves the barriers that separate reality and fiction, but also brings together “real” (fictional) and intrafictional time. The disguise and the game of duplicity thematized, giving verisimilitude to the action of the bear-creator, enhance a “metadiscourse on the construction of the (object) book and the act of reading

²⁶ Our translation from the original, in Portuguese, “(...) processo de criação numa espécie de brincadeira ou diversão carnavalesca,” em que a personagem “se transmuta num ser ‘real’, num género de coautor, de quem espera a [narrativização] das suas próprias aventuras.”

²⁷ Our translation from the original, in Portuguese, “onde também se dá, de certo modo, a vitória do mais frágil sobre o mais forte.”

itself,” capable of promoting, also through of materiality, “a [simultaneously disturbing and] playful experience that extends beyond reading” (Rodrigues, 2022, p. 139).²⁸

Likewise, contradicting or subverting the traditionally more restricted narrative forms, usually connoted with the “presence of the narrator in the first person, commonly the main character, closed endings instead of open ones and linear, monologic, rather than dialogic stories” (Belmiro & Almeida, 2018, p. 156),²⁹ the discursive strategies that characterize Anthony Browne’s “writing” establish a new type of dialogue, unfolding scenarios, expanding meanings and demanding a more active interventional role from the implicit reader.

In addition to the frequent and previously mentioned intertextual resources, with emphasis on parody (of other texts, genres and discourses) and (self) irony, diegetic unfolding and narrative fragmentation – cemented, for example, in mirroring or *mise en abyme* and metalepsis (e.g., *Voices in the Park*, 1998; *Into the Forest*, 2004; *You and Me*, 2010) –, the questioning and self-reflective register or, even, at the level of the peritextual dimension, typographic experimentation itself (e.g., *Piggybook*, 1986; *Willy’s Pictures*, 2000; *Into the Forest*, 2004), are some of the strategies that, across the work of the author of *Voices in the Park* (1998), “distance the reader from a text and often frustrate[m]] conventional expectations about [its] meaning and [its] closure” (Mccallum, 1996, p. 398, referred by Belmiro & Almeida, 2018, p. 156).³⁰ To reinforce this, see also the work mentioned, which has already been the subject of numerous critical attentions,³¹ such as the use of the narrativization of a polyphonic discourse and its unfolding into four voices and reports – specifically, four distinct perspectives and lives, that intertwine before the meeting of two children in a park –, “by exposing the process of fictional construction, the author draws attention not only to its conventional dimension, but also to sharing the

²⁸ Our translation from the original, in Portuguese, “metadiscurs[o] sobre a construção do (objeto-)livro e o próprio ato de ler,” capaz de promover, também por via da materialidade, “uma experiência [simultaneamente perturbadora e] lúdica que se estende para lá da leitura.”

²⁹ Our translation from the original, in Portuguese, “presença do narrador em primeira pessoa, comumente o personagem principal, finais fechados em vez de abertos e histórias lineares, monológicas, mais do que dialógicas.”

³⁰ See footnote 25.

³¹ Read, among many others, the studies by Pantaleo (2004), Belmiro & Almeida (2015) and Silveiro, Mello & Barbosa (2020).

codes and conventions that guide literary reading, promoting the development of deeper reading skills” (Ramos; Navas, 2016, p. 230).³²

The topic of metamorphoses, perhaps the most recurrent in Anthony Browne’s creation (and, in itself, worthy of a careful reading), operated in a more or less explicit and/or developed way in any of his books, will be at the origin of these same diegetic developments, with obvious implications for their reading and interpretation. In certain cases, it results in the transformation of characters who, with some frequency, gain, in the same story, a double appearance and see, for example, the cases of the stepmother metamorphosed into a witch, in *Hansel and Gretel*; of the young hero of *Into the Forest*, accompanied by the shadow of a rabbit, with a curious Carrollian inspiration, as he approaches his grandmother’s house; of Hannah’s father in various locations and details of *Gorilla*; or, even, of the previously described three male characters turned into pigs, in *Piggybook*. In other examples, this transmutation exercise focuses on the experience or inner vision of the change inherent in the child’s growth process and life, portrayed through the hybridity of scenarios and their elements, as relationships also change between the characters – which happens, in particular, to little Joseph Kaye, in *Changes* (1990), on the day his mother arrives from the maternity with his newborn sister in her arms.



Image 12 – Illustration taken from the book *Changes* (Browne, 1990, p. 10)

³² Our translation from the original, in Portuguese, “ao exporem o processo de construção ficcional, o autor chama a atenção não só para a sua dimensão convencional, mas também partilham os códigos e as convenções que norteiam a leitura literária, promovendo o desenvolvimento de competências de leitura mais profundas.”

From a child's perspective, visually guided by Kafka's and Magritian surrealist conceptions and arts, we can observe, in this model example, an "allegorical representation of a state of things felt as not conforming to the rationality of the empirical and historical-factual world and/or a means of ostensibly promoting a certain opening of horizons" (Fraga *et al.*, 2015, p. 124).³³

For everything that has been said so far and the examples described, a mere sample of the rich source of artistic and self-reflexive inquiry that constitutes the work of Anthony Browne, his picturebooks, in fact, "function as true samples of quotations, which they do not necessarily belong to the literary field, but to any of the different artistic manifestations" (Sánchez-Fortún, 2005, p. 63).³⁴ Books that, subverting the rules of the fictional act and, therefore, challenging/questioning the act of reading itself, require the ability to read in the interstices, to "observe and discover the allusions, similarities, connections that the text presents" (Sánchez-Fortún, 2005, p. 63)³⁵ and, from a new meaning, create expectations, in order to advance rich, pleasurable and robust hypotheses of meaning.

Final Considerations

It is true that the picturebook is currently one of the most privileged and daring segments of narrative publishing for children, Anthony Browne, a veteran of this multimodal genre, signs a vast and unique production that makes him an unavoidable face of Children's Literature.

Affiliating his "writing" with a post-modernist current, which follows and reveals some of the main trends in (hyper)contemporary children's narrative, the winner of the Andersen prize, throughout more than fifty publications, presents original verbal-iconic

³³ Our translation of the original, in Portuguese, "representação alegórica de um estado de coisas sentido como não conforme a racionalidade do mundo empírico e histórico-factual e/ou meio de ostensivamente promover uma determinada abertura de horizontes."

³⁴ Our translation of the original, in Spanish, "funcionan como verdaderos muestrarios de citas, que no pertenecen necesariamente al ámbito literario, sino a cualquiera de las diferentes manifestaciones artísticas."

³⁵ Our translation of the original, in Spanish, "observar y descubrir las alusiones, semejanzas, conexiones que el texto presenta."

proposals which, without limiting themselves to the playful dimension of their languages, lend themselves to intriguing games of perspectives and contrasts, configuring a universe of semantically stimulating readings. Marked by a surrealist and detailed plastic register, torn by numerous intertextual and metafictional challenges, his narratives often combine (or “confuse”) the tradition and the contemporaneity of a renewed discourse, from which a veiled and subtle social criticism stands out, based on the fictionalization of topics about some of the “disenchantments” of contemporary society (Silva, 2014).

In the diversity of their meanings and interpretative possibilities, building a vast interdiscursive web, the British creator is rarely governed by a linear structure, authorizing, in most cases, through the interweaving of other voices and other arts, the segmentation of a discourse that more actively involves the reader and, in each turn of the page, challenges him to generate content between the lines of the text(s).

Its insistent recurrence of intertextual dialogues with the most diverse arts and universal works, as well as the constant rupture of limits between the empirical and fictional worlds, which, supported by the exercise of meta and autofictionality, originates complex narrative proposals and meta-reflexive reading, driving the receiver to a questioning and critical stance, demanding a high degree of participation. Now, these multintersections that make Anthony Browne an author worthy of prominence in the frame of reference and in the dialogical universe of the picturebook, precisely because they enhance a reading and questioning of intertextuality and the creative act itself, also show that they become increasingly more the boundaries that separate institutionalized literature from (so-called) literature for children and young people. As the author himself states, “Picture books are for everybody at any age, not books to be left behind as we grow older. The best ones leave a tantalising gap between the pictures and the words, a gap that is filled by the reader’s imagination, adding so much to the excitement of reading a book” (Browne, n.d., s.p.).³⁶

For all this, we believe we can affirm that the paradigm that this work established and which served (and continues to serve) as a reference for much of the subsequent production, will have been strongly responsible for the consolidation of a new canon of

³⁶ BROWNE, Anthony. About me. *Anthony Browne Books*, s.d. Available at <http://www.anthonybrownebooks.com/about>.

CL and of its new *status* in the literary polysystem, to which the very criticism and investigation that has been target of, especially at an international level, also contributes. In other words, an *avant-garde* work, that of Anthony Browne, always *avant la lettre*, which truly substantiates *The Origin of Species* (Klibanski, 2011).

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Received October 03, 2023

Accepted June 01, 2024

Statement of Author's Contribution

For all intents and purposes, the authors declare that they were both responsible for conceiving the project, participating cooperatively in writing the article and critically reviewing its intellectual content. Carina Rodrigues played an active role in the theoretical construction and interpretative analysis of the corpus, due to her own research in the same field as the study, in which the article was based. Ana Isabel Pinto played an equally substantial role in deepening theoretical and analytical aspects, contributing to a significant support for the study. She also acted as translator of the article into English. Both were responsible for the general revision of the text and its adaptation to the journal's standards, with a view to its final approval, taking responsibility for all aspects of the work to ensure the accuracy and integrity of all parts of the work.

Research Data and Other Materials Availability

The contents underlying the research text are contained in the manuscript.

Reviews

Due to the commitment assumed by *Bakhtiniana. Revista de Estudos do Discurso* [*Bakhtiniana. Journal of Discourse Studies*] to Open Science, this journal only publishes reviews that have been authorized by all involved

Review I

The work presented to the journal, which focuses on the production of picturebooks by Anthony Browne, is a work of great interest for the holistic view it offers of the original production of one of the creators of original production of one of the most relevant creators of this meta-genre, who, despite the years that have passed since his beginnings, it continues to be one of the publishing trends with the greatest publishing trends with the greatest development and experimentation. The authors demonstrate a great knowledge of the author and his work, as well as a good use of language.

The title is appropriate for the content of the work, although there is no clear objective beyond the coherent exposition of the author's characteristic traits, exemplified by the mention of his works. Although this could be a negative point, the structure of the elaborated for the specific case of this work works well and maintains an adequate scientific rigour in the way the considerations are presented. In the same sense, the originality of the proposal, more than in the content, is linked to the ability for critical and analytical reflection on Browne's great output, with special attention to the dialogism and intertextuality in his work.

However, certain shortcomings have also been detected which need to be remedied for the definitive acceptance of the work:

-In presenting the previous research on picturebooks that guided the analysis, a general outdatedness has been perceived in the references used. The same condition is extrapolated to the references as a whole, since there's no reference of the most recent studies carried out on the author's work and which follow the same line of research as that of the work presented. For this reason, it would be interesting to review the recent

studies about illustrated albums, object books and art/artist's books, since much of Browne's work is situated at the convergence of these fields of study (e.g. *Picturebook. metafiction, hybridism e intertextuality* [2022], coordinated by Ana Margarida Ramos) and increase the references linked to recent works that focus on Browne's own work (e.g. *When the Silent Child Speaks: Identity and Subversion in Anthony Browne's Voices in the Park* [2023] o *Differences, Idiosyncrasies, and Shared Humanity: Reconceptualizing Crossover Literature* [2022]).

-The text is divided into three parts: an introductory section, the body of the paper, and the concluding section. The central section contains a lot of information and a subdivision of its content is advisable in order to help follow the large amount of information presented by the authors. In this way, the analysis of Browne's work would have a more concrete and enlightening organization, at the same time as it would allow the conclusion to be nourished by specific catalogues or signs of the artist's identity, which would demonstrate the progress made in the work, beyond the reemphasis of the points dealt with in the course of the work. In other words, what is missing is a little more structuration and organization of the work, identifying topics or threads that link the aspects studied and offer new paths of study.

-Although the quality of the writing is good, sentences were perceived to be too long and that complicates comprehension. It would be necessary to revise the text in this respect.

-Finally, it would perhaps be interesting to include some images of the works studied to illustrate the analysis carried out and facilitate understanding of the artist's great degree of experimentation.

As indicated in the evaluation, it is considered necessary to attend to the four aspects indicated for the definitive acceptance of the work: updating the bibliographical references, improving the structure of the work, revise some shortcomings in the work and consider including figures to illustrate the analysis. MANDATORY CORRECTIONS [Revised]

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Reviewed on December 08, 2023.

Review II

The title of this article is appropriate to the development of the article. The discourse presented by the authors is the result of an observation of rhetorical, stylistic and ideographic procedures based on a dialogical reading of the verbal and visual components and is supported by a review of relevant and current literature.

The authors present and analyse Anthony Browne's visual-plastic language, which develops and is enriched by his interaction with other arts, most significantly with drawing and painting, but also with different techniques and technologies.

The study presented is an important contribution to demarcating Illustration for Children from the idea that its existence should be based on easy language and simplistic discourses, where the images are mere repetitions or descriptions of what the verbal text offers. The work analysed also has the merit of helping to demystify the still dominant idea that to children should only be offered images that live off simplicity and basic representations of shapes and images that present idyllic, tidy and perfect worlds. In the

works analysed, it is clear that the illustrations are trying to get closer to the profusion and complexity of images present in the world we live in. The narratives that Anthony Browne creates are the result of contamination, as happened with painting and its successive (re)inventions of language operated by modernity between Illustration, Drawing and Painting. Consequently, its creative vigour benefited from this environment and its unusual technical, technological and linguistic mastery. The authors' view of these productions reveals the complex structures of their construction, as well as their relationship with the whole materiality of the book.

The work also draws conclusions about its demands in terms of reception, as well as its possible impact on the literary, critical and reflective education of its preferential, though not exclusive, readers - children.

His books are part of a range of products that have been developed for the children's world, joining many others that historically, due to social, technological, economical and democratic developments, have a strong erudition-related charge, promoting themselves as supports par excellence for education.

Anthony Browne's works are a strategy for activating the senses, which is so essential for bringing readers closer to different modes of representation, enabling, even if informally, an active perception, a visual education that shapes tastes and sensitivities. His work is therefore based on the subjectivity of the senses, but promises a construction of knowledge. APPROVED

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Reviewed on January 22, 2024.

Editorial Review

We ask the authors to consider the observations and comments of the referees, revise the article and send it back to the journal's email address - bakhtinianarevista@gmail.com until 15/02/2024. We would also like to inform you that the referees are willing to interact with the authors if they wish.

Review III

The work has been improved by taking into account the recommendations made in the review phase. I believe that all the modifications made, both the updating of the references and the organization of the content, the improvement of the conclusions and the inclusion of illustrations (very well chosen), have resulted in a very high quality article which, in my opinion, should be published in the journal. The authors are therefore to be congratulated for the effort invested and the result achieved. APPROVED

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Reviewed on February 27, 2024.