Cultural Representation In Interactive Children's Books

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ABSTRACT:

Children's picture books are anything but neutral. As culture moves ahead, technology within society gives and it takes away. The purpose of this paper is to explore how changes in the foundational patterns of life can be seen through the pages of a picture book, and how patterns of recognized change become harbingers of a quasi-prophetic voice pertaining to the future. Through a modified content comparative analysis coupled with the learning heuristic of epistemological shudders (Charteris, 2014), this paper examines three older children's picture books and their revisions in a later decade. In evidence of the resultant cultural changes, questions emerge. What view of culture, both past and current, do children's stories portray? How has writing in a picture book changed the perception of child and adult relationships? Results consider the perception of the family/child relationship, and what is now perceived to be a typical family life. This investigation reveals some interesting ground to be held as part of an overarching narrative, not just through the historical evidence of picture books, but within the larger fabric of hope and direction for future readers who may experience a cultural worldview that encourages them to become the stories they tell.

Keywords: picture books, modern, post-modern, tech-fictive, family, culture, worldview.

INTRODUCTION:

Images in picture books are not objective. Their existence and the manner in which people live in the world are shown by them. It should not come as a surprise that scholars have shown an interest in the topic of children's picture books since these books serve as narrative vehicles that portray changes in society and construct a certain sort of literary history. Research on picture books has included themes of social interest such as family (Belcher, 2008, 2010; Heath, 1982; Johnson, 1999); culture (Owens & Nowell, 2001); social issues (Dyches, Prater & Heath, 2010; Johnson, 1999); education (Wolfganger & Sipe, 2007);

and currently, media and narrative/special needs (Maich & Belcher, 2012; Maich, Belcher, Sider, & Johnson, 2015; Belcher & Maich, 2014). One thing that all of these studies have in common is that they are all looking at how picture books that were produced during a certain era, period of history, and culture interact with contemporary life.

To the best of my knowledge, picture books are the only type of children's literature that engages society in contemporary, postmodern, and what I refer to as "tech-fictive" ways of writing. This is due to the fact that, to the best of my knowledge, this style of writing has not satisfied the requirements. The following is a detailed explanation of how these modes are defined for the sake of this investigation.

In today's narrative, there is a beginning, a middle, and an end that all come together to form a conclusion that makes sense. The setting is one that may be related to everyday life. According to the Merriam-Webster definition, modern tales are those that pertain to or are indicative of the current and immediate form of family life in the United States of America. These tales may be told in the conventional format of a narrative (beginning, middle, and end), or they may serve as a model for behaviour, such as the dichotomous concepts of good and evil, or they may have moral elements that are contained in the original fairy tales. When it comes to the bedtime tale (Heath, 1982), this mode is reflective of the situation in which the parent and child take the centre stage. It is important for a kid to be read to since it helps them develop a love of reading together and opens the way for early literacy for them at home (Fox, 2001).A societal problem is addressed in the narrative of the post-modern tale, which is told to two different audiences (an adult and a youngster). In parallel, two tales are told. One of them is identified by the adult, and the youngster is able to connect to the other. The most significant distinction between modern and post-modern narratives is what Gergen (1994) calls the "abandonment of the traditional commitment to representationalism; the assumption that there is (or can be) a determinant (fixed or intrinsic) relationship between words and world." This is the most significant difference between the two types of narratives. (412 pages). After that, Gergen continues by saying that in post-modern literature, "the language of values all but vanishes from serious debate" (p. 413). It should be noted, however, that this does not mean that post-modern philosophy rejects moral reflection. Not only may it help to trigger it, but it can also function to engage relational discourses and promote a reflective posture that is linked to a larger cultural and historical context.

Through a mode that I have dubbed the tech-fictive mode, the youngster is led to believe that technology is something that they should strive to acquire. In this kind of writing, humour, satire, irony, and

parody are often prominent. Words may be more closely associated with the slang of the moment than they are with "proper English," especially when compared to the abundance of images. The reader is left with a sense of want or hunger as a result of reading these works. The narrative does not have to be profound or intrusive in any way. The "setting" consists of a virtual universe that is captivating owing to its technical capabilities.

It is important to look at picture books. The tales that we tell ourselves when we are young remain with us as people, and they motivate us to live and interpret the world in certain ways. These encounters are not only intellectually stimulating, but they also have the potential to shape one's heart. The author Naugle (2004) asserts that every narrative is seen via the prism of a personal worldview:

A worldview, therefore, comprises the symbolic cosmos that has deep repercussions on a number of major human actions. Specifically, it excavates the channels through which the streams of reason flow. It is the foundation upon which the hermeneutic framework that is used to understand texts is built. It is the mental medium via which one is able to get knowledge about the world. The progression of human existence in all of its many facets seems to occur "kardioptically," which means that it originates from a vision of an embodied heart that is present in the world.

All of the novels that are included in this analysis re-engage the author's previous thoughts and transform them into a contemporary parody or a portrayal from the third person. In the course of my research, I take into consideration contemporary and contemporary narratives of three comparative instances of six picture books. The first one involves Anthony Browne, a children's novelist, and a narrative that he had written for the first time in 1977 and then updated twenty years later, in 1998. In two further instances, Margaret Wise Brown and Laura Numeroff, two contemporary writers who have written books that have been bestsellers in the past, and a contemporary author who writes under the pseudonym Ann Droyd, look at how these authors have portrayed their works.

As this engagement transitions from a contemporary tale to a tech-fictive paradigm, changes become apparent in the interaction that occurs inside readings. Through the use of a modified comparative content analysis that is founded on the research of characters, time/setting, culture, and audience, I investigate areas of change from the first telling of the narrative. After that, I investigate this material by using the heuristic for teacher learning known as "epistemological shudders" (Charteris, 2014). This heuristic is a process that purposefully examines what is stated in a text in order to take into consideration what is not expressed or what is omitted.

The original writers of children's literature envisioned children's literature as a bedtime tale in which

children were read to. However, in today's world, it is now feasible for children to watch a story on their own or online and, in essence, be read to. Cyberspace does not provide the human supports necessary for a shared reading that includes questions and pauses, and young children do not often challenge what is read to them unless they are allowed to participate in the conversation. What it means to engage a story, what values the narrative may express or omit, and what perspective on what it means to be human for the future might be obtained by reading the book are all philosophical concerns that emerge as a result of confronting these shifts.

ENGAGING STORY:

In light of the fact that it would be unwise to presume that the selected texts have been read by the audience of this article in the past, the introduction of the texts, which includes brief explanations of the context and content for the reader, is provided in order to increase the amount of meaning that can be derived from this research. The culture of the author who is holding the pen is reflected in the books, which provide a societal lens for the decade in which the books were written or published.

Narrative #1: *A Walk in the Park (1977) by Anthony Browne:*

There are four main characters in the 1977 film A Walk in the Park: two parents, two children, and two dogs. However, the drawings do not depict distinctions in personality; rather, they depict disparities in look and voice. In the story, both of the families are of the Caucasian race. Both adults and children are dressed in a nice manner. As a reflection of the rock-style celebrity hairstyles that were popular in Britain in the early 1970s, the youngsters had haircuts that are quite similar to one another. The language used by the grownups in the novel is very unique from one another, including a cockney accent and a more polished Victorian manner of speech as compared to the younger characters. The book is a representation of a frequent and fundamental event that occurs in life, which is the occurrence of parents, children, and dogs going out for a stroll in the park.

The narrative connects elements of the modern and postmodern eras via the text. Not only does it include a contemporary narrative map, but it also addresses the societal problems of poverty and wealth. The characters During their time at the park, Mr. Smith, his daughter Smudge, and their dog Alfred come face to face with Mrs. Smythe, her son Charles, and their dog Victoria. Smith and Smythe are both aware of their "place" in society, as seen by their avoidance of eye contact and their placement on opposite ends of a seat. The youngsters, on the other hand, move themselves closer to one another and then proceed to play together. When they are allowed to run free, the dogs behave in the same manner. While adults will be able to clearly relate to the social-political issues that are brought up in the story, children will typically first identify

with the experience of meeting another child in the park, watching dogs play, and enjoying each other's company. This is something that I have observed from my decades of experience as an educator across elementary and university education. While the grownups try to avoid one other, the youngsters develop friendships with one another. Smudge receives a yellow wildflower from Charles, which she decides to retain and bring back with her. There is a new sort of tale that is being bred here, and it is the story of a twofold audience. Both the kid and the adult are readers, and they analyse the narrative from their own perspectives, taking into account their respective levels of development and social intelligence.

Narrative #2: *Voices in the Park (1998) by Anthony Browne:*

Voices in the Park is a collection of essays that were written in the late 1990s and provide a post-modern criticism of social interaction. In the book, the characters are depicted as Voices, despite the fact that they are identical (two dogs, two parents, and two children). During the 1990s, society got more conscious of societal concerns, but it became less aware of individuals or the interactions they had within the context of those issues by the same time. In the process of identifying societal problems, there was a strategy known as "name it and claim it." It is important to note that the figures are no longer shown as children; rather, they are anthropomorphically transformed. This narrative continues to address concerns pertaining to socioeconomic

class, but in a manner that is far more disillusioning and polarising.

Mrs. Smythe, the First Voice, is the one who starts the tale, as opposed to Mr. Smith, who in the original story did. While her kid is listed first, her pedigree Labrador, Victoria, is mentioned first. Arrogantly, Mrs. Smythe interacts with the individuals that are present in the park. The term "frightful type" is often used to describe Mr. Smith. Charlie had a conversation with a "rough-looking child." The tone of hostility is established at this point. The canines, rather than the primary protagonists, take up the most of the space in the pictures depicting the stroll.

Second Voice, also known as Mr. Smith, is now without a job and has gotten disheartened by the process of searching through the advertisements for jobs that are published in the daily. When Mr. Smith expresses his desire to possess the same level of energy as the dog possesses, the dog has the distinction of being the first character that the adult addresses. While he is hunting for work, he reads the newspaper.

Charles, the Third Voice, is experiencing boredom at home. They are going to go for a stroll, according to Mrs. Smythe. It is his hope that he is having as much fun as the dogs who are playing in the park around him. There is an offer sent to him to participate in the game, and at first, he feels that it is sad because the invitation is given by a female. Her capabilities astound him. When Charles's mother overhears them conversing together, she orders him to

return home. When Charles departs, he can't help but hope that his new friend will be there the next time.

Fourth Voice, also known as Smudge, has observed that her father has been very "fed up" as of late, and she is relieved that they were able to take Albert to the park. She makes the observation that Voice 1 was upset in response to the fact that the dogs were playing together, and she calls her a "silly twit." Both the children and the dogs come together to play. Smudge had an overwhelming sense of joy. A poppy was the flower that Charles chose to choose, and he presented it to Smudge. He had a melancholy expression as he had to leave. Along with making tea for her father, Smudge preserved the flower. The only other characters, with the exception of the dogs, that are shown as being joyful is Smudge.

In order to demonstrate a shift in vocabulary and tone, social topics are pushed to the forefront of the pictures on purpose. Many situations involve the presentation of viewpoints and points of view in a manner that is politically acceptable. For instance, the juxtaposition of figures who are in opposition to one another on a seat to illustrate the disparity between the wealthy and the impoverished, or the symbolism of the flower to encourage camaraderie. Norms of social behaviour are prevalent. The narrative demonstrates a greater hostility towards "difference." In this postmodern era, it is clear that people have a deep-seated mistrust, disillusionment, and dread of other people.

Narrative #3: *Goodnight Moon (1947/1975) by Margaret Wise Brown:*

In the contemporary tale "Goodnight Moon," which takes place in the bedroom of a kid, the protagonist makes every effort to resist going to sleep. Both the little kid and the elderly woman are shown as rabbits, which is evocative of the Beatrix Potter collection of novels. It is a narrative that is both reassuring and reflective of a time period after the war when family was valued more than anything else. In addition to the illustrations of common nursery rhymes that are displayed on the walls of the room, there is also a peaceful elderly woman who is knitting in a rocking rocker and muttering "hush."

A goodnight wish is given by the youngster to each and every item in the room, and the elderly woman remains in the room until the child has fallen asleep. In addition to having a basic family pattern, this is a really serene bedtime tale that also has a contemporary narrative style. The illustrations are done in pastel colours, and everything comes to a serene and logical conclusion as it should.

Narrative #4: *Goodnight iPad: A Parody for the Next Generation (2011) by Ann Droyd:*

At the same time as it follows a meta-fictional plot, the tech-fictive tale demonstrates certain postmodern themes. Technologies are at the centre. Norms that are fundamental to the family are skewed. Young people are in

charge. The father, who is an adult, acts like he is one of the children. When it comes to personalities and/or role models, adults are diminished. There is one notable exception, and that is the elderly woman, who embodies the contemporary character or the sage "outsider." Every person on the page is a unique individual, and the elderly woman is the only one who engages in conversation with them as a collective entity. The language that is utilised contains slang terms as well as grammar that is wrong. A feeling of disarray permeates the reader's senses. Under the covers of the last page, a younger rabbit is seen reading a book to a more mature bunny who is holding a torch. This occurs after the digital gadgets have been removed. To add insult to injury, it is Goodnight Moon.

In the beginning of Goodnight iPad: A Parody for the Next Generation, there is a licence agreement and a pictogram that says, "Don't bother reading this." Nobody does that. Proceed to the bottom of the page and click on it. Each and every person who is "as hopelessly plugged in as I am" is the recipient of this tribute. There are a great number of rabbits that appear in this novel as characters. The location is not quite a bedroom. A bright and bustling environment with iPads, games (including playing Doom and Angry Birds), screensavers, and pictures of newborns with digital displays of rattles and people texting are included in it. Additional features include screensavers. The presence of headphones, digital phones, televisions, and computer displays is especially noticeable, as is the presence of robotic toys. The reading of books is done on a digital device. The space is centred on a large LCD screen, Wi-Fi, an HDTV with Bose 5.1, six remote controls, and a 3-D. There is mention of mobile devices, music, and Facebook, in addition to YouTube. At the same moment, every piece of technology is operational. A senior citizen is attempting to get some shut-eye. She then proceeds to take away an iPad from a toddler as the child shouts "nooooooooo." When she makes the announcement, "Okay, everyone, it's time for bedtime," the adult rabbit in the family, who is the father since the mother is not around, asks, "Do we have ta?" Afterwards, she grabs all of the technological devices and hurls them out of the window. As she tucks the rabbits into bed, she gives them a kiss and bids them a good night. This is a tech-fictive fiction because it amusingly illustrates the world of plugged-in technology while also presenting an uncomfortable craving for interaction in that world with its technology.

CHANGE THE STORY, AND YOU CHANGE THE WORLD:

"Worlds are birthed from stories. If you tell the tale in a new way, you will transform the world... In the world of business, tales were a means of gaining a better understanding of the world around them. In Wright's 1996 book, page 36

Wright makes a connection between storytelling and coming to terms with reality in the

aforementioned quotation. Within the context of the modern digital era, this is a topic that is seldom explored. Ever since the year 2000, portable technology has become an increasingly significant societal problem across a wide range of fields, including neuropsychology, criminal justice, medicine, and many others, for a variety of important reasons. Twenge (2017) focuses on everyday life and the arrival of delayed maturity as well as the growing mental health issue. Harris (2011) and Turkle (2011, 2016) express worry that technology is diminishing the capacity for individuals to "attend" to others with their attention. As a result of the combination of Wright's quotation with Naugle's prior reference to the "kardioptic" features of a worldview, the scene is set to allow for the possibility of tales being more than intellectual happenings. According to Wright and Naugle, stories serve as mirrors of the world that show youngsters what they have the potential to become and encourage them to dream about what they might become and what they could become. Stories help children learn about the things they admire and the things they do not want to be like.

Prophetic of the tech-fictive age, in 1995 cultural critic Neil Postman, made the following prediction: At some point it becomes far from asinine to speak of the god of Technology – in the sense that people believe technology works, that they rely on it, that it makes promises, that they are bereft when denied access to it, that they are delighted when they are in its presence, that for most people it works in mysterious ways, that they condemn people who speak against it, that they stand in awe of it, and that, in the born-again mode, they will alter their lifestyles, their schedules, their habits, and their relationships to accommodate it. The question is, if this is not a sort of religious belief, then what is? It is on page 38.

Postman was concerned that technology might evolve into a "religious" arena of faith and devotion, one to which an individual would attribute an excessive and life-altering level of significance. In the process of altering the narrative, you are also altering the "kardioptics" or worldview of the reader, which is the core of a belief system. As your perspective on the world changes, so do the preferences and assumptions you make in your day-to-day existence. Rather of focusing on the spiritual, wise, ethical, loving, and humanistic aspects of tales, the tech-fictive style is primarily concerned with providing entertainment. Individual narcissism is more prevalent.

DISCUSSION: REVISITING EPISTEMOLOGICAL SHUDDERS:

Image has surpassed print in today's culture, and picture books are becoming less effective in generating clear, significant, and evident interactions. This is because the current society has embraced the digital age. There are many children's picture books that do not specifically discuss social

norms that were once commonly accepted by society, such as the necessity of having good manners. However, these social norms may be socially noted by their absence, for example, through omission, or as an epistemological shudder, pertaining to areas of compassion, truth, or morality. For instance, the proliferation of wordless picture books enables a kid or reader who is able to read independently to interpret any visuals in a manner that is appropriate for his or her level of comprehension. However, unless it is addressed inside the classroom, a tale written in that manner is not frequently verbalised or perceived as shared knowledge within formative educational literacy. This is the case for the majority of western picture books. The themes that were traditionally dealt with in a realistic manner by adults or in the household are increasingly being addressed in picture books. These concerns include social and political difficulties. It is possible for each youngster to have a unique perception of the same material if the topic is not handled openly. In the absence of a common understanding across the community, meaning becomes relevant to the particular reader at hand. An exception to this norm may be seen in the field of visual art in North America. Over the course of the last quarter of a century, the Japanese tradition of manga work has had a significant impact on the drawing styles of western artists.

A "tech-fictive stage" of literature is now being experienced by readers. This stage is characterised by a landscape in which a new style of reading is encountered, and a new sort of kid may develop. The concept of adulthood is vanishing from children's novels. It is becoming more common to see children functioning as an extra kind of autonomous authority.

Particularly when it comes to observing "the other" in our midst, the medium is the message, and there is no debate of any discomfort that may emerge as a result of differences or exceptionalities within the group. According to the findings of Maich and Belcher, technology has an impact on how we appraise the tragedy of others or how we see individuals to be heroes in today's society. A vision of those "others" that may be deemed unrealistic by literature is now being shaped by the media, namely via films that include examples of technology. Currently, there are a lot of books available for youngsters that include autism. Despite the fact that this is something that should be supported, there are also significant risks associated with this form of portrayal. With the use of technology and the media, people who have autism may be digitally projected into a new perception and an unrealistic tech-fictive identity. This eliminates the reality of the discomfort that is associated with coping with autism on a daily basis. Movies, for instance, have the ability to replace this with a virtual world of non-difficulty in everyday life. They can even portray a person with autism as a super-hero, which makes the difference more attractive than

normality (Maich & Belcher, 2012; Maich et al, 2015). The use of stereotypes is shown in the narrative. It would seem that if a book is deemed to be of "good" quality, it will be adapted into a film, and it will no longer be required to read the book in its original form. The topic or subject is discussed in a manner that conceals or avoids the everyday human anxiety that is associated with it. Yes, you should change the text form. Can you alter the world? I am going to take a few more years to come to a conclusion on it.

CONCLUSION:

Within the realm of children's literature, the nuclear human family as we once knew it is experiencing a decline. There might be a number of reasons for this. Some of these may be cultural (such as the rise of the latch-key kid in the early 1980s), social (such as the politicisation of issues in post-modernity), due to concerns regarding gender and consumerism in social life (such as the dislike of authority, changes in sexual orientation, and an increasing awareness of colonialism), technological (such as too much in too short of a time), or due to the increase in social anxiety and preference for a virtual reality life choice over reality, which has resulted in a merging of the two. There are also good aspects to many of these situations, such as enhanced accessibility to knowledge, the capacity to make connections between actions and consequences, and the possibility of having conversations with other learners who have similar interests,

whether they are located nearby or far away, about topical issues that are of greater interest. The family and the persistent role it plays in forming what children become has altered in its portrayal of what it means to be human. At least, this is the case in our regular interaction behaviours inside the pages of a picture book. This research provides the reader with the knowledge that they should not limit themselves to reading just tales written in a current style. For the purpose of enabling the kid to differentiate between virtual reality and the real-world grit that is required in order to live a life, it is beneficial for parents and children to read and talk about tales together. And the actual grit that we are losing is what we are losing. That is what will bring about a "kardioptically" transformation in us. The act of discussing a book in order to investigate this omission is more important than it has ever been.

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